A NEW YEAR'S WISH
NO. 3231

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:19.

THE Philippians had several times sent presents to Paul to supply his necessities. Though they were not themselves rich, yet they made a contribution and sent Epaphroditus with it, "an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Paul felt very grateful—he thanked God, but he did not forget to also thank the donors—he wished them every blessing and he did as good as say, "You have supplied my need, and my God shall supply yours. You have supplied my need of temporal food and raiment out of your poverty. My God shall supply *all* your need out of His riches in glory." "As," he says, in the 18th verse, "I have all and abound: I am full." "So," he adds, "'my God shall supply all your need.' You have sent what you gave me by the hand of a beloved brother, but God will send a better messenger to you, for He will supply all your need 'by Christ Jesus.'" Every single word sounds as if he had thought it over and the Spirit of God had guided him in his meditation so that he should, to the fullest extent, wish them back a blessing similar to that which they had sent to him—only of a richer and more enduring kind!

Now, on this New Year's Day I would desire, somewhat in the spirit of Paul, to bless those of you who have supplied, according to your abilities, the needs of God's work in my hands, and have given, even out of your poverty, to the cause of God according as there has been need. I count myself to be personally your debtor though your gifts have been for the students, the orphans, the book and track distributors and not for myself. In return for your kindness, after the manner of His gracious love, "my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." This verse is particularly sweet to me, for when we were building the orphanage, I foresaw that if we had no voting, and no collecting of annual subscriptions, but depended upon the goodness of God and the voluntary offerings of His people, we would have times of trial and, therefore, I ordered the masons to place upon the first columns of the orphanage entrance, these words, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The text, therefore, is cut in stone upon the right hand and upon the left of the great archway! There stands this declaration of our confidence in God—and as long as God lives, we shall never need to remove it, for He will

certainly supply the needs of His own work! While we serve Him, He will furnish our tables for us!

I. The text might suggest to us a field of gloomy thought if we wished to indulge the melancholy vein, for it speaks of "all your need." So, first, behold A GREAT NECESSITY—"*all your need.*" What a gulf! What an abyss! "All your need." I do not know how many believers made up the church at Philippi, but the need of one saint is great enough—what must many need? It would not be possible to tell the number of God's children on earth, but the text comprehends the need of the whole chosen family, "*all your need*." We will not ask you to reckon up the wonderful draft upon the divine bank account which must be made by all the needs of all the saints who are yet on earth—but just think of your own need—that will be more within the compass of your experience and the range of your meditation! May the Lord supply your need and *all* your need!

There is *our temporal need* and that is no little matter! If we have food and raiment, we should be content, but there are many of God's people to whom the mere getting of food and raiment is a wearisome toil—and what with household cares, family trials, sickness of body, losses in business and sometimes the impossibility of obtaining suitable labor, many of God's saints are as hard up as Elijah was when he sat by the brook Cherith. If God did not send them their bread and meat in a remarkable manner, they would surely starve—but their bread shall be given them and their water shall be sure. "My God shall supply all your need." You have perhaps, a large family and your needs are therefore greatly increased. The declaration of the text includes the whole of your needs—personal and relative!

After all, our temporal needs are very small compared with *our spiritual needs*. A man may, with the blessing of God, pretty readily provide for the needs of the body, but who shall provide for the requirements of the soul? There is need of perpetual pardon, for we are always sinning. And Jesus Christ's blood is always pleading for us and cleansing us from sin! Every day there is need of fresh strength to battle against inward sin and, blessed be God, it is daily supplied so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's! As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we need armor from head to foot—and even then we do not know how to wear the armor, or how to wield the sword unless He who gave us these sacred implements shall be always with us. Warring saint, God will supply all your need by His presence and Spirit. But we are not merely warriors, we are also workers. We are called, many of us, to important spheres of labor, (and, indeed, let no man think his sphere unimportant), but here, also, our hands shall be sufficient for us and we shall accomplish our life work. You have need to be helped to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right spirit and in the right manner—your need, as a Sunday school teacher, as an open air preacher and especially as a minister of the gospel, will be very great, but the text meets all your requirements—"My God shall supply all your need." Then comes our need in suffering, for many of us are called to take our turn in the Lord's

prison camp. Here we need patience under pain and hope under depression of spirit. Who is sufficient for furnace work? Our God will supply us with those choice graces and consolations which shall strengthen us to glorify His name even in the fires! He will either make the burden lighter, or the back stronger—He will diminish the need, or increase the supply.

Beloved, it is impossible for me to mention all the forms of our spiritual need. We need to be daily converted from some sin or other, which, perhaps, we have scarcely known to be sin. We need to be instructed in the things of God, we need to be illuminated as to the mind of Christ, we need to be comforted by the promises, we need to be quickened by the precepts, and we need to be strengthened by the doctrines. We need, oh, what do we *not* need? We are just a bag of needs and a heap of infirmities! If any one of us were to keep a *need book*, as I have seen tradesmen do, what a huge folio it would need to be! And it might be written inside and out and crossed and recrossed, for we are full of needs from the first of January to the end of December! But here is the mercy—"My God shall supply all your need." Are you put in high places? Have you many comforts? Do you enjoy wealth? What need you have to be kept from loving the world, to be preserved from wantonness and pride and the follies and fashions of this present evil world! My God will supply your need in that respect. Are you very poor? Then the temptation is to envy, to bitterness of spirit, to rebellion against God. "My God shall supply all your need." Are you alone in the world? Then you need the Lord Jesus to be your companion and your companion He will be! Have you many around you? Then you have need of grace to set them a good example, to bring up your children and manage your household in the fear of God. "My God shall supply all your need." You have need, in times of joy, to be kept sober and steady. You have need, in times of sorrow, to be strong and act like men. You have needs in living and you will have needs in dying—but your last need shall be supplied as surely as your first! "My God shall supply *all* your need."

Come, then, brothers and sisters, and look down into this great gulf of need and exultingly say, "O Lord, we thank You that our needs are great, for there is then more room for Your love, Your tenderness, Your power, Your faithfulness to fill the chasm!"

That first thought, which I said might be a gloomy one, has all the dreariness taken out of it by four others equally true, but each of them full of good cheer! The text not only mentions *a great necessity*, but it also mentions *a great helper*—"My God." Next, *a great supply*— "My God shall supply all your need." Thirdly, *an abundant store* out of which to draw the gift; "according to His riches in glory." And lastly, *a glorious channel* through which the supply shall come—"by Christ Jesus."

II. So, for our enormous needs here is A GREAT HELPER. "*My God* shall supply all your need." Whose God is that? Why, Paul's God! That is one of the matters in which the greatest saints are no better off than the very least, for though Paul called the Lord, "My God," He is my God, too!

My dear old friend who sits yonder and has nothing but a few pence in the entire world, can also say, "and He is my God, too! He is my God and He is as much my God if I am the meanest, most obscure and weakest of His people, as He would be my God if I were able, like Paul, to evangelize the nations!" It is to me delightful to think that *my God is Paul's God*, because, you see, Paul intended this—he meant to say, "You see, dear brothers and sisters, my God has supplied all my needs and as He is your God, He will supply yours." I have been in the Roman dungeon in which Paul is said to have been confined—and a comfortless prison, indeed, it is! First of all you descend into a vaulted chamber into which no light ever comes except through a little round hole in the roof. And then, in the middle of the floor of that den, there is another opening through which the prisoner was let down into a second and lower dungeon in which no fresh air or light could possibly come to him. Paul was probably confined there. The dungeon of the Praetorian in which he was certainly housed is not much better. Paul would have been left well-near to starve there, but for those good people at Philippi! I should not wonder but what Lydia was at the bottom of this kind movement, or else the jailer. They said, "We must not let the good apostle starve." And so they made up a contribution and sent him what he needed—and when Paul received it, he said, "My God has taken care of me. I cannot make tents here in this dark place so as to earn my own living, but my Master still supplies my need! And even so, when you are in straits, He will supply yours."

"*My* God." It has often been sweet to me, when I have thought of my orphan children, and money has not come in, to remember Mr. Müller's God and how He always supplied the children at Bristol. His God is my God—and I rest upon Him. When you turn over the pages of Scripture and read of men who were in serious trouble and were helped, you may say, "Here is Abraham, he was blessed in all this and Abraham's God will supply all my need, for He is *my* God. I read of Elijah, that the ravens fed him. I have Elijah's God and He can command the ravens to feed me if He pleases. The God of the prophets, the God of the apostles, the God of all the saints that have gone before us—"this God is our God forever and ever." It seems to be thought by some that God will not work, now, as He used to. "Oh, if we had lived in miraculous times," they say, "then we could have trusted Him! Then there was manifest evidence of God's existence, for He pushed aside the laws of nature and worked for the fulfillment of His promises to His people." Yet that was a rather coarser mode of working than the present one, for now the Lord produces the same results without the violation of the laws of nature! It is a great fact that without the disturbance of a single law of nature, *prayer* becomes effectual with God! And God being inquired of by His people to do it for them, does fulfill His promise and supplies their needs. Using means of various kinds, He still gives His people all things necessary for this life and godliness! Without a miracle, He works great wonders of loving care—and He will continue to do so!

Beloved, *is the God of Paul your God?* Do you regard Him as such? It is not every man who worships Paul's God. It is not every professing Christian who really knows the Lord at all, for some invent a deity such as they fancy God ought to be! The God of Paul is the God of the Old and New Testament—such a God as we find there. Do you trust such a God? Can you rest upon Him? "There are such severe judgments mentioned in Scripture." Yes, do you quarrel with them? Then you cast Him off! But if, instead thereof, you feel, "I cannot understand You, O my God, nor do I think I ever shall, but it is not for me, a child, to measure the infinite God, or to arraign You at my bar and say to You, 'Thus should You have done, and thus ought You not to have done.' You say, 'Such am I,' and I answer, 'Such as You are, I love You and I cast myself upon You, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the God of Your servant Paul. You are my God and I will rest upon You.'" Very well, then, He will "supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Just think of that for a minute!

If *He* will supply you, you will be supplied, indeed, for God is infinite in capacity! He is infinitely wise as to the manner of His actions and infinitely powerful as to the acts themselves! He never sleeps nor tires. He is never absent from any place, but is always ready to help. Your needs come, perhaps, at very unexpected times—they may occur in the midnight of despondency or in the noonday of delight—but God is always near to supply the surprising need! He is everywhere present and everywhere omnipotent and He can supply all your need, in every place, at every time, to the fullest degree!—

"Remember that omnipotence has servants everywhere"—

and that whenever God wishes to send you aid, He can do it without pausing to ask, "How shall it be done?" He has but to will it and all the powers of heaven and earth are subservient to your necessity! With such a helper, what cause have you to doubt?

III. The next point in the text is, A GREAT SUPPLY. "My God shall *supply* all your need." Sometimes we lose a good deal of the meaning of Scripture through the translation. In fact, nothing ever gains by translation except a bishop. The present passage might be rendered thus, "My God will fill to the fullest all your need." The illustration which will best explain the meaning is that of the woman whose children were to be sold by her creditor to pay the debts of her late husband. She had nothing to call her own except some empty jars—and the prophet bade her set these in order and bring the little oil which still remained in the cruse. She did so and he then said to her, "Go among your neighbors and borrow empty vessels, not a few." She went from one to another till she had filled her room full of these empty vessels—and then the prophet said, "Pour out." She began to pour out from her almost empty cruse and, to her surprise, it filled her largest jar! She went to another and filled that, and then another and another! She kept on filling all the jars till, at last she said to the prophet, "there is not a vessel more." Then the oil stopped, but not till then! So will it be with your needs. You were

frightened at having so many needs just now, were you not? But now be pleased to think you have them, for they are just so many empty vessels to be filled! If the woman had borrowed only a few jars, she could not have received much oil—but the more empty vessels she had—the more oil she obtained! So the more wants and the more needs you have—if you bring them to God, so much the better—for He will fill them all to the brim and you may be thankful that there are so many to be filled! When you have no more needs, (but oh, when will that be), then the supply will stop, but not till then!

How gloriously God gives to His people! We needed pardon once—He washed us and He made us whiter than snow! We needed clothing, for we were naked. What did He do? Give us some rough dress or other? Oh, no! But He said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." It was a fortunate thing for the prodigal that his clothes were all in rags, for then he needed raiment and the best robe was brought forth! It is a grand thing to be sensible of spiritual needs, for they will all be supplied. A conscious need in the sight of God—what is it but a prevalent request for a new mercy? We have sometimes asked Him to comfort us, for we were very low. But when the Lord has comforted us, He has so filled us with delight that we have been inclined to cry with the old Scotch divine, "Hold, Lord, hold! It is enough! I cannot bear more joy. Remember I am only an earthen vessel." We, in relieving the poor, generally give no more than we can help, but our God does not stop to count His favors—He gives like a king! He pours water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground!

IV. We must pass on to the next thought and consider for a minute or two THE GREAT RESOURCES out of which this supply is to come. "My God shall supply all your need, *according to His riches in glory."* The preacher may sit down, now, for He cannot compass this part of the text. God's riches in glory are beyond all thought!

Consider *the riches of God in nature*—who shall count His treasures? Get away into the forests—travel on mile after mile among the trees which cast their ample shade for no man's pleasure, but only for the Lord. Mark on lone mountainside and far-reaching plain the myriads of flowers whose perfume is for God alone. What wealth each spring and summer is created in the boundless estates of the great King! Observe the vast amount of animal and insect life which crowds the land with the riches of divine wisdom, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Look towards the sea—think of those shoals of fish, so countless that when only the fringe of them is touched by our fishermen, they find enough food to supply a nation! Mark also the sunken treasures of the ocean which no hand gathers but that of the Eternal. If you would see the wealth of the Creator, cast your eyes to the stars—count their numbers if you can! Astronomy has enlarged our vision and made us look upon this world as a mere speck compared with innumerable other worlds that God has made and it tells us that probably all the myriads of worlds that we can see with the telescope are

a mere fraction of the countless orbs which are in infinite space! Vast are God's riches in nature. It needs a Milton to sing, as he sang in *Paradise Lost*, the riches of the creating God!

The riches of God in providence are equally without bound. He says to this creature, "Go," and he goes, and to another, "Do this," and he does it, for all things do His bidding. Think of *the wealth of God in grace*. There nature and providence stand eclipsed, for we have the fountain of eternal love, the gift of an infinite sacrifice, the pouring out of the blood of His own dear Son and the covenant of grace in which the smallest blessing is infinite in value! The riches of His grace! "God is rich in mercy"—rich in patience, love, power, kindness—rich beyond all conception!

Now your needs shall be supplied according to the riches of nature, the riches of providence and the riches of grace! But this is not all—the apostle chooses a higher style and writes "according to *His riches in glory*." Ah, we have never seen God in glory! That were a sight our eyes could none at present behold! Christ in His glory, when transfigured upon earth, was too resplendent a spectacle even for the tutored eyes of Peter, James, and John—

"At the too-transporting light"—

darkness rushed upon them and they were as men that slept! What God is in His glory do you know, you angels? Does He not veil His face even from you lest, in the excessive brightness of His essence, even *you* should be consumed? Who among all His creatures can tell the riches of His glory when even the heavens are not pure in His sight and He charges His angels with folly?

"His riches in glory." It means not only the riches of what He has done, but the riches of what He could do, for if He has made hosts of worlds, He could make as many myriads more—and then have but begun! The possibilities of omnipotent God, who shall reckon? But the Lord shall supply all your need according to such glorious possibilities. When a great king gives according to his, riches, then he does not measure out stinted alms to beggars, but he gives *like a king*, as we say. And if it is some grand festival day, and the king is in his state array, his generosity is on a noble scale. Now, when God is in His glory, think, if you can, what must be the generosity that He distributes—what the treasures that He brings forth for His own beloved! Now, "according to His riches in glory," He will supply all your needs. After that, dare you despond? O soul, what insanity is unbelief? What flagrant blasphemy is doubt of the love of God! He must bless us; and, blessed by Him, we must be blest, indeed! If He is to supply our needs "according to His riches in glory"—they will be supplied to the fullest!

V. Now let us close our meditation by considering THE GLORIOUS CHANNEL by which these needs are to be supplied—"According to His riches in glory *by Christ Jesus.*" You shall have all your soul's needs satisfied, but you must go to Christ for everything. "By Christ Jesus." That is the fountainhead where the living waters well up! You will not supply your needs by your own care and fretfulness. "Consider the lilies,

how they grow." You are to be enriched "by Christ Jesus." You will not have your spiritual needs supplied by going to Moses and working and toiling as if you were your own savior, but by faith in Christ Jesus! Those who will not go to Christ Jesus must go without divine grace, for God will give them nothing in the way of grace except through His Son! Those who go to Jesus the most shall taste of His abundance more often, for through Him all blessings come! My advice to myself and to you is that we abide in Him for since that is the way by which the blessing comes; we had better abide in it! We read of Ishmael that he was sent into the wilderness with a bottle, but Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-Roi. And it is wise for us to dwell by the well, Christ Jesus, and never trust to the bottles of our own strength. If you wander from Christ Jesus, brothers and sisters, you depart from the center of bliss!

All this year I pray that you may abide by the well of this text. Draw from it. Are you very thirsty? Draw from it, for it is full! And when you plead this promise, the Lord will supply all your need! Do not cease receiving from God for a minute. Let not your unbelief hinder the Lord's bounty, but cling to this promise, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I know not how to wish you a greater blessing. If you are enabled by the Holy Spirit to realize it, you will enjoy what I earnestly wish for you, namely—

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 KINGS 4:1-7; PHILIPPIANS 4.

2 Kings 4:1. *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.* It is sad for anyone to be in debt and yet there may be circumstances under which even a man who fears the Lord may die in debt and leave no provision for his wife and children except a large portion of sorrow. In the case of this poor widow, it was not long before she cried to Elisha, "The creditor is come." He generally does come pretty quickly and he had come to her to take away her two sons whom she needed to support her—to make them bondmen—slaves, to serve him for a certain number of years till their father's debt was worked out. And this hurt the poor woman's heart, so she came to see what the Lord's servant could do for her. She could not bear to see her sons taken away to serve as bondmen to a stranger through no fault of their own and, possibly, through no fault on their father's part.

2. *And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for you?* Elisha was probably about as poor as she was, so what could he do for her?

2. *Tell me, what have you in the house?* "Whatever there is in the house must go towards this debt, so 'tell me what have you in the house?'"

2. *And she said, Your handmaid has not anything in the house, save a pot of oil.* Her husband had been a God-fearing man, a true servant of Jehovah, yet he had died in such dire poverty that his widow had to say to Elisha, "Your handmaid has not anything in the house, save a pot of oil." Those were indeed bad times for the sons of the prophets for, in those days men cared more for false prophets and for the priests of Baal than for the servants of the Most High God!

3. *Then he said, Go, borrow 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.] "Get as many empty oil jars as you can, it does not matter how great nor how many they are, but they must be empty."

4-6. *And when you are come in, you shall shut the door upon you and upon 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 upon her and upon 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 another vessel. And the oil stopped.* [See Sermon #1467-A, Volume 25—THE OIL AND THE VESSELS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There was no reason why "the oil stopped" except that there was "not another vessel" to receive the flowing stream!

7. *Then she came and told the man of God.* She must have understood that the oil was to be used for the payment of her debt, but she was a woman of delicate sensitiveness, with a tender conscience—as honest people usually are—so she wanted full permission from Elisha before she would dispose of the oil. She regarded it, in some sense, as *his* oil—as it was through using the means that he had directed that her little store of oil had been so miraculously multiplied. So "she came and told the man of God."

7. *And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay your debt, and live, you and the children off the rest.* What a merciful deliverance that was for the poor widow and her sons! And there have been many other deliverances in the experiences of God's people which, if they have not been quite as miraculous as this one, have, nevertheless, been very remarkable—although God has appeared to work them the common way in which He is constantly working. Yet they have been uncommon mercies all the while.

Now let us read Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi who had been the means of supplying his necessities, though not in the miraculous manner in which the Prophet Elisha had supplied the needs of that poor widow.

Philippians 4:1. *Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the lord, my dearly beloved.* [See Sermon #1959, Volume 33—THE WATCHWORD FOR TODAY—STAND FAST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Paul had a very warm affection for the church at Philippi. You remember how that church was established—first with the baptized household of Lydia and afterwards

with the baptized household of the jailer. These saints at Philippi were, in a special sense, Paul's spiritual children. They were very generous and kind to him, and his heart was very warm with love to them, so he called them, "my brethren dearly beloved," and then again, "my dearly beloved."

2. *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* These two women had fallen out with one another. They evidently differed upon some question or other so that they were not "of the same mind in the Lord," and Paul thought it so important that there should be perfect unity and love in the church at Philippi, as well as everywhere else, that he beseeched these two women, of whom we know nothing else, that they would be "of the same mind in the Lord." Notice that he beseeches each of them in exactly the same way—"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche." He has a, "beseech," for each of them! Perhaps, if he had written, "I beseech Euodias and Syntyche," the latter lady might have fancied that he was not quite so earnest about her as he was about Euodias, so he puts it, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Have any of you fallen out, my dear friends? I do not know of any of you who have done so, but if you have, I say to all of you, men or women, "I beseech you, that you be of the same mind in the Lord." There is nothing like perfect unity in a Christian church! If there is even a little division, it will grow to something much worse, by and by, so I beseech you, "be of the same mind in the Lord."

3. *And I entreat you, also, true yokefellow*—Their minister—

3. *Help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement, also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.* They helped me, and they have helped you, so help them with encouraging words and in every other way that you can.

4. *Rejoice in the Lord always.* Not only now and then, on high days and holiday, have a time of joy, but, "rejoice in the Lord always."

4. *And again I say, Rejoice.* [See Sermon #2405, Volume 41—JOY, A DUTY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He had said this before, as you will see in the first verse of the third Chapter, which begins, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Now he writes it again and repeats it in the same verse—"Rejoice. Rejoice." It is so important that believers should be full of joy that Paul writes three times over in a short space, "Rejoice in the Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* Be men who are God governed, because God governs those who run to excess in nothing. Some go to excess in one way and some in another, but all excess is to be avoided! "Let your moderation be known unto all men."

5, 6. *The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing.* This is not a good translation of the original—it does not convey the sense of the Greek. It should to, "Be *anxious* for nothing." Of course you ought to be careful about everything. You cannot be too careful, but you never ought to be *care*-full, you must care to be right with God, yet you must not be filled

with care about anything. "Be anxious for nothing." Do not fret, do not worry, and do not make other people miserable by your fretting and fuming and fueling.

6. *But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* [See Sermon #2351, Volume 40—PRAYER, THE CURE FOR CARE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Ah, this is the way to find the cure for all your anxieties! Take all your trouble to God with a prayer and with a song. Do not go without either the thanksgiving or the prayer, but bear your burden at once to God and ask Him to bear it for you.

7, 8. *And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, and whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think on these things.* If anything is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report—be on that side. A Christian is on the side of everything that makes for purity, chastity, honesty or that is for the good of men and the glory of God! Whenever anyone is making out a list of those who will fight for everything that is right and good, every Christian should say to the man writing the list, "Set down my name, sir."

9, 10. *Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again; wherein you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity.* You see that Paul did not really mean, "Be careful for nothing," for he says here that these Philippians had cared for him and he praises them for being careful of him. They had lovingly thought of him who was their spiritual father—and when they knew that he was shut up as a prisoner in Rome, and suffering need, they took care to send something to relieve and cheer him.

11. *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.* [See Sermon #320, Volume 6—CONTENTMENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I have been initiated—for that is the word—"among those who are content with such things as they have."

12, 13. *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.* [See Sermons #345 and #346, Volume 6—SELF-SUFFICIENCY SLAIN and ALL-SUFFICIENCY MAGNIFIED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I can be poor, or I can have abundance, if you send it to me, but these things make no real difference to me. I have been made invulnerable either to suffering or to abundance." Blessed is the man who has got as far as that! It is a wonderful work of divine grace when a man can truly say this!

14, 15. *Nevertheless you have done well, that you shared with my affliction. Now you Philippians also know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only.* I should not wonder if it was Lydia who was at the bottom of that giving and receiving and, perhaps, the jailer. They were evidently thoughtful and grateful people. They remembered the apostle's sufferings and needs and did all they could to help and cheer him.

16, 17. *For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desired a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.* He did not look at it as merely something that would ease him, but he looked at it as a token of gratitude for the spiritual blessings they had received through him! It showed that they loved the gospel which he preached and that they also loved him for having been blessed by God to their souls—and this cheered and delighted him. But, to show that he was not asking for more, he says—

18. *But I have all, and abound: I am full.* I do not suppose that it amounted to much, but it was all that the apostle needed—and so he says to them, "I have all, and abound: I am full."

18, 19. *Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* I am sure that when they read this verse, they all felt glad that they had had a share in the subscription to relieve the apostle's needs.

20, 21. *Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.* "Give them all my love and tell them how grateful I am to them."

21, 22. *The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.* Exposed to the greatest perils and yet brave to confess Christ! They may have been nothing but poor kitchen maids, or they may have been among the Praetorian guards who watched and guarded the palace and the prisoners, but they must have their title set down in the letter, "chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

23. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

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FACTS AND INFERENCES
NO. 3232

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1863.

"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace."
Psalm 37:35-37.

WE must never judge by appearances, for many things that we see with our eyes and hear with our ears are not really what they appear to us to be. Our senses, like everything else within us, are imperfect, so that it is safer to walk by faith than by sight. Especially is this the case with regard to God's providential dealings with men. If we were to conclude, for instance, that all those who prosper in this world are peculiarly favored of God, we would make a very great mistake. And if, on the other hand, like Job's friends, we should imagine that all persons who are grievously afflicted and tried are suffering because they have grossly sinned, we would equally err. It is true that there sometime are manifest judgments upon individuals, communities and nation, but every trial or affliction is not a judgment—nor would it be right for us to regard it so. Yet the man who walks through the world with his eyes opened and his understanding enlightened, must notice certain facts about which there can be no question—facts which are so important and so instructive that he will want other people to also notice them and to learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

There are two facts mentioned in our text. And I am going to talk to you concerning them, coupling with them certain inferences and revelations which must not be separated from them. The first fact is concerning the wicked—we have seen them in great power, spreading themselves like a green bay tree—yet they have passed away and soon been forgotten. The second fact is concerning the righteous—we have not merely once, but many times, seen a godly man die and from our own experience we can confirm the testimony of the Psalmist, "the end of that man is peace."

I. So let us for a while meditate upon THE FIRST FACT AND THE INFERENCE AND REVELATION CONCERNING IT.

It is a fact that we have seen the wicked in great power and that we have seen them suddenly cut off. Those of you who are much older than I

am can remember the terror that was associated with the name of one who was, for a while, in great power and who spread himself like a green bay tree—the branches whereof cast a baleful shade over most of the nations of Europe. Napoleon Bonaparte aimed at absolute sovereignty in France and won it. And then he aimed at universal sovereignty over all his fellow monarchs and, for a time, it seemed as though there would be no human limit to his great power. You know how he waded through slaughter and snatched crown after crown from other men to put upon his own head. But you also know how he led his vast army into Russia—and left the bulk of his followers to sleep in death beneath the snow, or to be devoured by wolves. And you remember how, afterwards, he met with men who could play the devil's game of war more skillfully than he ever could and, in the end, the imperial eagle that had torn so many others in pieces with its cruel talons was chained for the rest of its life to the lonely rock of St. Helena! Who that saw Napoleon's empire in the height of its glory could have imagined that it would melt away like a snowman in blazing sunshine? I grant you that its grandeur [Mr. Spurgeon was, of course, referring to the state of affairs in France in 1863. But he lived to see the Second Empire also pass away, and the French republic firmly established in its place.] has been somewhat revived in our day, but the failure of the "great" Napoleon should teach the whole race of mankind that although a wicked man may be in great power and may spread himself like a green bay tree, yet no greatness will permanently endure unless it is founded upon goodness and upon God!

There are some who have had great power because they have had great wealth. Many of us can recollect persons who seemed to have unlimited riches which enabled them to exercise enormous power over their fellow men. Solomon said that "money answers all things," and they certainly made it answer their ends. Everybody was obsequious to them—whole nations yielded up their treasures at the bidding of these multi-millionaires. They said to the North, "Give up," and to the South, "Keep not back"—and gold and jewels and works of art came pouring into their palaces and mansions—yet those very men were reduced to beggary before they died and, at the same door where they had repelled poor Lazarus with scorn, they, themselves, were suppliants craving alms! I need not mention names. Many of you can remember such men who were in great power and spread themselves like a green bay tree—yet they have passed away and if you seek them they cannot be found.

I find that the Hebrew has in it the idea of a tree indigenous to the soil, a tree that has never been transplanted. So David means that he had seen the wicked flourish like a tree whose roots had never been disturbed. You may have heard a rich man boastfully say, "My father lived in this house and his father lived here before him. And through a long line of ancestors, these estates have belonged to our family." He had no trouble in his youth and no labor in his manhood—he is the man

who, in his prosperity, said, "I shall never be moved." But he *has* been moved—the ancestral hall, of which he was so proud, has a new owner—those estates which he surveyed with such manifest delight have been sold to another family! And if you go to the district today and ask anyone whom you meet, "Where is that rich man who used to own all these broad acres?" you will receive the reply, "Nobody knows." And you may say with the Psalmist, "I sought him, but he could not be found."

This has been the case with some who have gained honor among men. The bay tree was highly esteemed among the Greeks and Romans—they crowned their heroes with wreaths made from its leaves—yet neither the wreath nor the honor lasted very long. So, if a man receives honor from his fellows, yet is all the while a wicked man, his honor is like the dissolving-view which appears upon the sheet and quickly fades away—or like the *mirage* of the desert which makes the burning sand look like a lake, but which only mocks all who run to drink from it! Or like the will-o'-the-wisp that frightens timid folk at night, but itself is without any enduring substance. So passes away the glory of this world and so passes away the man who has honor among men, but who is without that divine grace alone brings true honor, glory and immortality! I can say of more than one such man, "he passed away and lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found." Have you not noticed, dear Friends, how complete has been the disappearance of certain "great men" whose greatness has been founded upon wealth or upon sin? Every trace of them seems to have been destroyed—in the places where they used to live, nobody remembers them—their escutcheons have been broken up by the battle-axe of Time—and all their glory of heraldry has been burned in the fire. Why, as I am speaking of them, you can scarcely recall their names though they used to be as familiar as household words! Their names were written in the sand and Time's ever-rolling waves have utterly effaced them! If you seek them, you cannot find them.

Some men have appeared to be "great" because their true character had not been discovered. They were playing a very crafty part in the drama of life. Before the curtain, they appeared to be truthful, upright, and even religious. But behind it, they were rogues, thieves, liars and everything that was bad. Then, all of a sudden, the curtain was torn in two and they were revealed to all men as they had been all the while, to the all-seeing eyes of God! And the whole world looked on and was amazed. There was a man who always wore a mask when he walked abroad and everyone said, "What a beautiful sight it is to see such a man!" But one day the mask was broken and all could plainly see the signs of leprosy on his brow—the deadly disease was there all the time—it was only hidden from the public gaze by the mask! Discovery has often trod on the heels of sin—the guilty one has been caught red-handed—and swift justice has been meted out to the criminal. But suppose,

sinner, that for years you conceal from your fellows your real character as so many others have done? God knows all about you and His word still contains the warning that Moses gave to the Reubenites and Gadites, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Judas stood revealed, at last, as the son of perdition—his fellow apostles did not suspect him even up to the night of the betrayal—but Jesus had known from the first that he had the heart of a traitor, and only awaited a convenient opportunity to sell his Master for 30 pieces of silver! Simon the sorcerer, who had "bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one," professed to believe in Jesus and was even baptized! Yet Peter afterwards had to say to him, "Your heart is not right in the sight of God, for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." And, alas, both Judas and Simon Magus have many representatives even to this day!

Other "great" men have been laid low by some striking disaster. A man seems to climb up one of the tallest cedars of Lebanon to build his nest there and you say to yourself, "How can that man ever be pulled down from such a height as that?" But the omnipotent hand lays hold of him, scatters his nest upon the ground and before long he and his nest are alike forgotten! Perhaps the man has built himself what he calls an impregnable castle and in his marble halls he fondly hopes that no power can successfully attack him. But God has only to make a slight fissure in the earth's surface and the man and his castle and all that he has shall disappear even as the earth once before opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and all that appertained to him! God has many ways of putting down the mighty from their seats and exalting them that are of low degree! An Eastern potentate could not sleep on a certain memorable night and hence it came to pass that proud Haman was hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai, the Jew—while the despised Mordecai was publicly proclaimed as the man whom the king delighted to honor! Mysterious have been the workings of God's providence by which the mightiest monarchs and the most powerful princes have passed away so completely that they have been like the wicked man of whom David says, "I sought him, but he could not be found."

If in no other way the wicked man is removed from his pinnacle of greatness, he passes away at the call of death. We need not say much about his death, but when he is gone to his final account, he has few, if any, to mourn his loss. He lived for himself and he died for himself—no sorrowing widows, whose poverty he has relieved will keep his grave green with their grateful tears—no mourning children, whose ignorance he has dispelled by his instruction, will remember and revere his name. No sympathetic souls, turned from darkness to light through his instrumentality, will gratefully look up to him as their spiritual father.

I have thus called your attention to the fact that the wicked who have been in great power have passed away and been forgotten. Now, *what is*

the inference from this fact? I think a very safe inference is that as these men failed to attain that which was the great end and objective of their lives, they cannot have succeeded in that about which they were not at all concerned, namely, the everlasting interests of their never dying souls! It is certainly fair to infer that as they made such a lamentable shipwreck in this life, they made an even worse shipwreck in the world to come. And as they passed away from everything in which they took pleasure, here, it is reasonable to infer that whatever expectation and hope they may have cherished with regard to the next life, they are certain to have been totally and finally disappointed.

This, however, is not a mere matter of inference, *for the teaching of divine revelation agrees with it and confirms it.* The wicked man who was in great power here, in due course, dies—and he wakes up in the next world to find himself only a feeble worm exposed to all the fury of divine wrath! He had servants and slaves on earth to do his bidding, but there are none to crouch at his feet now! He was held in honor in this world but there are no praises or flatteries for him now. His wealth could at one time buy for him anything that his heart might wish, but he had to leave it all behind him—and even if he still possessed it, he could not purchase even a drop of water to cool his parched tongue. Nothing remains for him, now, but shame and everlasting contempt in that terrible prison where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. Throughout all heaven and hell there is nothing that can afford him even a moment's solace—he has made an awful and an eternal failure of his whole life—and his dolorous cry is, "Lost! *Lost!* LOST!"

But, just in passing, though my text speaks especially of the wicked who are in great power, I must remind you that their doom will be the doom of *all who believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ*—whether they are in the higher or lower walks of life! So, dear friends, whoever and whatever you are, if you live only for this life, you, too, will pass away and be forgotten here—but you will not be forgotten in the next world! Remember that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Make the only fitting preparation for that judgment by repenting of sin and trusting in Him who died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God." O man, play not with shadows! Let not that which is the only real and substantial thing pass by you unheeded! If you must have something to play with, let it not be your immortal soul, for though you can play your soul into hell, you can never play it out! Nor *pray* it out! Nor *weep* it out, nor *work* it out! Once there, it is there forever! Do you ask, "What is there that is real and substantial? What is there that will abide when all earthly glory has passed away?" Listen. "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." So, my dear hearer, believe that gospel, lay hold on the hope set before you, trust in that blessed Savior who died in the place of sinners, put your eternal interests into the hands of the one mediator between God and men and then, with the apostle Paul, you will not be afraid to look forward even to the great Day of Judgment, but you will be able to confidently 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." Man, woman, sinner—whoever or whatever you are—give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids until you can truthfully say, "Jesus is my Savior. My Beloved is mine and I am His."

II. Now, with great brevity, I pass on to THE SECOND FACT AND THE INFERENCE AND REVELATION CONCERNING IT. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

It is a fact that we have seen the righteous die and that we know that their end is peace. It is a fact that those who are accounted perfect in the sight of God through the blood and righteousness of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and whose lives have been made upright through the effectual working of the ever blessed Spirit, do end their earthly careers in peace and then enter into that eternal peace which has no end! I am not speaking of dreams and fancies, but of *facts* that have happened in my own experience. Never shall I forget the deathbed of one who had often walked with me many a weary mile to preach the gospel in country villages. I have told you before how I found him, when he was near his end. His sight had so completely failed that not a ray of light entered his eyes, but when he heard my voice, he sat up in the bed, and said to me, oh, so joyously!—

"And when you hear my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!"

Verily, the end of that man was peace! There is a beloved brother behind me on the platform, who went with me to see one of the members of this church who was dying of consumption. While we talked with her, she told us that her only fear was lest she might live, for she dreaded the temptations of living far more than the pangs of dying! A few hours after we saw her, she passed away from this world of sorrow and sin—and entered the land of everlasting peace—but the rapture with which she anticipated death almost made us exclaim, after the manner of Thomas, "Lord, let us die with her." As we came away, we felt that hers was the happy lot and that she was the one to be envied because she had gone to be "with Christ, which is far better."

Look at the dying Christian—what blessed peace he has! He is at peace even with those who have been his enemies! He says to those around him that if there are any who have done him harm, or said what was false concerning him, he not only freely forgives them, but his most

earnest wish for them is that he may meet them all in heaven! He is at perfect peace concerning the past, for he knows that all his sins have been forgiven him, for Christ's sake, and that they will be remembered against him no more forever. He is full of peace in the present, even though he is near the end of his earthly life. His wife weeps and well may she grieve at the thought of parting with such a godly husband, but he reminds her of that ancient promise, "Leave your fatherless children. I will preserve them alive, and let your widows trust in Me." And of that inspired declaration, "A father of the fatherless, and a judge (or advocate) of the widows is God in His holy habitation." He looks at his dear children gathered around his bed and although he would gladly have lived longer for their sake, he knows that it is his Lord's will that he should depart out of this life, so he does not repine! He commits into the hands of God, his household, his business and all that concerns him. He says, "I have nothing more to do with them, I am dead to them all. And now I am only waiting until the messenger arrives to summon me into the presence of the King." As for the future, he is at peace concerning that, also. He knows that it is a solemn matter to pass through death's iron gate, but he is confident that Christ will come and meet him there, so he looks forward to the great transition without a tremor and without a murmur! He is fully aware that existence in a disembodied state is something very mysterious and awe-inspiring, but that mystery has no terrors for him, for he has the same assurance that Paul had when he wrote, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He is not in the least troubled because the poor old worn out tent is being taken down, for he knows that he is going to exchange it for one of the abiding mansions in his Father's house! Indeed, he is so happy in the anticipation of going home that he begins to sing the very hymn that we afterwards sing at his funeral—

"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul! How near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eyes,
Your golden gates appear!
Ah, then my spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above!
'Forever with the Lord!'
Father, if 'tis Your will
The promise of that faithful word
Even here to me fulfill.
So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,

By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain!"

The good man believes in the resurrection of the body, so he says with Job, "I know that my redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." It is a blessed thing for such a man to die! And the many deaths of that happy kind that I have witnessed have made me also—

"Long for evening to undress,
That I might rest with God."

What is the inference from all this? I think it is but fair to infer that if in the pain, agony and weakness of death, the Christian has such perfect peace, surely his peace will be even more profound when he enters that blest world where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." If in this stormy world he has such peace of mind even amid the swellings of Jordan, surely there must be for him, in the life that is to come, stormless seas and cloudless skies—days that have no night and years which winter's cold can never reach! And truly, *revelation confirms this inference*. For a Christian to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord! What it must be to be present with the Lord, no mortal tongue can fully tell, but we know that "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night, there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign forever and ever…And He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." What a change, beloved, it will be from all the strife and turmoil of this world to the perfect peace of the world to come! Here, you and I have to work, work, work—either with the sweat of the brow or the sweat of the brain—and the latter is not the lighter of the two! But *there*, brain and brow shall both be perfectly at rest! Here we are sometimes perplexed by the prosperity of the wicked—but *there* we shall see that we have no cause to envy them! Here we are often made to grieve over losses and crosses, adversities and afflictions—but *there* we shall always be on the bright side of the hill—our dark night of sorrow and trial shall be forever over and our everlasting morning shall have come! Here we are constantly losing some of our best friends, they pass away as sweet flowers wither and die. But *there*—

"Oh, it will be joyful
When we meet to part no more!"

Here we are plagued and tormented by sin—but *there*, "they are without fault before the throne of God." Here the fiery darts of the wicked one are

continually flying all around us—but *there*, they are out of range of the devil's most deadly artillery! Yet let not one of us sigh and cry for the wings of a dove, that we may fly away and be at rest. In God's good time, He will beckon us across the narrow stream of death! And till then let us patiently wait and earnestly work for Him who is all our salvation and all our desire.

Now, my hearers, I have set before you two men representing two very different classes—those who have their portion in this life, and those whose inheritance is in the heavenly Canaan, the land of perfect peace and perfect bliss. What is the great objective upon which your soul is set? To get on in this world, to make money, to win fame, honor, glory, power? Oh, that is a poor ambition! And if you could attain it all, your wreath of bay leaves would soon wither—and then what would you have left? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Profit him? It would be an eternal and irretrievable loss! Oh, seek not such "gain" as that, but "seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"—insofar as God sees that it shall be for His glory and your own and others' good for you to have them. May the Lord give you the grace to make the wise choice this very hour, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37.

May the Spirit of God graciously apply this Psalm to our hearts, comforting us as no one else can! Is He not the Comforter? And what better cordial has He for our spirits than His own word?

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* Evil cannot last! It is a feeble plant, like the grass and weeds which the mower's scythe soon cuts down and leaves to wither in the blazing sunshine.

3, 4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* [See Sermon #454, Volume 8—SUNSHINE IN THE HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is a most precious verse—its sweetness who can tell? Do not think first of the desires of your heart, but think first of delighting yourself in your God! If you have accepted Him as your Lord, He is yours, so delight in Him and then He will give you the desires of your heart.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.* Give it over into God's hands and then confide in Him as completely as a little child confides in its mother. "He shall bring it to

pass." It is quite certain that *you* cannot "bring it to pass," so you will be wise if you leave it with Him who can do what you cannot!

6. *And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* You cannot make the light and the noonday—that is a work that is far beyond your power—but your God can give you both light and noonday. He can clear your character from any slander that may have fouled it and He can crown you with honor and glory in place of the contempt that is now cast upon you.

7. *Rest in the LORD*—[See Sermon #2393, Volume 40—A COMFORTING MESSAGE FOR THE CLOSING YEAR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is the sweetest word of all—"Rest." Go no further! Fret no more. Bear your burdens no longer. Make this day a Sabbath to your soul—"Rest in the Lord"—

7. *And wait patiently for Him!* Do not be in a hurry. The Lord has infinite leisure, so partake of it as far as you can—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

7, 8. *Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger.* You cannot do that unless you "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. "Angry passions boil upon the fire of fretfulness! Therefore, "cease from anger"—

8, 9. *And forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* Their turn will come in due time. It comes last, but then it comes *to last*, for there is nothing to come after the last!

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* The house in which he lived, or the place that was called by his name is often destroyed.

11, 12. *But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just.* That has been the style of things from the beginning. And the old serpent's seed will be like the old serpent and he, "was more subtle than any beast of the field." "The wicked plots against the just"—he plots against the Lord's people, but "the Lord shall laugh at him"—

13-18. *For he sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the day of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever.* He gives them an eternal portion by an everlasting covenant.

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* There is nothing that they can get, but God will give them what they cannot get themselves. He will ransack heaven

and earth to find food for His people! "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

20-23. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lamb: they shall vanish; into smoke shall they vanish away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth, and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD*—Even his "steps"—the little movements of his life—not only his great plans and his ambitious projects, but "the steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah"—

23. *And He delights in his way.* He loves to see him walk, even as parents delight to watch the first tottering steps of their little children, so that He who "takes not pleasure in the legs of a man," takes pleasure in the ways of His people!

24. *Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down.* For a while it may seem as if he had been finally defeated—things may seem to go altogether wrong with him—but, "though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down."

24, 25. *For the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* And we can also still speak of the faithfulness of Jehovah. He who took care of His people in David's day has not changed since then! We have not seen the righteous forsaken.

26. *He is ever merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed.* God has a special regard for the children of believers. Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of Joseph, and the God of Manasseh and Ephraim!

27-29. *Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints. They are preserved forever but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein forever.* I have frequently remarked to you that although the wolf is very strong and fierce—and the sheep is very weak and timid—yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves. And the day will come when the last wolf will be dead—and then the sheep shall cover the plains and feed upon the hills. Weak as the righteous often are, they "shall inherit the land" when the wicked shall have been cut off from the earth!

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment.* That which is down in the heart will come up into the mouth—and you may rest assured that men are fairly judged by the common current of their conversation.

31-33. *The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him. The LORD will*

not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. How dreadful it would be for the godly man if the Lord were to leave him in the hand of the wicked! You remember how David sought to avoid that calamity when he had to choose famine, pestilence, or the sword of his enemies? "Let me fall," he said, "into the hands of the Lord, for very great are His mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of man." Let us thank God that even if we should get into the hands of the ungodly, the Lord will not leave us there, nor condemn us when we are judged!

34-37. *Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* There is no end to that man, for he is to endure, world without end! In any sense in which there *is* an end to him, his end is everlasting peace!

38, 39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble.* Have you not proved it so, dear brothers and sisters in Christ? I know that you have had times of trouble, but has not God been your strength in a very peculiar way in all such times?

40. *And the LORD shall help them*—He is and He shall always be their helper. "The Lord shall help them."

40. *And deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.* That is the point—not because of any merit of theirs, nor because of any skill of theirs— but, "He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him." So, Lord, help us to trust in You! Amen.

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GOD'S FIREBRANDS
NO. 3233

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"
Zechariah 3:2.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 1 to 5 is Sermon #611, Volume 11—
ZECHARIAH'S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST—
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IT may be well to explain these words, for simple as they are a few words of exposition may be useful to open up the metaphor and enforce the thrilling truth of God that underlies it.

There is mention of *a fire*. A cry of "FIRE!" has something fearful in it. When a fire begins to get the upper hand with us, it is terrible in its destructiveness. The fire here meant is more awful than any flame that makes havoc of matter, and its devastations are ten thousand times more appalling! It is the *fire of sin*. It blazed in the heart of an angel and he became a devil. Its sparks fell into the bosom of mother Eve and into the heart father Adam—and Paradise was burned up and the world became a wilderness. Sin is a fire which destroys the comfort of mankind, here and all the joy of mankind hereafter. It is a flame which yields no comfortable warmth. The sinner may dance in the light of it for a moment, but in sorrow will he have to lie down in it forever! Woe unto those who have to make their bed in this fire—to dwell with these consuming flames for a term that knows no ending!

There is further, mention of *a brand*. Nothing can be more suitable to burn in the fire than a brand. It is not a branch just taken from the tree, fresh and full of sap—it is a brand—dry, withered timber, fit for the burning. It is not a mass of stone or iron, but a combustible brand. And what does this indicate but man's natural heart which is so congenial to the fire of sin? Our heart is like the tinder—Satan has but to strike the spark and how readily does the spark find a nest within our bosom! As the firebrand fits the fire, so does the sinner fit in with sin. When sin and the sinner come in contact, it is, "Hail fellow, well met!" They are bosom companions. The sinner's heart is the nest well prepared—and sins are the foul birds which come to nestle there! Not to go a step without a particular application, it will be well for us all to understand that *we* are, ourselves, like the brands—there is a fitness between us and sin. If we burn in the fire of sin, it is no wonder! With our fallen nature, it is no greater marvel that we should be incited by sin than that the firebrand should kindle in the flame!

Beyond the distinct allusion to a fire and a brand, we read of *a brand in the fire*. Nor is it merely a brand lying upon the heap, to be, by-and-by, put upon the flames—it is "a brand plucked out of the fire." It has been in the fire! Does not this portray our condition—not only congenial for the fire of sin, but actually burning and blazing in it? We began very early. Disobedience to parents, angry tempers, petty lies, many sorts of childish obstinacies and wrongdoings—all these were like the first catching on fire of the brand. We have blazed away the reverse of merrily since then—some have become charred with sin till their very bodies contain the marks of that tremendous fire, while in every case the *soul* receives a charring and blackening from the flame. Not one of us has been able, even with godly training and Christian parentage, to escape from burning to some extent in this fire. Alas! Alas, for those who are even now in it!

There is a fair side to the picture—it is not altogether gloomy. While we have a fire, a brand and a brand in the fire, we also have, blessed be God, *a brand plucked out of the fire*. Sinners these, who though they have still within them the propensity to sin, are no longer in the fire of sin! They have been taken away from it. They sin through infirmity, but willful sin they do not commit. Their nature has been changed. They have received the renewing grace of God. The fire that once burned within them has been quenched. They recollect, to their grief and sorrow, the mischief that sin did to them, but it is not doing them the same mischief now. They are delivered from the body of sin and death!

Still, the force of the passage seems to lie in the words "*plucked out of*." You may sit down on the bench by the hearth in one of those good old country fireplaces where they still burn the logs and, perhaps, a brand drops out upon the hearth where it flames a little while and then goes out. This is not a picture that we can appropriate, for there never was an instance known of a man, by himself, dropping out of the fire of sin! Alas, we love it too well! "The burnt child dreads the fire," says the proverb, but we are like the silly moth that flies at the candle and singes its wings, yet still uses those wings to mount up again into the flame! And if it falls— all full of pain and torment, with burnt legs and with almost all its wing gone—it struggles, it pants, it labors to get into the fire again! Such is man. He loves this fire which is his destruction! In youth, we put our finger into the flame. We feel that it is burnt, yet again we put our hand into it. Then, in later years, we persist deliberately till that sin has consumed us from head to foot! And we lie down in our grave with our bones filled with disease—foul fruit of the sins of our youth—our very corpses in their mortality bearing witness to the corruption of our morals!

Albeit the Christian is relieved of that peril, he does not escape by his own free will. He is *plucked out of it*. To be plucked out, there needs a hand quick to rescue. You know that pierced hand and how it burnt itself when it was thrust into the hot coals to pluck us out like brands from the burning! It was no use waiting till we dropped out, for we would

never have done so—there was no hope of that. With all the appliances of grace and of judgment, the two together could not bring us out! But effectual vocation did it, when the Spirit of the living God took the firebrand in His hand and without asking it whether it would or not, by the sweet and irresistible compulsions of divine grace plucked the brand out of the fire! Every believer in the Lord Jesus is a trophy of the strength as well as of the mercy of God. It took as much omnipotence to snatch him from the fire as it needs to make a world—and every believer may feel that he is a brand plucked from the fire.

This question, as it appears to me, will bear three renderings. First, it may be looked upon as *an exclamation of wonder*—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!" Secondly, *as an inquiry or hope:* "Is not *this* a brand, particularly this one, "plucked out of the fire?"And, in the third place, it is certainly *a defiance for us, assured of our safety, to throw into the face of Satan, the accuser*—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

I. THE TEXT BEARS THE SENSE OF WONDERMENT—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

It was said of Joshua, the high priest. There was such astonishment at his preservation that with hands uplifted, the question was asked, "Is not this man just like a firebrand snatched from among the glowing coals?" Nor is this marvel confined to Joshua. I believe this is *a matter of wonder in the case of every saved sinner*. Was there ever a man saved by grace who was not a wonder? Is not every Christian conscious that there is some peculiarity about his own salvation which makes it marvelous? If you cannot all chime in with, "Yes," I must at least lead the chorus in which an overwhelming multitude will join—confessing that it was so with myself! For a long while, I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalog was made out, it seemed to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved *me* and *not* the rest of the world, I would have wondered, indeed! But if He had saved the entire world except me, that would have seemed to be according to the common course—and a right course, too. And now, being saved by grace, I cannot help saying, "Yes, I am a brand plucked out of the fire!"And does not each believer say the same? Why, look at the Believer! He is fallen, lost, and yet, though lost in his first parent, he is saved in Christ! The believer's own nature is depraved like that of other men and yet, contrary to nature, his is made a new creature! As though Niagara were suddenly made to leap upwards instead of falling downwards, our nature, so mighty for sin, has been suddenly turned into the opposite direction and we have been compelled to seek after grace and holiness!

Out of the state of our natural depravity we have been plucked so that every man who is delivered from its sway may well say, "Am not I a brand plucked out of the fire?" Each Christian, knowing his own heart and

having a special acquaintance with his own peculiar besetting sin, feels as if the conquest of his own will by the grace of God were a more illustrious trophy of that grace than the conquest of a thousand others! I can well understand that none of us will yield the palm in heaven to any other as to our indebtedness to the mercy of God. You may sing, and sing loudly, each one of you, and each one say, "I owe more to God's grace than any other"—but there is not one of us who will concede the point! We shall each strike up our own peculiar note and louder yet and louder yet, and louder until our notes of gratitude will rise to the seventh heaven—"unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood: to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever!" Each Christian, then, for some reason, will feel that he is peculiarly "a brand plucked out of the fire." I envy not the feeling of any believer who should dispute this. May you and I be more thoroughly baptized into the spirit of humility—that with deeper gratitude we may feel how peculiarly we are indebted to the grace of God!

Though this is the case universally, there are instances so uncommon that they excite surprise in the minds of all who hear of them. In the cases of extraordinary conversion, one of the first is *the salvation of the extremely aged*. Imagine a person, here, who has lived to be 70 or 80 years old and all this time his heart has never heard the sigh of repentance and never felt the joy of pardon! You have lived only to cumber the ground all these years and you are still an enemy to God! While on the borders of the grave you have no hope of heaven. O soul, your case is very sad! It were enough to make angels weep, if weep they could, to think that such an one as you, after so many years of long-suffering, should not be melted thereby! Now, suppose the Lord should appear to you tonight and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." I took you into the house of prayer tonight on purpose that My word might come with power to your soul, and I have this to say to you—"Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What do you say, you hoary Jacob, but without Jacob's faith, leaning upon your staff—would it not be a wonder if now you should begin to love the Lord and begin to believe in Jesus? Oh, may God give you grace to do so! And then I am sure you will say to your kinsfolk and acquaintance, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

There have been instance of persons converted at the most advanced age. There was one who went, I believe, to hear Mr. Toplady preach the very day when he turned a hundred! He had been a constant neglecter of the house of God, but when he arrived at the age of a hundred, attracted by the fame of Mr. Toplady, who was an exceedingly popular, and he certainly was a highly evangelical preacher, and happened to be preaching in the town where the man lived, he said he would go on that day to hear him, that he might remember his birthday. He went—and that day God, in His grace, met with him! I remember, too, the instance

of a man who was converted by a sermon which he heard Mr. Flavel preach, and which was blessed to him 83 years *after he had heard it*, when he was at the age of ninety-eight. The word came with power to his soul after all that interval of time! Just as he was on the borders of the tomb, he was made to enter into eternal life! If the God of infinite mercy gives such a blessing to aged ones here—then they will be brands plucked out of the fire!

Remarkable, too—I might almost say *exceptional*—is *the conversion of people who have been accustomed to hear the gospel from their youth up, who, though not, perhaps, absolutely aged, have nevertheless been for years receiving gospel privileges without any result*. They have been lying at Bethesda's pool with its many porches, for 40 or 50 years! Oh, there are some such here. You have not heard *me* all that time. Some other ministry has, in times past, fallen upon your ears and, perhaps, our own voice is now familiar to you through your having heard it these 10 or 12 years. You listened to it at first with attention. You were riveted for a little while. Then it grew to be an ordinary thing and though you still give the preacher a fair hearing, there is very little of that drinking in of the Word of God which there once seemed to be. Some of you, perhaps, will almost go to sleep here now. I sometimes wish that you were elsewhere—perhaps another voice would make your ears tingle—you know my voice full well. It is quite possible for a minister to preach too long to any one set of people—they can get so accustomed to the tones of his voice that they are never awakened. The "click, click" of the mill gets to be so to the miller that he goes to sleep. Over in Bankside, I am told, when a man is first put inside a boiler while the rivets are being fastened, he cannot stay long—the noise is so dreadful. But after a time, the boilermaker gets so used to the horrible din that he can almost go to sleep inside! Well, now, so it is, too, under any ministry when the people get gospel hardened. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. The influences which tend to make some people better make other people a great deal worse. Some of you have thus trifled with your own conscience! Should you be saved tonight, you would be brands plucked out of the fire, and may we not hope that you shall be? Will not some of us pray for it?

Further still, and apparently the wonder increases, *there have been cases of gross sinners in which this marvel has been still more exciting!* It is a merciful thing that God forgives drunkenness. Some of those who have wallowed in it have been saved. We sometimes talk of a man being "as drunk as a beast," but who ever heard of a beast being drunk? Why, it is more beastly than anything a beast ever does! I do not believe that the devil himself is ever guilty of anything like that. I never heard even him charged with being a drunk. It is a sin which has no sort of excuse—those who fall into it generally fall into other deadly vices. It is the devil's backdoor to hell and everything that is hellish, for he that once gives away his brains to drink is ready to be caught by Satan for anything! Oh, but while the drunk cannot have eternal life abiding in him while he is

such, is it not a joy to think of the many drunks who have been washed and saved? This night, there are sitting here those who have done with their cups, who have left behind them their strong drink and who have renounced the haunts of their debauchery! They are washed and cleansed—and when they think of the contrast between where they used to be on Sunday night and where they are now, they give an echo to the question—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Very frequently where this sin comes, blasphemy is added to it! And how many we have who, though now saved by grace, were once fearful swearers and could dare the God who made them to destroy them! Or to inflict the most horrible judgments which it would be a shame even to mention, upon them! But almighty grace takes the swearer and says to him, "You shall curse no longer, for I have blessed you; I do not intend that you should imprecate curses on yourself; you shall now begin to plead with Me for saving mercy!" Many, many, many such, whose tongues might well have rotted in their mouths through blasphemy, have been cleansed by Jesus' blood! And the tongue can now sing that once could curse, and the lips can now pray, that once could utter oaths! "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Oh, you are here, Jack, are you? You can swear! Sometimes, when you are at sea, you roll out an oath or two. And when you are on shore, you know what you are—but may my Master meet you and may He once and for all transform you and put His Holy Spirit to dwell in you, instead of the seven devils that are now there! And then you will say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Can we pass over *the cases of some who have given themselves up to sin, to work it with greediness?* Alas, how men turn aside with scorn from the harlot in the street, and they think of her as though she must be consigned to the seventh hell, albeit that they, themselves, perhaps, are viler still! But how shall we give a preference to one sinner rather than to another when it must take *two to commit this iniquity*? But, alas, we know that in London, our streets abound with those whose very names seem to make the cheek of modesty to mantle with a blush. Well, should there be such an one strayed in here—sister—for you are a sister, still—the Lord Jesus receives sinners, and though you have sinned very foully, "there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared." And His voice still says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whoever you may be that has fallen into these polluting sins which do such terrible mischief and which bring down God's anger upon men—still the heart of God melts with pity to the chief of sinners and He cries, "How can I give you up?" and lets the lifted thunder drop! Oh, when such are saved—and there are scores, and scores, and scores, to our knowledge, now rejoicing in Christ who have found peace in this house, though once the chief of sinners—when such are saved, we say of each one of them, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Or, what if you have even worn the felon's dress? What if you have even plunged into such sin that the very thought of it makes your ears

tingle? What if the darkness of the night could tell of such hideous crimes that the brightness of day seems all too good for such an offender as you have been? Still the rivers and floods of divine mercy can break forth and rise above the loftiest Alps and Andes of iniquity! The deluge of the Savior 's pardoning grace shall mount to 20 cubits upwards, until the tops of the mountains of sin are covered and you, the chief of sinners, shall have it said of you, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

We have gone a good length in the way of wonderment, yet one wonder, I think, is greater than all. I have almost ceased to wonder when the swearer is converted, or when the harlot is saved—not because it is not a mighty act of grace, but because it is common enough to be often repeated! God's mercy is extended very freely to such sinners as these, but there is a wonder which I do not often see. I do see it, though not often—I wish I could. It is *when a self-righteous religious man gets saved.*

"What," you say, "do you mean by that?" Why, I mean those good people who go to church and chapel regularly, have family prayers, say their own prayers and think themselves upright! They will not confess that they have sinned, except in the mere complimentary way in which they are accustomed to say that they are "miserable sinners," though they do not look very miserable! Perhaps I address some such, now, who felt, while I was preaching to the sinner, as if their dainty holiness was quite shocked. They are double distilled in their refinement. They are unutterably holy and free from hypocrisy—their heart all the while loathing the plan of salvation and rejecting the grace of God—because they believe that they are as good as they need be! To talk to them of crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is to insult them! Have they not been baptized? Have they not been confirmed? Have they not gone through all the means? All must be right with them—they are so good—who could think of finding fault with *them*?

Now, if ever such people as these are saved from this terrible disease of self-righteousness, we would have to say, indeed, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And nowadays it is getting so common that it ought to be a subject of prayer with God's people that God would deliver this land from the spreading poison—the Romanism, *alias* Puseyism—which has covered it almost everywhere! If a man wants to make sure of everlasting wrath, let him fall into the deep ditch of Puseyism, for the abhorred of the Lord fall therein! You may get out the common sinner, but those who wrap themselves about with vestments and fine garments of ceremony—who shall reach these? The hocus-pocus of the priesthood, the gewgaws, the ceremonies, and the mummery which they designate worship—these things form the refuge of lies behind which they hide themselves—and the true gospel of the blessed God is scarcely heard! What with their chants and intoning, how can the still small voice of the gospel be heard? Through the dim smoke of incense and the glare of gorgeous vestments, how shall Christ have a hearing? The man of Nazareth, alone, is He who can save sinners! May He, in His mighty

power to save, rend away these rags of Rome from before His cross and let the naked beauty and simplicity of the gospel shine out again! Once more may we have to say, in the words of Cowper—

"Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul quickening words—
BELIEVE AND LIVE."

II. With more brevity than the preacher likes, though with perhaps as much amplitude as will be pleasant to yourselves, we shall now take the text BY WAY OF ENQUIRY OR HOPE. Our time has so far gone that I can only hint at what I meant to say.

When a sinner's eyes are suffused with tears and the sorrowful cry breaks forth, "Alas! Woe is me!" you may then say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" for the tear of sorrow for sin is a blessed omen of mercy's dawning! May mercy reach her noontide soon! And when you are alone, the knee is bent, and the whispered prayer goes up, "Jesus, Master, pity me! Save me or I die," the angels recognize the penitent's prayer. They say, "Behold, he prays!" And then they feel that this is "a brand plucked out of the fire." The tear of penitence and the prayer of the seeking soul are evidences of the working of almighty grace!

And when the poor soul at last, driven by necessity, throws itself flat at the foot of the cross and rests its hope wholly and alone on Jesus, then we my say of it, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

And when, in the midst of many a conflict and soul struggle, the heart flings away its idols and resolves to love Christ, and vows in His strength to be devoted to His service, we may say again with pleasure, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

I would invite you to think over these signs of grace and if you see them in yourselves, may you ask the question, and be able to answer it with joy, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

III. And lastly, WHAT A QUESTION OF DEFIANCE THIS IS!

Do you not catch the idea of the text? There stood Joshua, the high priest. There stood the angel of the Lord and there stood Satan. The adversary began to attack Joshua, but the angel of the Lord said to him, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? What have you to do with him? If God has plucked him out of the fire, you can never put him in again. Seeing God has plucked him out of the fire, go your way and mind your own business! You have nothing to do with this saved soul, this elect vessel, this one whom God has chosen, in whom the Spirit's power has shown itself! He has plucked him out of the fire! Go your way, Satan, and leave this soul alone!"

It is a defiance full of majesty and grandeur! *It reflects a gorgeous luster on the past.* "God saved that soul," says the angel to Satan. "Why did He do it? Why, because He chose him, because He ordained him unto eternal life, because everlasting love had set itself upon him! What have you to do with him? If God has chosen him, do you think that you can undo the divine decree? Can you reverse the counsels of the Most High,

or dash in pieces the settled purposes of the infinite mind? Go your way! God has snatched him from the fire, determined to save him. Go and think not to frustrate that divine design!"

Nor less did the angel seem *to dart a look forward*. If God had plucked him from the fire why did He do it? To let him go back again? Will God play fast and loose with men? Does He pluck brands out of the fire to thrust them into the flame again? Absurd! Preposterous! Why has He plucked this brand out of the fire? Why, to keep it from ever being burned! That brand, taken out of the fire, shall be exhibited in heaven as a proof of what God's almighty grace can do! And therefore the angel says to the devil, "Get out of here! What have you to do with this man? God means to save him, so can you destroy him? God has done that which is the earnest and pledge of his perfect eternal safety—do you think that you can thwart God's resolution and intention?"

Now, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, realize in yourselves this precious thought, each one of you. If the Lord has changed you, if, indeed, you are a brand plucked out of the fire, why should you fear the temptation which now assails you? Dread not all the temptations that may attack you! Weak as you are, the God who has done so much for you cannot leave you! He will not leave His purpose half accomplished! He will not be disappointed. He will to the end carry on His work till He brings you up to heaven. Why, I think some of you who were very great offenders ought to often take comfort from your conversion—you can say, "What a change there is in me! How far beyond anything I could ever have worked in myself. It must have been God's work—

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

The whole end to which we drive is this—May God enable us all to see that our salvation is in Him! Jonah had to go into the whale's belly to learn that grand axiom of theology—and the most of us had to be sorely beaten before we found out that "salvation is of the Lord." If you know this, look to the Lord for it! Repose yourself on Him right now and you shall be His forever—you shall dwell on high, your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks—and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold the land that is very far off!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOB 1.

Verse 1. *There was a man in the land of Uz.* Job was a man, indeed—a true man—a man of the highest type, for he was a man of God.

1. *Whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright.* Job was thoroughly true and sincere. And in this sense he "was perfect and upright."

1. *And one that feared God, and eschewed evil.* He had both sides of a godly character—a love of God and a hatred of sin.

2. *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.* Job was highly favored in having such a family of sons and daughters.

3. *His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East.* Job was not a poor man, yet he was a man of God—one of those "camels" that manage to go through "the eye of a needle."

4. *And his sons went and feasted in their houses, each on his appointed day; and sent and called for their three sisters*—Who were very modest and retiring, and would not have gone to the feast if they had not been sent for, but their brothers were kind and thoughtful, as all good brothers will be.

4, 5. *To eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them.* Job did not go to the feast. Perhaps he felt too old—his character was too staid for such a gathering. He had higher joys that were nearer his heart than any earthly feast could be.

5. *And rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. Thus did Job continually.* He thought, "Perhaps, in their rejoicing, unholy thoughts may have intruded. They may have been unguarded and lax in their conduct. They may not have fallen into any gross sin, but in their feasting they may have sinned against God. Therefore I will offer sacrifices for them." "Thus did Job continually." Not only occasionally, but every day he sacrificed upon his altar unto God, and so sought to keep his household right before Jehovah.

6. *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.* Into heaven? Oh, no! The presence of God is very widespread and there was no need to admit the evil spirit into heaven in order that he might be present before God!

7. *And the LORD said unto Satan, From where do you come?* God is Satan's Master, so He asks him where he has been. I wonder whether if the Lord were to put that question to everybody here, "From where do you come?" if each of us could give a satisfactory answer to it.

7. *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.* Uneasy, restless, ever active, like a roaring lion "seeking whom he may devour." Ah, we little know how near Satan is to us now! And even in our hours of prayer, when we are nearest to God, he may come and assail us.

8. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job*—[See Sermon #623, Volume 116—SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "He is an example to you. He may well chide you, he is so obedient, and you are so rebellious: "Have you considered My servant Job?"

8, 9. *That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said*—We may be certain that if there had been anything bad in Job, Satan would have found it out and brought it against him. However excellent a man is, though there are none like him on earth, you can find fault with him if you want to do so. Satan found fault with Job because he had prospered. And his friends afterwards found fault with him because he did not prosper! So you can make anything into a blot on the character of men if you have a mind to do so. "Satan answered the Lord, and said"—

9, 10. *Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?* The black dog of hell had been prowling around to see where he could get in, so he knew that there was a hedge around Job and round his house and all that he had. Notice how the devil insinuates that Job feared God for what he could get out of Him. "His love is cupboard love," says Satan, "he is well paid by providence for his reverence to God."

10. *You have blessed the work of his hands*—Even the devil dared not deny that Job was a working man, or say that he had come by his estate by oppression or plunder. No. He said to God, "You have blessed the work of his hands"—

10, 11. *And his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.* Oh, what mischief Satan can imagine against the righteous! The mercy is that although he is mighty, he is not *almighty*—he is very malicious, but there is one who is far wiser and stronger than he is who can always circumvent and overpower him!

12-15. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when Job's sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away; yes, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you.* Job had not wronged these Sabeans—they were plunderers on the lookout for spoil. And when Satan moved them, they came and stole the patriarch's oxen and asses—and slew his servants.

16. *While he was yet speaking*—As if to give Job no time to rally his faith and encourage his heart—

16. *There came, also, another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and has burned up the sheep, and the servants and consumed them; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you.* This calamity must have distressed Job all the more because "the fire of God" had burnt up the sheep that he was accustomed to offer in sacrifice to Jehovah—and the blow had seemed to come directly from God, Himself—as if it was

lightning that had destroyed both sheep and shepherds, too. Poor Job had not time to recover from that shock before the next blow fell upon him—

17. *While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels and have carried them away, yes, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell you.* He had not time to think before the heaviest stroke of all came—

18, 19. *While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and, they are dead; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you.* Satan had arranged to bring on the patriarch's troubles so quickly, one after another, as to utterly overwhelm the good man—at least, so the devil hoped it would prove—yet it did not.

20. *Then Job arose*—With all his burden on him, he arose—

20. *And tore his mantle, and shaved his head*—He did not pull his hair out as a Pagan, or a maniac, or a person delirious through trouble might have done. But he deliberately "tore his mantle, and shaved his head"—

20. *And fell down upon the ground and worshiped*—Grand old man! How bravely does he play the man here! He "fell down upon the ground and worshiped"—

21. *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there.* That is, to the womb of Mother Earth.

21. *The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.* [See Sermons #2457, Volume 42—JOB'S RESIGNATION and #3025, Volume 53—FIFTEEN YEARS LATER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I think these are the grandest words in the whole record of human speech! Considering the circumstances of the man at the time, that he should thus speak was, I think, a miracle of grace!

22. *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

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STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS
NO. 3234

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 5, 1863.

"For I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."
Psalm 39:12.

IF you read the whole verse, you will see that David used these words as an argument in prayer—"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." It is a grand thing to be able to argue with God in prayer! Faith grips the angel of the covenant, but it is by well-grounded arguments that we will wrestle with Him until we prevail. Expectancy puts in the wedge, but it is solid argument that drives it home. When we want to obtain any mercy from the Lord, we must support our plea by reasons drawn from His nature, His promises and the experiences of His children as recorded in His word. Martin Luther was a great master of this holy art of arguing with God in prayer, as was the apostle Paul and, therefore, their supplications were not presented in vain. Let it be so with you, also, beloved—besiege the throne of grace with the most powerful arguments you can find in the heavenly armory! Lay hold upon the arm of omnipotence and say to the Lord, as wrestling Jacob did, "I will not let You go, unless You bless me."

I. It is, however, the argument that David used, rather than the prayer that he presented, upon which I want to talk to you at this time. So first, I ask you to notice that DAVID WAS A STRANGER AND A SOJOURNER, AS ALL HIS FATHERS HAD BEEN BEFORE HIM. A stranger is a person who is away from his home. And a sojourner is one who only stays in a certain place for a short time and then must be up and away. Such is a true Christian. In what respects is he a stranger?

First, he is a stranger *in his position*. He is not in his native land—he is a freeman of the New Jerusalem. He sings—

I'm but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home!
Earth is a desert dreary,
Heaven is my home!
Dangers and sorrows stand
Round me on every hand—
Heaven is my fatherland,

Heaven is my home!

While we are here in the body, we are absent from our nearest and dearest relatives. You know how Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, who are in heaven." Our Elder Brother has gone home before us to prepare the many mansions in His Father's house for our eternal abiding place. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have already joined the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in Heaven. 'Tis true that we have many very dear relatives *here*, but they, also, are strangers here even as we are—pilgrims to the Celestial City that lies beyond the river! Our true possessions are not here. We own no property in this world. We have had certain things lent to us for use while we are here, and we have to give an account of how we use them, but we must leave them all behind us when we go home. We brought nothing into this world and we can carry nothing out of it. Our inheritance is above—an inheritance which is undefiled, and that fades not away—which we are to share with Christ, for we are joint heirs of it with Him! Our treasure is where our heart is and both are now before the throne of God on high in the keeping of Christ—unto whom we have committed them until that day when we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His glory! "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. "I know that there are tender associations connected with our earthly homes and loved ones, yet how often are the ashes of our family hearth quenched by the tears of grief while the black pall of mourning hangs over those who have been taken from us? Ah, no, this is not our home! Our native land, our true country is in the heavenly highlands where Jesus dwells! And we long for the time when He shall say to us, "Come up here." Then, but not till then, shall we be at home with the Lord!

Next, we are strangers, not only in position, but in character. When an Englishman crosses over to France, he is quickly recognized as a stranger and a foreigner. And a true Christian is not in any place long before it is discovered that he is of a different nationality from them by whom he is surrounded! His pedigree is not the same as that of worldlings—they are of their father, the devil, and they do his works—but he has been "born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." God is now his Father, for He has "begotten him again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." His manners, too, as well as his pedigree, are not like those of worldlings. If an Englishman goes to the continent and tries to pass himself off as a German or a Frenchman, he is soon detected. And, in a similar fashion, a true Christian reveals the fact that he is an alien in this world—his ways and manners and customs are not those of the men of the world who have their portion in this life. He has

obeyed that great apostolic command, "Be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind." There is also something in a Christian's speech which shows that he is a stranger in this world. He has a peculiar accent which the worldling cannot imitate. Even when a Christian speaks wrongly, he is speedily detected. Peter denied with an oath that he even *knew* Jesus of Nazareth, but those that stood by were not deceived by his swearing, for they said to him, "Surely you, also, are one of them, for your speech betrays you."

The reason of all this is because there is an essential difference between the *nature* of a Christian and the *nature* of a worldling—the worldling is of the earth, earthy. But the Christian is no longer a mere natural man, for he has had a higher and spiritual nature imparted to him! Indeed, he has been made a partaker of the divine nature! The worldling seeks the things of the world, but the spiritual man seeks the things of the Spirit. That which came down from heaven returns back to heaven and, just as fire seeks the sun, the great central source of light and heat, so the new spirit within the Christian seeks God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and things eternal, heavenly, and divine! I say again that there is an essential difference between the nature of a Christian and the nature of a worldling—you cannot make a true Christian into a worldling and you cannot make a worldling into a Christian! A natural man must be born-again before he can become a Christian—and then he will not be the same man that he was before, but a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Further, being strangers in this world, *we must expect to be treated as strangers by the world.* Worldlings cannot understand us, just as the people in a foreign country cannot understand an Englishman who can only speak his native language. He is a stranger in a strange land and so is a Christian in this world. When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon this earth, the great mass of the people could not comprehend Him—He was a stranger in the very world which He had made! And the world knows us not because it knew Him not—and the more we are like He, the less will the world to able to comprehend us. The carnal mind knows not the things of the Spirit "because they are spiritually discerned." We must not marvel, therefore, beloved, if our motives are misconstrued and our words wrested and twisted—and we are slandered and abused. We are like the pilgrims passing through Vanity Fair—and if we did not receive such treatment as they received, we might begin to suspect that we had become like the citizens of that country and were no longer pilgrims bound to Zion!

Further, *we are in our hearts, strangers to the world.* Wherever a true Englishman wanders, his heart always turns towards his native land and he says—

England, with all your faults, I love you still—

and when once again he sees the hoary cliffs of old Albion, his heart leaps within him, for he is glad to be back in the dear homeland! I have traveled through many lands and I can appreciate their beauties, but, after all, "there's no place like home!" So is it with the Christian. He has various interests and occupations here and he seeks to be a blessing in the land where he is for a while, a sojourner, but his heart is with Christ in heaven—and he can never be fully satisfied until he is there, too! An Englishman abroad is often hard to please. He thinks sometimes very foolishly, that there is nothing as good as what he has in his fair island home! But a Christian *knows* that heavenly things are infinitely preferable to the things of earth! He has long since learned that there is nothing here to satisfy his immortal spirit and his heart is always anticipating the time when he shall be at home with his Lord and find in Him all that his capacious soul can wish.

Certainly, brothers and sisters in Christ, *we ought to be strangers to the world in our conversation.* When we are in a foreign country, we are very cautious where we go, for we do not feel as safe as when we are in our own land where we can ask our way and easily understand the directions given to us. When we try to bargain with the foreigners, we are not certain whether they are cheating us and, certainly, the Christian in this world has many who are attempting to cheat him—not merely for time, but for eternity, too! That arch-rogue, Satan, is plotting against him every day and all Satan's legions are constantly seeking to rob him of his holiness or of his peace of mind—or in some way or other to lead him astray. So be on your guard, Christian, as you journey through this foreign land! You are in an enemy's country, a foe may be lurking behind every hedge, a fiery dart may be shot at you from every bush! Keep your sword unsheathed, ever have ready for use that two-edged "sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," and hold as with a death-grip the great "shield of faith wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The great adversary of your soul will attack you just at the moment when you think yourself most secure, so "be sober, be vigilant"—always obey your Master's command—"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Strangers in a foreign land should have their wits on the alert and Christians in this world should have their graces in active exercise! If they do not, they will bitterly regret their folly and sin.

Yet further, *we are strangers as to our supplies.* When we go on the continent, we do not expect the people living there—the hotel keepers, shop keepers, and so on, to pay the cost of our travels, board and lodging, and to buy for us anything that takes our fancy! No, we take with us as much money as we think we shall need, or drafts that we can cash at a foreign bank. And if we find that we have not sufficient funds, we send to England for more, for we are absolutely dependent upon our

home supplies. Just so is it in spiritual matters with the Christian—he knows that he must not look for a single lump of coal from earth's mines to keep alight the fire of his piety—he must depend upon God for everything. Like the Israelites, he is in a howling wilderness that can yield him no supplies of corn—and his bread must drop from heaven day by day, or he will starve. He is in a desert not watered by any river where he can quench his thirst—all he has to drink must flow from the struck rock, Christ Jesus. Everything he has must come directly from his God! His eyes must always be lifted up to the hills, from where comes his help—his help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth!

And, to close this part of the subject, *the Christian is a stranger as to the short duration of his sojourn in this world.* Thank God we are not to be here long. Though the days of our pilgrimage should be seventy, or eighty, or even 90 years, how swiftly they come to an end! No weaver's shuttle flies so fast as does the life of man—and the Christian who dies the soonest is all the earlier in heaven! The worker for Christ, who gets his service finished first, receives his reward the sooner. [It is remarkable that this Sermon, taken in the regular order of the unpublished manuscripts, should be first available for reading on the last Sabbath in January, just 19 years after Mr. Spurgeon's home going at Mentone, a little before midnight on January 31st, 1892, at the age of fifty-seven! The Sermon intended for reading that day, #2241, Volume 38—A STANZA OF DELIVERANCE, was the second of only two which the beloved preacher had been able to revise during his last long illness. The other one was #2237, Volume 38—GRATITUDE FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE GRAVE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Instead of dreading death, and bidding him depart from us, we might rather beckon him to come for us! Come quickly, blessed messenger, to summon us to the presence of the King! Come, chariot of fire and horses of fire, and take the servant of the Lord to be forever with his gracious Master and Savior! Of course, I am saying all this in complete subservience to the will of God. He knows the best time and way to end our earthly service and, after all, it matters not when and how we go home to heaven! And if we "are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," we "shall not prevent (or have any preference over) them which are asleep. For the Lord, Himself, shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

II. Now, secondly, notice that DAVID WAS A STRANGER WITH GOD—and so is the true Christian. The worldling is a stranger *to* God, but the true believer in Jesus is a stranger *with* God—and there is an eternal difference between the two!

What is the meaning of the sentence, "I am a stranger with You"? I think it means, first, that *although we are strangers in the world, we are*

constantly under God's eyes and care. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their cry." Beloved, you are always under *God's discerning eyes.* He searches you, tries you and sees if there is any wicked way in you—and leads you in the way everlasting. You are all constantly under *God's protecting eyes*. You know what He said of old concerning His vineyard—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Further, you are continually under *God's directing eyes*—"I will guide you with My eyes." You are also always under *God's pitying eyes*. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." You, too, are never absent from *God's providing eyes*. One of the Lord's most precious names is Jehovah Jireh, which means, "The Lord will see, or provide." And you are perpetually under God's *delighting eyes*. He says to you, "You shall no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall your land any more be termed Desolate: but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land, Beulah, for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married."

Further, that sentence means that *although we are strangers in the world, we enjoy peculiar fellowship with God.* The apostle John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." We are not strangers *to* God, for, like Enoch, we walk with God in hallowed and intimate union and communion. He has told us some of His greatest secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." He has given us the high privilege of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty! He has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love. And we have had such rapturous fellowship with Him that we understand what Paul meant when he said that he was "caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

The sentence "I am a stranger with You," also means that, *although we are strangers in the world, God, too, is a stranger*. It is passing strange, yet is it strangely true that God is a stranger in His own world! Here is His handiwork all around us, most fair and beautiful, yet the fool says in his heart, "There is no God," and proves himself to be a fool by saying it! Here are signs on every hand of the working of God's gracious providence—mysterious but wondrously wise—yet worldlings cannot see any traces of the finger or mind or heart of God, for He is a stranger to them! And as God is a stranger here, we need not marvel that we, who are His children, are also strangers on the earth—

"Behold what wondrous grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!
'Tis no surprising thing

That we should be unknown—
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."

I think I see my gracious Lord and Master wandering through this world as a stranger, "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—spit upon, scourged, hounded out from among men and, at last crucified "outside the gate." Then, when we "go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach," we are strangers with Him and what higher honor than that can any of us ever desire? "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

There is another thought that I must not leave out. It is this. *Though we are strangers in the world, we are with Christ all the while.* Where is the true Christian's life? Paul answers the question in writing to the Colossians—"If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead and your life is His with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Christ is the Christian's all in all, so what can there be belonging to the Christian that is left here on earth? Why, nothing at all that need trouble us for a moment for, "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." Representatively, *we are in heaven even now*—and where our head is, there will all the members of His mystical body be gathered in due time.

III. Now, lastly, IF WE ARE STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS HERE, WHAT THEN?

First, *it is clear that we must have a home somewhere*. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests," and shall the immortal spirit of man have no home? God forbid! We could not be called strangers and sojourners unless we had a native land somewhere! A man who is an alien in one country, is a citizen of another, so we who are strangers and sojourners here, are citizens of a better country, even a heavenly!—

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away"—

which is my true home and there, in God's good time, I know that I shall be—

"No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home!"

Do you think God would make us so dissatisfied with this world if He did not mean to satisfy us with another and a better one? Surely not! The

very fact that we are strangers and sojourners upon the earth proves that we have a country of our own that is very different from this wilderness world through which we are passing!

This being the case, *it is not surprising that we sometimes long to get home*. We ought not to long for heaven from any lazy motives. A good workman may be so tired with heavy toil that he eagerly looks forward to Saturday night so that he may enjoy his Sabbath rest and renew his strength for fresh service on the morrow. And you and I, beloved, though we are not tired *of* our Master's work, are often tired *in* it, and we shall be glad when our rest day comes. Thank God, it is not to be six days' work, and then one day's rest, but it is to be a rest that shall know no end—a rest in untiring service! "There remains therefore a rest (a *Sabbatismos*, an eternal keeping of Sabbath) to the people of God." I said that it is not surprising that we sometimes long to get home. You would not think that a boy loved his home if he never longed for the holidays to come. I recollect that when I was at boarding school, I made an Almanac with a square for every day and I blotted out each one as it went by—and sometimes I blotted it out the night before so that I might seem to have fewer days at school! And, Christian, you, also, may rejoice as the days of your school training here pass, for, as each one flits by, you are "a day's march nearer home."—

"Though in a foreign land,
We are not far from home.
And nearer to our home above
We every moment come."

Do you not also think, dear friends, that *the fact that we are strangers here should make us treat one another well?* And surely, if the worldling knew Christians better, he would treat them better. They are strangers to you, man, but they are God's strangers! They are royal personages *incognito*, princes of the blood imperial traveling through this world to their wondrous palaces above! But let us who are fellow pilgrims and strangers help one another all we can. If you are in Switzerland, or up the Rhine, and have got into some difficulty or trouble, if you see an Englishman coming, you feel pretty sure that your fellow countryman will do what he can to help you. It should be so with Christians! We are strangers in this world, so let us aid one another all we can. We are soldiers in an enemy's country, so back to back and shoulder to shoulder let us face the foes that are all around us! Though we are strangers to the world, we are not strangers to God, so let us not be strangers to one another, but let us be of one heart and mind, walking in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

Then, next, *surely we ought never to envy the lot of sinners*. I never grudge horses their corn or the swine their husks and hogwash. Then why should I envy sinners? I remember David's words, "Fret not yourself

because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." When a friend once gave Martin Luther a large sum of money, he stood at the church door and gave it all away to the poor because, he said, he had made up his mind to have his portion in the next world—and not in this. There is nothing in the sinner's lot, either here or hereafter, that you and I have any cause to envy!

And *let us never murmur at our own lot—*

"The road may be rough, but it cannot be long!
So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

There are you, my poor brother or sister, fretting about what you will do in six months' time, worrying about the rent, the fire, food, the clothing and I know not what! Yet it may be that before even this year ends, your head may be wearing the crown and your fingers sweeping the golden harp strings, and you yourself—

"Far from this world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in!"

And if you are still here for a while, the Lord will provide for you—so cast all your care upon Him who cares for you!

So, lastly, *what an easy thing it should be for a Christian to die!* He is a stranger with God even here, but he will be with God, and not as a stranger up there! He has been with God in life, and God will be with him in death—

"Strangers into life we come,
And dying is but going home."

And going home is not hard work. Going home is not a thing to be dreaded—rather should we sing in joyous anticipation of it, as so many of our dear brothers and sisters have done when they have actually reached the hour of their home going!

Yet, alas, there are some here who may well dread their home going, for they are strangers to God, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." O soul if that is your condition, do not remain a stranger to God a moment longer! Repent of your sin and trust God to forgive it for Jesus sake! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." And then, though you will be a stranger, here, you will not be stranger up there where He is! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 39.

This Psalm gives a description of David's experience and conduct when stretched upon a sickbed. He appears to have felt impatience working within him, which I am sorry to say is a very common disease

with most of us when God's hand is heavy upon us. Yet David struggled against his impatience. Though he felt it, he would not know it, lest he should thereby open the mouths of his enemies and cause them to speak evil of his God. Let us imitate his restraint if we resemble him in the temptation to impatience.

Verse 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.* This government of the tongue is a most important part of our ways. It is a very essential part of holy discipline, yet we have heard of one saint who said that he had lived for 70 years and had tried to control his tongue, but that he had only begun to understand the art when he died. David said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before me.* They have such quick ears and they are so ready to misinterpret and misrepresent our words—and if they can find one word awry, they will straightway preach a long sermon over it! So let us muzzle our mouths while they are near. The ill words of Christians often make texts for sinners, and thus God is blasphemed out of the mouths of His own beloved children! Let it not be so with any of you, beloved.

2. *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.* We all know that unless our grief can find expression, it swells and grows till our heart is ready to break. We have heard of a wise physician who bade a man in great trouble weep as much as he could. "Do not restrain your grief," he said, "but let it all out." He felt that only in that way would the poor sufferer's heart be kept from breaking. David determined that before the wicked, he would have nothing at all to say, and though his griefs were surging within him, yet for a time he kept them from bursting out.

3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing, the fire burned: then spoke I with my tongue.* He could not hold his peace any longer—it would have been well if he had done so, for he uttered an unwise prayer when he spoke with his tongue—

4. *LORD, make me to know my end.* That is what you and I are apt to say when we get into a little trouble—we want to die and get away from it all! We say that we long to be with Christ, but I am afraid that it is often only a lazy wish to share the spoils of victory without fighting the battle—to receive the saints' wages without doing the saints' work and to enter into heaven without the toils and dangers of the pilgrims' way! Perhaps this has been the case with us, sometimes, when we have thought that our aspirations were of the best and holiest kind. When David prayed, "Lord, make me to know my end," This prayer was not a very wise one, but the next sentences were not quite as foolish—

4. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* Oh, that we could all know how frail we are! But we reckon upon living for years when we have scarcely any more minutes left! We think our life's hour glass is full when the sands have almost run out. And although the hand of God's great clock may be upon the striking point, we think our brief hour has but just begun!

5. *Behold, You have made my days as an handbreadth.* This is a very common measure, the breadth of the human hand—and David says that this span is the measure of his life. Some here must surely have spent a great part of that handbreadth—let them and all of us be prepared to meet our God when that short span's limit is reached!

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* It is an incalculably tiny speck when compared with the immeasurable age of the Eternal! "My age is as nothing before You." When Alcibiades boasted of his great estates, the philosopher brought him a map of the world and said to him, "Can you find your estates on this map?" Even Athens, itself, was but as a pin's point! Where, then, were the estates of Alcibiades? Nowhere to be seen! So when we see the great map of eternity spread out before us, where is the whole of this world's history? It is but a speak! And where, then, are your life and mine? They are as nothing before God!

5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.* Then what must he be at his worst state?

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain.* [See Sermon #2346, Volume 40—EARTH'S VANITIES AND HEAVEN'S VERITIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They fret, and fume, and flurry, and worry—and all about what? About nothing! We sometimes say, "It will be all the same a hundred years hence." Ah, but it will be all the same much sooner than that when the six feet of earth shall be our entire heritage!

6. *He heaps up riches, and knows not who shall gather them.* "Do you think," says an old writer, "every time you lock up your money in a box, how soon death shall lock you up in your coffin?" Some men seem to be like our children's moneyboxes into which money is put, but they must be broken before any can come out! To some men, how sad must be the thought that they have been accumulating wealth all their days, and they know not for whom they have been gathering it! A stranger may, perhaps, inherit it—or if their own kith and kin shall get it, they may squander it just as thoroughly as the misers hoarded it!

7. *And now, Lord*—If all earthly things are nothing but emptiness—

7. *What do I wait for?* "I wait for nothing here, for there is nothing here to wait for."

7. *My hope is in You.* Ah, this hope makes life worth living! Now that we hope in God; now that we know that there remains another and a

better world than this world of shadows, life is invested with true solemnity!

8, 9. *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it.* It is always a blessed reason for resignation when we can say of any bereavement or affliction, "The Lord has done it." Shall He not do as He wills with His own? Then let us say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

10-12. *Remove Your stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When you with rebukes do correct man for iniquity, you make his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears.* Tears have always had great prevalence with God. Christ used these sacred weapons when, "with strong crying and tears," He prayed to His Father in Gethsemane, "and we heard in that He feared." Sinner, there is such potency in a penitent's tears that you may prevail with God if you will come to Him weeping over your sin and pleading the precious blood of Christ! Your tears cannot merit heaven or wash away your sins, but if you do penitently grieve over them, and trust in the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, your tearful prayers shall have a gracious answer of peace! Mr. Bunyan describes the City of Mansoul as sending Mr. Wet Eyes as one of her ambassadors to the Prince Emanuel—and he is still a most acceptable ambassador to the King of kings! He who knows how to weep his heart out at the foot of the cross shall not be long without finding mercy. Tears are diamonds that God loves to behold!

12. *For I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* "I am not a stranger *to* You, O my God! Blessed be Your holy name, I know You well, but 'I am a stranger *with* You.' You are a stranger in Your own world, and so am I. The world knows You not, and the world knows me not. And when I act as You act, the world hates me even as it hates You."

13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.*

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THE HOPE THAT PURIFIES
NO. 3235

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure. 1 John 3:3.

THE Christian is a man of much present enjoyment. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and, being God's sons, we cannot be altogether unhappy." Relationship to the ever blessed God must bring with it a measure of joy. "Happy are you, O Israel," sang Moses, "who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" The men who can be truly called the sons of God are a blessed people! Still, the main portion of the believer's inheritance lies in the future. It is not so much what I have as what I *shall have* that makes me joyful. "It does not yet appear what we shall be." To the unbeliever, all that is to come is in darkness. He may expect to go from the shades of evening to the blackness of a midnight that shall never end. But for the Christian, "light is sown." He is now in darkness—the only darkness he shall ever know—and from the twilight of the morning he shall go on unto the perfect day, a day whose sun shall never set! We have the eyes of hope given to us and, looking across the narrow stream of death and beyond—that place where to carnal eyes hangs the curtain that shuts out the unseen—we, with these far-seeing eyes, behold the glory which is yet to be revealed and we are blessed with the joys of hope! Let every Christian, therefore, when at any time he is downcast about the things of the present, refresh his soul with the thoughts of the future!

We have often discoursed concerning the past and I know that some of us have frequently been cheered and comforted by seeing how kindly God has dealt with us in bringing us up out of the hole of the pit from which we have been dug. Now we shall get further consolation by seeing what is to become of us in the future yet to be revealed. But still, my objective at this time will not be to impart consolation so much as to excite to holiness! Our text is a very practical one—while it deals with hope—it has more to do with the *result* of that hope in the purity of the believer's life.

Let us go at once to our work. We shall note, first, *the believer's hope.* Secondly, *the operation of that hope* and, thirdly, *the use of the operation as a test of the hope.*

I. To begin, then, let us look at THE BELIEVER'S HOPE. The text speaks of men that have hope—"hope in Him"—which I understand to mean hope in Jesus Christ.

The Christian has a hope peculiar to himself. As for its objective, it is the hope of being like Jesus Christ. "We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Now, some would not put it in that shape—they would say that their hope, as Christians, is to pass within the pearly gates, to tread the golden streets, to listen to the harpers harping with their harps and, standing upon the sea of glass, to be forever free from sorrow, toil and pain. But those are only the lower joys of heaven, except so far as they indicate spiritual bliss. I believe that there are some professing Christians who would like Mohammad's heaven—and be perfectly satisfied if they could sit forever on a green and flowery mountain and could drink from rivers of milk and eat from hives of honey—and so on, and so on!

But, after all, the real truth of God, the truth that is contained in these metaphors and figures and underlies them all—the truth is that the heaven a true Christian seeks after is a *spiritual one*—it is the heaven of being like his Lord! I take it that while it will consist in our sharing in the Redeemer's power, the Redeemer's joy and the Redeemer's honor, yet from the connection of the text, it lies mainly in our being spiritually and morally like He—being purified, even as He is pure. I must frankly confess that of all my expectations of heaven, I will cheerfully renounce ten thousand things if I can but know that I shall have perfect holiness, for if I may become like Jesus Christ as to His character—pure and perfect—I cannot understand how any other joy can be denied me! If we shall have *that*, surely we shall have everything! This, then, is our hope—that "we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

Every man sees morally what he himself is. A man who is bad sees evil—he is blind to good. The man who is partially like Christ has only a partial view of Christ. You might almost know your own character by your view of Jesus. If your eye sees not inexpressible beauty in Him, it is your eyes that are to blame, for He is altogether lovely. And when the eyes of our inward nature shall come to see Jesus as He is, then we may depend upon it that we are like He is! It is the pure in heart that see God, because God, the inexpressibly pure One, can only be seen by those who are, themselves, pure. When we shall be perfectly pure we shall be able to understand Christ—and when we understand Christ, or see Him as He is, as we shall do at His appearing, then we shall be like He—like He, free from sin! Like He, full of consecration to God! Like He pure and perfect! Today He is conqueror over sin, death and hell. He is superlative in His virtue and His holiness, He has conquered all the powers of evil and one day we, too, shall put our foot on the old dragon's head! We, too, shall see sin bruised beneath us and shall come off "more than

conquerors through Him that loved us." This, then, is our hope—that we shall be like our head when we shall see Him as He is!

But why do we expect this? *What is the ground of our hope?* The context shows us that we do not expect to be like Christ because *of anything that is in us* by nature, or any efforts that we ourselves can make. The basis of all is divine love—for observe, the chapter begins—"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." We expect to be like Christ, the Beloved of God, because we also are beloved of God! It is according to the nature and purpose of the love of God to make its object like God. We, therefore, expect that divine love will work with divine light and divine purity and make us into light and purity, too!

The apostle goes on to say that we have been called the sons of God and that we really are God's sons. [See Sermon #1934, Volume 32—"AND WE ARE"—A JEWEL FROM THE REVISED VERSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Well, that is another ground of our hope—we hope to be like Christ because the sons of God are like each other! It is the Lord's purpose that Jesus Christ shall be the firstborn among many brethren. "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." Very well, then, since we are adopted into the divine family and are to be made like our elder brother, we, therefore, believe that we shall one day be like the Lord Jesus Christ in the perfection of His excellence!

Then we have this further buttress for our hope, if it is not a main pillar of it—that we are now one with Jesus Christ and, therefore, "when He shall appear, we shall be like He is." There is an intimate connection between our souls and Christ. He was hidden from the world and the world knew Him not and, therefore, we are hidden and the world knows us not. He is to be revealed—there is to be a day of His manifestation to angels and to men! And when He is manifested, we shall be manifested, too! Knowing that we are united to Christ by sacred, mysterious bonds, we, therefore, expect that when we shall see Him as He is, we shall be like He!

Still, for simplicity's sake, it is well to say that the basis of our hope lies altogether in Him. "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself." Beloved, all true hope is the hope in Christ. If your hope lies in yourself, it is a delusion. If your hope rests upon any earthly priest and not upon this one great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, your hope is a lie! If your hope stands with one foot upon the work of Christ and the other foot upon your own resolutions or merits, your hope will fail you! "Hope in Him" is the *only* hope which can be acceptable to God, the *only* hope which will bear the stress of your weight, the *only* hope which will stand the test of your dying hour and of the Day of Judgment!

Our hope, then, of being *like* Christ is *a hope in Christ*. We are trusting Him; we are depending upon Him. If He does not make us like Himself, our hope is gone; if ever we are to get to heaven, it will be through Him, and through Him alone! Our hope is in Him from top to bottom. He is our Alpha and our Omega, the beginning and the end. There our hope begins and there our hope ends! You, O Christ, are all our confidence! We know of none other. This, then, is the believer's hope—a hope to be made like Christ, a hope based upon Christ!

II. But, now, coming to the practical business of the sermon, our text speaks of THE OPERATION WHICH HOPE HAS UPON THE SOUL. "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself."

It does not puff him up—it purifies him. I know there are some who will say, "Well, if I had a hope, a sure hope, a full assurance and confident expectation that I would go to heaven, I think I would feel myself to be someone very great." Yes, very likely you would. But then you do not possess such a hope and God does not intend to give it to you while you are in your present condition. But when the Lord makes a man His child—then He takes away the evil heart out of his flesh. When He shows a man His great love to him, He humbles him, He lays him low—and so the expectation of heaven and of absolute perfection never exalts a man! If any man can say, "I am sure of heaven, and I am proud of it," he may take my word for it that he is sure of hell! If your religion puffs you up, puff your religion away, for it is not worth a puff! He who grows great in self-esteem through the love of God knows not the love of God in truth, for the love of God is like the fish that the Lord put into Peter's boat—the more full the boat became, the more quickly it began to sink! O Lord, the more the glories of Your love shall strike my eyes, the humbler I shall lie!

Again, a man who has this hope of heaven in himself—let me correct myself—a man who has this hope of *perfection* in himself finds that *it does not give him license to sin*. I have heard a thoughtful person say, "If I had a good hope of being saved and knew that I would go to heaven, I would live as I liked." Perhaps you would, but then you have not that hope—and God will not give it to you while you are in such a state that you would like to live in sin. If a Christian could live as he liked, how would he live? Why, he would live absolutely without sin! If the Lord would indulge the newborn nature of His own children with unrestricted liberty, in that unrestricted liberty they would run after happiness! The unrenewed heart would like to sin, but the *renewed heart quite as eagerly loves to obey the Lord*. When the Lord has changed you, He can give you not only a hope but a full assurance that that hope shall come true—and yet you will walk all the more carefully with your God, for, "every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

This hope, then, does not puff up and does not lead to licentiousness. You can see why it is so. *Gratitude leads to holiness*. Any man who feels,

"God has saved me and I am on the way to being made like Christ"—if he is a man at all, (and he must be to feel that), will say, "Now that I owe all this to God, how can I show forth my gratitude to Him?" He would be a brute, he would be a devil, he would be 7,000 devils in one who would say, "God is doing all this for me and, therefore, I will continue in sin." Well did the apostle say of such men that their damnation is just! But where there is the good hope of heaven, the man naturally says, "O my Lord, have You loved me so much and have You provided such a glorious portion for me hereafter? Then I will obey You in everything! I will serve You with my whole heart and soul. Help me to run in the way of Your commandments."

Such a man, when led of the Spirit, also feels that *holiness is congruous to his expectations*. He expects to be like Christ. Very well, then, he says, "I will try to be like Christ. If I am to be the possessor of a perfect nature, the most natural thing is that I should begin to seek after it now." If the Lord intends to make you heirs of immortality to dwell at His right hand, does it seem right that you should now live as others do? Suppose you know tonight (and I hope many of you do) that, before long, you will be at God's right hand—does it not seem a shameful thing that you should go and become a drunk, or that you should be dishonest? King Lemuel's mother said to him, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink." And surely it is not for children of God to drink the wines of sin and go after the sweets of iniquity! It is not for princes of the blood imperial, descended from the King of kings, to play with the filthy lewdnesses of this time and with the sins of earth. Surely an angel would not stoop to become a carrion crow—neither can we suppose it congruous, nor does it appear seemly, that he who is brother to the Lord Jesus Christ and who is to dwell forever where Jesus is, should be found in the haunts of sin! The very natural fitness of things, under the blessing of God's Spirit, leads the child of God to purify himself, since he expects to be completely like Christ before long.

Now, without tarrying longer upon that part of the subject, let me notice that *the believer is here said to purify himself*. If we are very orthodox, we can afford to use language that does not look so, but people who are heterodox usually have to be extremely guarded in their expressions. Now we do not believe that any man *actually purifies himself*, yet the text says that, "every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself." We believe that the Holy Spirit purifies sinners by applying to them the precious blood of Jesus. We sing—

"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."

We look to God for all purity, believing that He is the creator of it. Still, the text says that "every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself" That is to say, God the Holy Spirit so works in every man who has a true hope, that he labors to become purified and uses all possible means to overcome sin and to walk in righteousness. While I am speaking upon this point, may each one of us be examining himself! When a man has a true hope in Christ, he begins to purify himself by the power of the Holy Spirit!

First, *he puts away all the grosser sins*. Perhaps before conversion, he had been unchaste. He had been lewd in language and in act, or he had been dishonest, or he had been a blasphemer. Conversion does away with all that. I have sometimes been astonished and delighted when I have seen how readily these sins are put to death. They are taken out to the block and executed! Many a man who had never lived a day without swearing, has never had a temptation to it from the moment of his conversion. So thoroughly does God renew the heart that these grosser sins go at once!

But there are sins of the flesh which, though we are purged from them, will endeavor to return—and hence the man who has a hope of heaven will purify himself every day from them. He will hate the very thought of those sins and any expressions or actions that might tend towards them. He abhors them. He flees from them, for he knows that if he begins to dally with them, he will soon go from bad to worse. He understands that in this warfare to flee is the truest courage and, therefore, from such sins of the flesh he daily flees, like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife, even though he would leave his garment behind him, that he may get away from them. So he "purifies himself."

Then *he purifies himself from all evil company*. Those spirits that he once thought choice, he now avoids. If they will go with him to heaven, he will be glad that they should join his company. But if they will neither repent of sin nor believe in Jesus, he says to them, "You can be of no service to me." If he can help them to heaven, he seeks them out and tries to win them—but when they ridicule him, he is afraid lest their example may be injurious to him and he shuns them and seeks better company. So he "purifies himself."

Then *he begins from that day forth and till he dies, he continues seeking to purify himself*. Perhaps, first, he does not know some things to be sin which he afterwards finds out to be so. As the light of God gradually shines into his soul, he puts away this and that, and the other with a strong and resolute hand—and if there was some sin that pleased him much—which was to him like a right hand or a right eye, he cuts it off, or tears it out, for having a hope of heaven in him, he knows he cannot take any sin to heaven—and he does not want to do so. He puts it away. He knows that he must put it away before he can enter into eternal life!

Soon, he finds out that there are certain sins in his nature which more readily overcome him than any others do. Against these he sets a double watch. Possibly he has a quick temper. Over this he grieves very much and he earnestly prays to God, "O Lord, subdue my evil temper! Guard my tongue, lest I say bitter words, and my heart, lest I indulge in unkind feelings." He finds himself in a certain trade and if in such a trade there is sin, (and most trades have some peculiar sin), he feels, "Then I will have nothing to do with it! If I cannot make money without sin, I will lose money, or change my business, but I will not do what is wrong." He observes some sin that runs in his family—he knows that his household has some peculiar fault. Here, again, he cries to God, "Lord, purify me and purify my house from this evil thing!" He observes that there are certain sins in the district where he lives. Against these he cries aloud. He knows that there are sins peculiar to his position. If he a is rich man, he is afraid of growing worldly. Is he a poor man? He is afraid of becoming envious. He looks at his position and he observes what the peculiar sins of that position are and then, in the power of the Eternal Spirit, he seeks to purify himself from all these sins!

Perhaps he is traveling for his health and he knows that many travelers, though they profess to be Christians, never observe the Sabbath and forget, to a large extent, the regular habits of devotion which they had at home. So he sets a double watch over himself in that respect. Is he in great trial? Then he knows the temptation to impatience and murmuring will come and he tries to purify himself from that. Has he great pleasure? Then he knows the temptation will be to make this world his home and so he tries to purify himself from that. You see brothers and sisters, under the power of God's Spirit, this purifying of the life is a great work to be done, but it is a work that every man that has this hope in Christ will do! If he is, indeed, hoping in the Lord Jesus, this will be the great struggle and warfare of his life—to get rid first of this sin, and then of that other, that he may be wholly sanctified unto the Lord—a holy man, fitted for a holy heaven!

Now, then, how does he purify himself? I have shown you what he does, but by what means does he do it? *He does it, first, by noting the example of Christ*. The hoping man reads Christ's life and he says, "Here is my model, but I am far short of it. O God, give me all that there was in Christ! Take off from my character all the outgrowths, for these must be outgrowths if they were not in Christ!" Familiarizing himself with the life of his Savior and getting to commune with Christ, he is thus helped to see what sin is and where sin is—and to hate it!

Then *he prays God to give him a tender conscience*. Oh, I wish that all Christians had tender consciences! I have heard of persons who are blind beginning to read with their fingers, but beginning late in life they have had some manual labors to perform which have hardened their fingers,

so they could not read. I am afraid that some of you have hard consciences, with two or three thicknesses or skin over them. You need to have the knife used to make your conscience tender again. It is a blessed thing to have a conscience that will shiver when the very shadow of sin goes by—a conscience that is not like our great steamships at sea that do not yield to every wave, but like a cork on the water, that goes up and down with every ripple, sensitive in a moment to the very approach of sin! May God the Holy Spirit make us so! This sensitiveness the Christian endeavors to have, for he knows that if he has it not, he will never be purified from his sin. He prays—

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul, when sin is near,
And keep it still awake.
Oh may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!"

He always tries to keep an eye to God, and not to men. That is a great point in purity of life. I know many persons whose main thought is earning other people's esteem. Their question is, "What will so-and-so say? What will the neighbors say? What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will be commonly thought of it?" You will never be a holy man till you do not care a fig what anybody says except your God—for a thing that is right is right anywhere! If it is right before the Lord, it is right although the entire world should hiss it down! Oh, that we had more moral courage, for moral courage is essential to true holiness! The man who has this hope in him will not say, "If the door is shut and nobody hears of it, I may feel free to do evil." Or, "I am in a foreign country where the customs differ from those at home; therefore I will do as others do." No—such hypocrisy shows a rotten heart! The man of God will say, "This is right before the Lord and though no eyes see me to commend me, and though every tongue should speak against me to blame me, I will do the right and I will shun the evil." This is one way in which the Christian "purifies himself."

And then *he notes the lives of others and makes them his beacons.* If you were sailing down the Thames, and saw a boat ahead of you that had run upon a shoal, there would be no necessity for you to go there to find out where the true channel was—you would let other shipwrecks be your beacons! So the Christian, when he observes a fault in another, does not stand and say, "Ah, see how faulty that man is!" Rather he says, "Let me shun that fault." And when he sees the virtue of another, if his heart is right, he does not begin to pick holes in it and say, "he is not as good as he looks," but he says, "Lord, there is a sweet flower in that man's garden—give me some of the seed of it—let it grow in my soul." So other men become both his beacon and his example!

A wise Christian tries to purify himself *by hearing a heart searching ministry*. If the ministry never cuts you, it is no use to you. If it does not make you feel ashamed of yourself—yes, and sometimes half angry with the preacher—it is not good for much. If it is all smoothing you the way the feathers go and making you feel happy and comfortable, be afraid of it! Be afraid of it! But if, on the other hand, it seems to open up old wounds and make the sores fester and the soul bleed before the living God, then you may hope it is a ministry which God is using for your lasting good! The true Christian not only wishes the preacher to search him, but his prayer is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts." He does not want to live in sin, thinking it not to be sin—he wants to get away from it! I am afraid some Christians do not want to know too much of Christ's commands. There might be some very awkward ones and they do not want to attend to some of them. They are very pleased if they can get some minister to say that some of Christ's commands are nonessential and unimportant! Ah, dear friends, he is a traitor to his Master if he dares to say that anything that Christ says is unimportant! It is always important for a servant to do as his master tells him—and it is essential to comfort and to obedience that whatever the Lord has spoken, we should endeavor to perform in His strength.

I might continue thus to show you the way by which the Christian who has a good hope endeavors to purify himself, but I must just notice this one thing, that *he sets before himself Christ as his standard*. He purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. My dear friends, we shall make a mistake if we make anyone our model but the Lord Jesus Christ, for in any other life but His there will be sure to be something in excess! I am sure it will be best for us, if we are Wesleyans, not always to try and do everything as John Wesley would do it. And if we are Calvinists, as much as we honor John Calvin, we must remember that we shall go wrong if we try to season everything with the spirit of John Calvin. No man is fit to be a model for all men except the Savior who redeemed men!—

"Lord, as to Your dear cross we flee,
And plead to be forgiven,
So let Your life our pattern be,
And form our souls for heaven.
Help us, through good report and ill,
Our daily cross to bear;
Like You, to do our Father's will,
Our brethren's griefs to share."

In white, all the colors are blended. A perfectly white substance combines all the colors of the rainbow merged in true proportion. But green and indigo and red are only the reflections of a part of the solar rays. So John, Peter and Paul are parts of the light of heaven. They are differing colors and there is a beauty in each one of them. But if you

want to get the whole of the rays of light, you must get to Christ, for all light is in Him! In Him is not simply the red or the blue, but in Him is light—the blue light, the whole of light! You are sure to get a lopsided character if any man shall be the copy after which you write. If we copy Christ, we shall, through the power of His Spirit, attain to a perfect manhood! O brothers and sisters, what a life task is here for you! "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure." We shall never be able, beloved, to throw down our weapons and say, "Now I have no more sin to fight with, no more evil to overcome." I have heard of some brethren who say that, but I think it must be a mistake. If there is a possibility of getting to that condition, I mean to get to it—and I would recommend you all to try after it! But I think that till you die, you will have some evil to struggle with. As long as you are in this body, there will be enough tinder for one of the devil's sparks to set it alight! You will have need to keep on dousing it and every moment be on the watchtower, even till you cross the Jordan! This is our life's business and, brothers and sisters, I do not know that you can have a better business, for while you are contending against sin—purifying yourselves by the precious blood of Jesus—you will be bringing honor and glory to God! Your heart will become a field in which the power and grace of God will be displayed, for He will come and purify you! He will be the real purifier while He is using you to purify yourself!

III. I must stay no longer; but in the last place, USE THE TEXT AS A TEST. "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself." Dear hearers, the question is, have we a true hope in Christ? If we have, we purify ourselves—we labor to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure!

There are some professors of religion who do the opposite to this—*they defile themselves*. I repeat it—they defile themselves! It is a shame that I should have to say it. They were baptized on profession of their faith, but they were never cleansed from their old sins. I have heard of persons who come to the communion table yet go to the table of the drunk, too, but he that has the true hope in Christ purifies himself! How can you be said to have that hope if you love such sin? I have heard of professed Christians and my cheek has blushed when I have heard it of them, who could sing wanton songs and do wanton acts—and yet say they had a hope of heaven! O sirs, do not deceive yourselves! You lie! If you are not pure and chaste, you are none of God's children! You may fall into sin by surprise, but if you calmly and deliberately go to that which is unclean, how can the love of God dwell in you? I have known a man who liked to hear a good sermon, and also liked to mingle with those who frequent the alehouse and liked to sing "a jolly good song." He was a good companion of the wicked. Well, labor under no mistake, sir, "He that commits sin is of the devil." It is no use making excuses and apologies—if you are a lover of sin, you shall go where sinners go! If you who live after this fashion say that you have believed in the precious blood of Christ, I do

not believe you, sir! If you had a true faith in that precious blood, you would hate sin! If you dare to say you are trusting in the atonement while you live in sin, you lie, sir! You do not trust in the atonement—for where there is a real faith in the atoning sacrifice, it purifies the man and makes him hate the sin which shed the Redeemer's blood!

After all, holiness is *the* test. So let the great fan throw up the chaff and the wheat together—and let the wind go through it, and blow the chaff away. You come here and sit as God's people sit, and sing as God's people sing, but ah, some of you are a disgrace to the profession you make—I know you are! May God forgive you and give you grace to repent of this, your sin, and come to Jesus Christ and find pardon in His precious blood! This is, after all, the test, "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself." How can he have that hope in Him if he defiles himself?

But there are some others who, while they do not actually defile themselves, yet *they let things go very much as a matter of course*. They do not purify themselves, certainly, but they float down the stream. If there is a good song at home, they do not object to it—if there is an evil one, they do not rebuke it. If they are in the shop and someone speaks upon religion, they chime in. If anybody ridiculed it, perhaps they would not join in it, but they would get up in a corner and say nothing. They never take sides with Christ, except when everybody else is on His side. True, they do not take sides with the devil, but they mean to be "betweenites," neutrals and slippers-in. Well, you will slip, one of these days, into your appointed place and shall, I think, ought to be a particularly low place in hell! A sinner who sins openly and honestly is a respectable sort of a fellow, but those mean creatures who try to get enough religion to cheat the devil with, but never come straight out and acknowledge Christ—why, I think they deserve a double perdition! They know better! They prove their knowledge by a little sneaking affection to the right and yet they cleave to the evil! The dead fish that float down this stream have only one fault, but down the stream it goes for that one fault! And the man who gives himself up to the current in which he is, proves himself to be spiritually dead. What, sir? Did you never say, "No"? Did you never put your foot down and say, "I will not do this"? Others have to fight to win the crown and you expect to get it by lying in bed? Do you think there are crowns in heaven for those who never fight their sins? Do you believe that there are rewards in heaven for those who never followed Christ and never endured hardship for His sake? No, make no mistake—you know not what the truth of God is.

The truth is in that famous picture of John Bunyan's. While I tell it to you again in my own words, may some of you be moved to make that picture true! He tells us that the Pilgrim saw, in the Interpreter's house, a beautiful palace. And on the top thereof there walked many persons

clothed in gold. And from the roof there came the sweetest music that mortal ear had ever heard. He felt that he would gladly be on the top of that palace with those that there so happily basked in the sun. So he went to see the way there and saw at the door that there stood a number of armed men who pushed back every person who sought to enter! Then he stood back in amazement. But he noted that there sat one at a table having a writer's inkhorn and a brave man from the crowd, of stout countenance, came up and said, "Set down my name, sir!" And when his name was set down on the roll, he at once drew his sword and began to cut his way through the armed men! The fight was long and cruel and he was wounded, but he gave not up the conflict till he had cut his way through, making a living lane through those that had opposed him. So he pressed his way in and the singers at the top of the palace welcomed him with sweet music, singing—

"Come in, come in!
Eternal glory you shall win."

Now, sir, if you would go to heaven, it is all of grace and through the precious blood of Christ! It is all by simple faith in Christ, yet every man who gets there must fight for it. There is no crown except for warriors! There are no rewards except for those who contend for the mastery against flesh and blood, against Satan and against sin! Whose name shall we set down tonight? Is there a man of stout countenance whom God has made resolute against sin? Let us set his name down! Only, when you put down your name, remember that he that puts on his harness must not boast as though he were taking it off! There is much that you will never perform unless the eternal God is at your back; nevertheless, if you have this hope in you; if you have received this hope from God; if it is a hope based upon divine sonship, upon divine love—a "hope in Him," even in Christ, you shall win the day—you shall purify yourselves, even as He is pure! And when He shall appear, you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is!

I pray the Lord to bless this sermon to the preacher, and bless it to every one of his hearers, and He shall have the glory! Amen and Amen.

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THE GOSPEL CORDIAL
NO. 3236

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1863.

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.
Proverbs 31:6, 7.

THESE somewhat singular sentences were spoken by the mother of Lemuel to her son, who was probably Solomon. She had already said to him, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." But such a king as Solomon must have had an abundant store of wine of all kinds, so his mother urged him to give it to the sick and the sad and the poor who needed it more than he did. The Jews were in the habit of giving a cup of strong drink, usually with some potent drug in it, to stupefy those who were about to be executed. Perhaps that is the meaning of the words, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish." We know, too, how persons who have been very weak and ill, on the very borders of the grave, have often been medicinally relieved by wine given to them which they could not possibly purchase for themselves. I believe this is the literal meaning of the text and that if any man should be wicked enough to draw from it the inference that he would be able to forget his misery and poverty by drinking—he would soon find himself woefully mistaken, for if he had one misery *before*—he would have 10 miseries afterwards! And if he were previously poor, he would be in still greater poverty afterwards. Those who fly to the bottle for consolation might as soon fly to hell to find a heaven and, instead of helping them to forget their poverty, drunkenness would only sink them still more deeply in the mire!

I am going to use my text spiritually, for I believe it has a far deeper meaning than that which glistens upon its surface. There are many persons who are doubting and despairing, spiritually "ready to perish." And there is, in the word of God, a rich store of comforting truths which are far more cheering to the spirit than wine can ever be to the body! And we are to give this gospel cordial to those who are heavy of heart, that they may drink and forget their misery and remember their doubts and despair no more!

In attempting to obey the precept of the text, I am going to speak upon three topics. First, that *there is a most comforting cordial in the gospel.* Secondly*, that it is our duty and privilege to give this cordial to all who*

need it. And, thirdly, *that when it is given to such people, it is their duty and privilege to drink* and forget their spiritual poverty and misery.

I. So, first, THERE IS MOST COMFORTING CORDIAL IN THE GOSPEL. Dr. Watts truly sings—

"Salvation! Oh, the joyful sound!
'Tis pleasure to our ears
A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears."

I will take, first, the case of a true believer *in Jesus who is sorely tried with cares and losses and crosses*. I will suppose that you have come in here, tonight, dreading what may happen to you tomorrow. Perhaps your trouble, my brother, is that your business is failing and that need is staring you in the face. Possibly you, my sister, are sorrowing over that dear child who lies in her little coffin in the quiet room upstairs at home. Or it may be that you, my friend, have a sick wife and, day by day you see fresh signs and tokens of the great loss that is surely awaiting you. I cannot mention all the causes of sad heart in the believing members of this great assembly, but my Master has sent me here with His own blessed cordial which is more than sufficient to comfort every sorrowing saint here!

Remember, beloved, that all that happens to you comes in the course of divine providence. Your loving heavenly Father has foreseen, foreknown and, I venture to say, foreordained it all! The medicine you have to drink is very bitter, but the unerring physician measured all the ingredients, drop by drop, and then mixed them in the very way in which they would best work for your highest good. Nothing in this world happens by chance. That great God who sits upon the circler of the heavens, to whom all things that He has made are but as the small dust of the balance, who make the clouds His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind—that same God cares for you with such special care that He has even numbered the very hairs of your head and put your tears in His bottle! You may, therefore, rest assured that even those experiences which are causing you so much sorrow are all in accordance with His eternal counsel and decree! Does not this divine cordial make you forget your poverty and remember your misery no more?

Remember, too, that everything that happens to believers is working for their present and lasting good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." If you could have chosen your own circumstances and condition in life, you could not have made so wise a choice as God has made for you! The gardener knows where his plants will flourish best. Some of them might wish to grow in the sunshine, although like the fern family, they are better in the shade. Some of them would prefer to be on yonder mossy bank, but the gardener puts them in sandy soil because he knows that it is better suited to the requirements of their nature. You may depend upon it that there never was any earthly father who was so attentive to the needs of his child as your heavenly Father is to you! When you decide as to the occupation you think is best for your son to

follow, you may select the very career that will prove to be his ruin—but when God plans your future, He takes more care in arranging for you than you do in arranging for your boy and, as He sees the end from the beginning—which you cannot see either for yourself or for your child—He chooses for you with infinite and unerring wisdom! Do not wish to have it otherwise, dear brother or sister in Christ! Be not only content with such things as you have, but say with David, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." So drink this divine cordial and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more!

Moreover, beloved friend, do you not know that the Lord Jesus Christ is with you in all your poverty and misery? Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego never realized the presence of the Son of God so blessedly until they were cast alive into Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace! But His presence with them, there, was so manifest that even the heathen king exclaimed, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." There is many a child who has no special petting and fondling so long as it stays well—but as soon as it is ill it seems as though all the mother's love was concentrated upon that particular member of the family—and it is to you who especially need such a cheering message that the Lord says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted." It was to His ancient people that He gave the gracious promise and it was concerning them that it was said, "In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old." It is thus that He still tenderly and lovingly deals with His tried and afflicted people! And this thought ought to be like a cordial to make them forget their poverty and misery!

I might keep on all night trying thus to comfort tried saints, but I must content myself by giving them just one more sip of this divine cordial and that shall be this—remember how soon all these trials will be over! Be of good courage, weary pilgrim—the heavenly mansion where you are to rest forever is almost in sight! It is so close that you may well sing—

"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul! How near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eyes,
Your golden gates appear!"

How fast the years fly by and our trials and troubles are flying just as fast. Beloved, Paul truly wrote concerning "our light affliction, which is but for a moment," for after all, our afflictions are only like a troubled dream—a little starting in the sleep of life and then we wake to sleep no more forever. This world is to the believer, like a country inn by the wayside where there are many constantly coming and going, and there are such disturbing noises that no one can rest. Well, never mind, you are only tarrying there for one short night and then you shall be up and away to your eternal home, to go no more out forever! Will not this divine

cordial make you forget your poverty and remember your misery no more?

Now I will take the case of *a true believer in Jesus who is suffering from soul-desertion*. You, my friend, are inclined to say with Heman the Ezrahite, "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You!...You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps...Lord, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?" You are even inclined to think that you now can understand that cry of Christ upon the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The Lord seems to turn a deaf ear to your supplications! Prayer, itself, is a heavy burden to you—you have no comforting visions of the Savior's face—past seasons of holy enjoyment are only remembered by you with regret that you no longer have such happy experiences! Even when you turn to the word of God, itself, your eyes seems to fix only upon the threats and never notice the many "exceedingly great and precious promises." And your soul is "ready to perish" in despair! Well, my poor brother, if there ever was a time when you needed the spiced wine of God's covenant faithfulness and the luscious, nutritious nectar of Jesus Christ's everlasting love, it is now! I wonder what Arminians do when they are seized with this kind of spiritual condition and shake in terror from head to foot? I know that when I have these attacks—and I do have them very badly sometimes—I turn to those texts that say most about God's free and sovereign grace and I try to get the marrow and fatness out of them to feed my starving soul! Those who, "do business in great waters," spiritually, find that nothing will serve their turn but God's eternal decrees, God's unchanging purposes, God's never failing faithfulness, God's distinguishing, discriminating grace! At least that is my own experience and I urge you, my despairing brother or sister, to take a deep draft of the same divine cordial so that you may forget your spiritual poverty and remember your misery no more! You are not likely to turn the high doctrines of the gospel to evil account, so come and feed upon them till your soul is satiated with these dainties of your Lord's banqueting house. Accept His own gracious invitation, "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Among the other comforting things that I should say to a brother or sister suffering from soul desertion would be this—Remember, brothers and sisters, if you were ever a child of God, you are a child of God now! You pass through many changes, but you have a Savior who is always the same—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." You have your ups and downs. You change with every phase of the moon. But with the great "Father of lights" there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We rightly sing—

"Unchangeable His will
Whatever be my frame!
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same!
My soul through many change goes,

His love no variation knows!"

He never began a work of grace in anyone and then left it unfinished! He never adopted a child into His family and then cast him out to perish! The Lord Jesus Christ never first married any soul and then divorced her, for He hates putting away. He will never part with any member of His mystical body, If He could do such an outrageous thing, He would, Himself, be incomplete! So, my despairing brother, I say to you that if you have ever had the light and the love of God in your soul, not only are you *still* a saved man, but the time will yet come when you will know that it is so! Like Jonah, you will yet come up out of the depths and with him you will ascribe all the glory of your salvation unto the Lord.

I also want to try to comfort *some true believers in Jesus who are afraid they are not really the Lord's*. I am glad that John Bunyan mentioned some of their names in his immortal allegory, for we still have among us swarms of people who answer to his description of Mr. Fearing, Mr. Feeble Mind, Mr. Despondency and his daughter, Miss Much Afraid, Mr. Ready to Halt and Mr. Little Faith, though we have only here and there a Mr. Great Heart, or a Mr. Stand Fast, or a Mr. Valiant for Truth. Well, dear friends, if you are here, tonight, let me remind you that although you are the little ones in God's family, you are not little in God's sight! He loves you just as much as He loves the greatest saint who ever lived! When the Lord gave the commandment to Moses concerning the ransom for every soul numbered among the children of Israel, it was expressly stated, "The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel when they give an offering unto the Lord to make atonement for your souls." It is the same in the atonement worked by the Lord Jesus Christ—it cost Him just as much, and no more, to ransom the least of His people or the greatest—and He loves them equally! He may use some of them as His instruments more than He uses others, but He has the same regard for all of them! If He ever makes any difference in His treatment of them, it is the weak ones who have the preference—He carries the lambs in His bosom, but He allows the strong sheep to follow in His tracks.

So be of good cheer, you feeble folk who belong to Christ, and also remember that little saints are just as safe as big saints. If we are with Christ in the vessel of His church, we are just as safe as all the rest of those on board—and we may rest assured that we shall never perish, for if we could, Christ would perish, too, and that can never be! The greatest saint who ever served his Lord with apostolic zeal or even Christ-like self-sacrifice, has to rely for his salvation on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—and the feeblest saint has to do the same—and the one is no more saved and safe than is the other. So Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid, drink that divine cordial and be no longer either doubtful or sad!

I think my text also has a special message to *the sinner who is heavy of heart and desponding in spirit*. To such an one I would present the gospel cordial thus. My friend, remember that "Christ Jesus came into

the world to save sinners." That word, "sinners," includes you. And if you ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I answer as Paul did when that question was put to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." So, as you are *commanded* to believe on Christ, to rely upon Him, to trust to Him to save you, it cannot be presumptuous on your part to do so! Jesus Christ is "mighty to save." He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. If there is a sinner here who is so bad that I could not describe his case to you, he is not too bad for Christ to save! Then why do you despair, O you who are "ready to perish," seeing that God has given up His Well-Beloved Son to die for just such sinners as you are? Your sins are great, I know, and they cry aloud for punishment—but the moment that you repent of them and trust in the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from them—you shall be made perfectly whole! Your sins shall be so completely put away that God says that if they are searched for, they shall not be found! They shall be as absolutely annihilated as if you had never committed them! What more comforting cordial than that can you possibly have set before you? Then drink of it and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more!

II. I can only speak very briefly upon the second point which is that IT IS OUR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO GIVE THIS CORDIAL TO ALL WHO NEED IT.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I want you all to obey the injunction of the text by giving this gospel cordial to those who are heavy of heart and "ready to perish." Some of you can do this *by talking to them of your own experience*. When you meet with doubting and desponding souls, tell them how the Lord delivered you from old Giant Despair's grim dungeon in Doubting Castle. Remind them of that key called, Promise, which can unlock the doors of the prison where they lie bound in fetters of iron! We are told that Origen, so long as his strength permitted, used to go to the prisons where the Christians were confined during the Decian persecution and afterwards went with them to the stake, comforting them from the Scriptures which he had found to be such a support to his own soul. Imitate him as far as you can, even though Christians are not now persecuted unto death.

Many of you can give away this gospel cordial *by visiting the sick and the poor*. In so vast a church as this, it is impossible for the pastor or elders to visit all the members, much less *visit* all who compose our great congregation! So I would urge you to do the visiting, yourselves, as far as you are able. Especially would I invite you who are the most deeply experienced in the things of God to find out the sin and the sorrowing in your own neighborhoods and to comfort them with the comfort wherewith you, yourselves, have been comforted of God. Then, many more of you than are at present doing it, can give away this gospel cordial *by preaching wherever and whenever you have the opportunity*. In such a city as London, where every street corner can furnish a pulpit and every street can supply a congregation, there is no excuse for the man with only one talent if he does not use it for Christ! The good news you

have to tell, my brother, is so sweet that it should be told over and over and over again till every gale shall spread the tidings to—

"All people that on earth do dwell."

I pray the Lord also to raise up many brothers and sisters from our midst to go to "the regions beyond" as missionaries of the cross and to move you who cannot preach, to give of your substance either for the training of our brothers in the College, or for the support of those who are called of God to preach and teach the word in distant lands where Jesus is not known. In that way, you, too, will be helping to give the gospel cordial to those who are heavy of heart and "ready to perish."

III. Now lastly and but briefly, WHEN THIS GOSPEL CORDIAL IS GIVEN TO SUCH PEOPLE, IT IS THEIR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO DRINK IT and forget their spiritual poverty and remember their misery no more!

We can bring a horse to the water, but we cannot make him drink it. And we can carry this gospel cordial to the sinner, but only the Holy Spirit can sweetly constrain him to take a full, deep drink of it. I have been trying to give this cordial, again tonight, to those who need it, as indeed I have been doing ever since the Lord first opened my mouth to speak for Him; but what about your part of the business, my dear hearers? It is my duty and privilege to preach the gospel, but it is just as much your duty and privilege to believe it when it is preached! "Faith comes by hearing," but alas, there are many who hear the word who are like those of whom the apostle wrote that "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." To have the healing medicine in your hands and yet not to drink it is to commit spiritual suicide! I beseech you, sinner, not to add that crowning crime to all your other iniquities! I pray you, this very hour, to accept the proffered blessing. The water of life is set before you—drink and live! The bread of life is placed within your reach—why should your immortal soul be starved and perish?

Do you fear that you are too black a sinner to be saved? Remember Agur's words concerning one of the "four things which are little upon the earth," but which "are exceedingly wise." He said, "The spider takes hold with her hands and is in kings' palaces." It may be that Agur had seen a big black spider in Solomon's palace and that, as he mused upon it, he said to himself, "That ugly creature is very wise, for there was a great storm coming on and her usual home would have been unsafe, so, looking about for a place of shelter, she spied an open window in the King's palace and in she went. She had no right there—no one had invited her—but there she was." Now, poor sinner, that spider was not as full of venom as you are full of sin! There is a greater storm coming on than that spider dreaded—and the door of God's mercy is as surely open as was that window in Solomon's palace! And you are invited to enter, as that spider never was invited! O sinner, be at least as wise as a spider and come in to God's royal palace of salvation! For once you are inside; you shall never be cast out!

Are you still afraid to come to Jesus? Then let me remind you of that poor woman who came and touched the hem of His garment and was instantly cured of her longstanding malady! You remember that she was ceremonially unclean—she had no business to be in a crowd—yet she was so eager to be healed that she worked her way through the throng until she was near enough to Jesus to touch the border of His seamless robe, for she said, "If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole." She did so and Christ at once honored her faith and gave her the gracious assurance that she might "go in peace"—and keep the cure that she had, as it were, obtained by stealth! O sinner, will you not be as wise as that poor woman was? You need not attempt to *steal* the blessing, for you are *invited* to come and take it openly! Jesus still says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is what you need—rest of mind, rest of heart, rest of conscience—that rest can only come to you by faith, "for we who have believed do enter into rest." O you poverty stricken and miserable sinners, believe in Jesus! Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for so shall you find rest unto your souls! And then shall you also realize that "there remains" another rest—a fuller and yet more blessed one—even that eternal "keeping of Sabbath" which is the blissful portion of all "the people of God!"

There is the divine cordial which we are commanded to place within your reach. Drink it and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:1-44.

Verse 1. *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.* To many people it may have seemed an event of no particular importance that "a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany," but great consequences often depend upon what appear to us to be very minor matters—and we must not despise the least of the Lord's people, nor think little of anything that concerns them. When a king or an emperor is ill, the news is published in all the papers, but when a friend of the Lord Jesus, a man "named Lazarus of Bethany" was sick, that event was recorded in the Bible because of something very remarkable which was to follow that sickness! Lazarus was a son of God—and divine grace makes greater distinctions than earthly rank and worldly honors ever can make!

2, 3. *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.* [See Sermon #1518, Volume 26—BELOVED, YET AFFLICTED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So you see that those whom Jesus loves may be, themselves, ill, or may have dear ones who are ill. Yes, and the illness may be sent by God as a token and testimony of His affection for them! Men polish gems, but they do not take the trouble to polish

common pebbles—and God sends affliction to His own beloved ones for their good and for His glory.

4. *When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death.* That was not to be the end of it. God had quite another purpose in view in allowing Lazarus to be sick. "This sickness is not unto death."

4. *But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.* Jesus knew that Lazarus would die, but He also knew that his death would only be a kind of interlude—the great design of God was not to take Lazarus home at that time, but to glorify His Son in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead!

5. *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.* Happy was the family at Bethany of which it could be said that all the members of it were dear to Christ! Is it so with your household, Martha? Or is it only Mary who is thus loved? Has Lazarus been left out? Then pray for your brother as these gracious sisters sent to tell Jesus about Lazarus.

6. *When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He still abode two days in the same place where He was.* We cannot always understand what our Master does. It seemed a strange thing that when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was. Yet there was a good reason for the delay—Christ was waiting in wisdom and in love. I think I see Mary and Martha, day after day wondering where Jesus could be! Perhaps even thinking hard thoughts of Him and saying, "He loved us, and He loved our brother—why did He not come as soon as we sent for Him?"

7-10. *Then after that He said to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples said unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone You, and do You go there again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walks in the day, he stumbles not because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles because there is no light in him.* Christ felt that His day was not over and that He could not die before His work was done and, therefore, He did not fear the stones cast by unbelieving foes! So, my brother; at all risks go on with your God given work! You will live through your 12 hours and you will not live a moment longer! Be so much a believer in predestination that even if duty calls you to risk your life, you will bravely do it knowing that you are in the hands of God and that your life cannot end until your appointed 12 hours have expired!

11. *These things said He: and after that He said unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps.* "*Our* friend?" Why, Lazarus was *Christ's* friend—yes, but those who are Christ's friends are our friends, too, if we belong to Christ! I have recently met with a large number of persons from different countries, but the moment we discovered that we loved the same Lord, we seemed to be as intimate as if we had been next door neighbors for the last 50 years! "Our friend Lazarus sleeps."

11-14. *But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then*

said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. Let me remind you, my dear brothers who preach the gospel, that you will have to preach very plainly—for you see that even the apostles could not understand a figure of speech! When Christ said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps," they mistook His meaning, so He had to say plainly, "Lazarus is dead." That is how we must preach the gospel—not only so that our hearers can understand it, but so that they *cannot misunderstand it.*

15, 16. *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe. Nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him.* Thomas always took a dark view of things, so he thought his Master was going to be killed. But he was a brave disciple, for he said to the other disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." There are still many very timid despondent disciples, but they cling to Christ and, if necessary, they would die for Him as Thomas was willing to die with Him! God bless you, Thomas! There are worse men than you, but not many better!

17. *Then when Jesus came, He found that he had already lain in the grave four days.* You know that in the East they have to bury the dead almost immediately because of the heat of the climate—so that Lazarus was, not long after he was dead, put away in the family vault.

18. *Now Bethany was near unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.* An easy walk of somewhere about two miles.

19, 20. *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house.* You will often hear people praising Mary at the expense of Martha, but although Mary is commended for sitting at Christ's feet, Martha, here, was the first to meet her Lord. The varying characters of different persons come out best at different times. Mary is best at sermon time—she forgets the cups and the platters. But Martha is the more practical in the time of grief. She is active and does not give way as Mary does. She is not so contemplative and not so crushed as Mary is, so she is the first to go to meet her Lord.

21. *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.* There seems to have been just a tinge of reproach in Martha's words—and Mary said exactly the same words to their dear Master and Friend a little later. And I have often heard Martha and Mary talk in this fashion—"Oh, if we had only had another doctor!" Or, "If our dear friend had not gone to the seaside!" Or, possibly, "If he had gone to the seaside, he might not have died." Well now, beloved friends, you have grief enough in having lost your relative or friend without adding to it by these unwise suppositions about what might have happened if you had done something else! Do not fall into that mistake and wound yourselves and grieve your best friend by unnecessary and useless regrets!

22-24. *But I know that even now* [See Sermon #2249, Volume 38—EVEN NOW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org], *whatever*

You will ask of God, God will give it to You. Jesus said unto her, Your brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. She could not believe the joyful meaning that Christ meant to convey to her when He said, "Your brother shall rise again."

25. *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection.* Note that our Lord did not say, "I am He who raises the dead," but, "*I am* the resurrection."

25-27. *And the life: He that believes in Me, though he were dead,* [See Sermon #1799, Volume 30—"THOUGH HE WERE DEAD"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said unto Him, Yes, Lord: I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Will not many of you make Martha's grand confession of faith your own? Believe in Jesus and then you will be able to believe anything and everything that He says!

28. *And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calls for you.* [See Sermon #1198, Volume 20—THE MASTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Martha's title for Christ might be rendered, "The teacher, The authoritative teacher," yet I am glad our translators put it, "The Master."

29. *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto Him.* The coming of Christ had such an effect upon her that she arose from amid the ashes of her sorrow and went out to meet her dear Lord and Master.

30, 31. *Now Jesus was not yet coming into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goes unto the grave to weep there.* It is significant that these mourners did not follow Martha when she went to meet Jesus—but they did follow Mary. Sometimes sinners who are not converted by listening to one preacher, are blessed by the testimony of two. One sister may not be able to lead her brother to Christ, yet God may enable two to do it. Jesus sent out His 70 disciples, "two and two," and the apostles are usually mentioned in pairs—Simon and Andrew, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew and so on—and we shall find that two Christians can often accomplish what one alone could not do.

32, 33. *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His knees, saying unto Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.* His heart was full of sympathy. He felt the grief of these mourners and sorrowed with them.

34, 35. *And said, Where have you laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.* [See Sermon #2091, Volume 35—"JESUS WEPT"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] In the original, a very blessed and expressive word is used here concerning

Christ's weeping—quite a different word from that used to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews. It should be a constant comfort to the sorrowing church of God that "Jesus wept."

36-39. *Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!* [See Sermon #3228, Volume 56—"OH, HOW HE LOVES"—Read/download the entire sermon, soon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore, again groaning in Himself, came to the grave. It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days.* "Will you expose that corrupt corpse to the air? "Ah, me, what poor foul creatures we are through the fall! See what we may, any of us, become in a few days, so that even the one who loves us best will have to say of us, "Bury my dead out of my sight."

40, 41. *Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, you should see the glory of God? 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.* That groaning in spirit was Christ's prayer to His Father, that inward tumult of His soul was His earnest supplication! And now He thanks His Father that He has heard Him! Yet Lazarus was still dead and lying—a mass of corruption—in the grave. Oh, for faith to bless God for the mercies that are on the way to us!

42, 44. *And I knew that You hear Me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loosen him, and let him go.* [See Sermons #1052, Volume 18—THE SPHERE OF INSTRUMENTALITY; Sermon #1776, Volume 30—UNBINDING LAZARUS and #2554 Volume 44—THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See what wonders our Lord can work and ask Him to work similar miracles in the spiritual realm—to raise to life those who are dead in trespasses and sins!

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OUR LORD'S PREACHING
NO. 3237

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted."
Isaiah 61:1.

[Two more Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon on the latter part of the text are #1604 and #1605, Volume 27—HEART DISEASE CURABLE and JESUS KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org. As this Sermon is so short, there is included with it an Address given by Mr. Spurgeon at a prayer meeting for Sunday schools, which is just as timely and as much needed, now, as when it was delivered in 1877.]

OUR Lord's anointing was with a special view to His preaching. Such honor does the Lord of heaven and earth put upon the ministry of the word that, as one of the old Puritans said, "God had only one Son, and He made a preacher of Him." It should greatly encourage the weakest among us, who are preachers of righteousness, to think that the Son of God, the blessed and eternal word, came into this world that He might preach the same glad tidings which we are called to proclaim!

I. We may profitably note, first, HOW EARNESTLY OUR LORD KEPT TO HIS WORD.

It was His business to preach and He did preach. He was always preaching! "What?" you say, "did He not work miracles?" Yes, but His miracles were sermons—they were acted discourses, full of instruction. He preached when He was on the mountain. He equally preached when He sat at the table in the Pharisee's house. All His actions were significant—He preached by every movement. He preached when He did not speak—His silence was as eloquent as His words! He preached when He gave and He preached when He received. He was preaching a sermon when He lent His feet to the women that she might wash them with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head, quite as much as when He was dividing the loaves and the fishes and feeding the multitude. He preached by His patience before Pilate, for there He witnessed a good confession. He preached from the bloody tree—with hands and feet fastened there, He delivered the most wonderful discourse of justice and of love, of vengeance and of grace, of death and of life that was ever preached in this poor world! Oh, yes, He preached wondrously! He was always preaching—with all His heart and soul He preached! He prayed that He might obtain strength to preach. He wept in secret that He might the more compassionately speak the words which wipe men's tears away.

Always a preacher, He was always ready, in season and out of season, with a good word. As He walked the streets He preached! As He went along and if He sought retirement and the people thronged Him, He sent them not away without a gracious word.

This was His one calling and this one calling He pursued in the power of the eternal Spirit. And He liked it so well, and thought so much of it, that He trained His 11 friends to the same work, and sent them out to preach as He had done. And then He chose 70 more disciples to go on the same errand. Did He shave the head of one of them to make Him a priest? Did He decorate one of them with a gown, or a chasuble, or a biretta? Did He teach one of them to say "mass," to swing a censer, or to elevate the "host?" Did He instruct one of them to regenerate children by baptism? Did He bring them up to chant in surplices and march in processions? No! Those things He never thought of and neither will we! If He had thought of them, it would only have been with utter contempt, for what is there in such childish things? The preaching of the cross—this is it which is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the wisdom of God and the power of God—for it still pleases God, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Nor, at the close of His career had our Lord lowered His estimate of preaching, for just before He ascended, He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." His last charge in brief was, "Preach, preach even as I have done before you." He lived the Prince of preachers, He died and became the theme of preachers! He lives again and is the Lord of preachers. What an honorable work is that to which His servants are called!

II. Secondly, as you have seen that our Savior came to preach, NOW NOTICE HIS SUBJECT—"The Lord has anointed Me to preach *good tidings* unto the meek."

And what good tidings did He preach? Pardon. Pardon given to the chief of sinners. Pardon for prodigal sons pressed to their Father's bosom. Restoration from their lost estate, as the piece of money was restored to the treasury and the lost sheep was brought back to the fold. How encouragingly He preached of a life given to men dead in sin—life through the living water which becomes a fountain within the soul! You know how sweetly He would say, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life—He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." He preached the absolute necessity of a change of heart and the need of a new creation. He said, "You must be born-again" and He taught the truths of God by which the Holy Spirit works in us and makes all things new.

He preached glad tidings concerning resurrection and bade men look for endless bliss by faith in Him. He cried, "I am the resurrection and the

life…and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." He gave forth precepts, too, and threats in their place—some of them very searching and terrible—but they were only used as accessories to the good news. He made men feel that they were poor that they might be willing to be made rich by His grace. He made them feel weary and burdened that they might come to Him for rest. But the sum and substance of what He preached was the gospel—the good spell—the glad news!

Brothers, *our divine Lord always preached upon that subject*—He did not stoop to secular themes. If you notice, though, He would sometimes debate with Pharisees, Herodians and others when necessary, yet He was soon away from them and back to His one theme. He baffled them with His wisdom and then returned to the work He loved, namely, preaching where the publicans and sinners drew near together "to hear Him." Our business, since the Spirit of God is upon us, is not to teach politics, save only in so far as these immediately touch the kingdom of Christ, and there the gospel is the best weapon. Nor is it our business to be preaching mere morals and rules of duty—our ethics must be drawn from the cross—and begin and end there! We have not so much to declare what men ought to *do* as to preach the good news of what God has done for them! Nor must we always be preaching certain doctrines, as doctrines, apart from Christ. We are only theologians as far as theology enshrines the gospel! We have one thing to do and to that one thing we must keep! The old proverb says, "Cobbler, stick to your last," and depend upon it, it is good advice to the Christian minister to stick to the gospel!

I hope I have always kept to my theme, but I take no credit for it, for I know nothing else. And, like the apostle Paul, I have determined not to know anything among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Indeed, "necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." I would gladly have but one eye and that eye capable of seeing nothing from the pulpit but lost men and the gospel of their salvation! To all else one may well be blind so that the entire force of the mind may center on the great essential subject. There is, certainly, enough in the gospel for any one man, enough to fill any one life, to absorb all our thought, emotion, desire and energy—yes, infinitely more than the most experienced Christian and the most intelligent teacher will ever be able to bring forth! If our Master kept to His one topic, we may wisely do the same. And if any say that we are narrow, let us delight in that blessed narrowness which brings men into the narrow way! If any denounce us as cramped in our ideas and shut up to one set of truths of God, let us rejoice to be shut up with Christ and count it the truest enlargement of our minds! It were well to be bound with cords to His altar, to lose all hearing but for His voice, all seeing but for His light, all life but in His life, all glorying save in His cross! If He who knew all things taught only

the one thing necessary, His servants may rightly enough do the same! "The Lord has anointed Me," He says, "to preach good tidings"—in this anointing let us abide!

III. But NOW NOTICE THE PERSONS TO WHOM HE ESPECIALLY ADDRESSED THE GOOD TIDINGS.

They were "the meek." Just look at the fourth chapter of Luke, and the 18th verse where our Lord was reading this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, and you will read there, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the *poor*." The poor, then, are among the person's intended by the term, "the meek." I noticed, when I was looking through various comments upon this passage, that the Syriac renders it "the humble." And I think the Vulgate renders it, "the gentle." Calvin translates it, "the afflicted." It all comes to one thing. "The meek"—a people who are not lofty in their thoughts, for they have been broken down; a people who are not proud and lifted up, but low in their own esteem. A people who are often much troubled and tossed about in their thoughts. A people who have lost proud hopes and self-conceited joys—a people who seek no high things, crave for no honors, desire no praises, but bow before the Lord in humility—they are glad to creep into any hole to hide themselves because they have such a sense of insignificance, worthlessness and sin! They are a people who are often desponding and are apt to be driven to despair. The meek, the poor—meek because they are poor—they would be as bold as others if they had as much as others, or as others think they have! But God has emptied them and so they have nothing to boast of. They feel the iniquity of their nature, the plague of their hearts. They mourn that in them there dwells no good thing and oftentimes they think themselves to be the offscouring of all things. They imagine themselves to be more brutish than any man and quite beneath the Lord's regard—sin weighs them down and yet they accuse themselves of insensibility and impenitence.

Now, the Lord has anointed the Lord Jesus on purpose to preach the gospel to such as these. If any of you are good and deserving, the gospel is not for you! If any of you fancy that you are keeping God's laws perfectly and hope to be saved by your works, I have to tell you that the whole have no need of a physician and that the Lord Jesus did not come upon so needless an errand as that of healing men who have no wounds or diseases! But the sick need a doctor and Jesus has come in great compassion to remove their sickness. The more diseased you are, the more sure you may be that the Savior came to heal such as you are! The poorer you are, the more certain you may be that Christ came to enrich you! The more sad and sorrowful you are, the surer you may be that Christ came to comfort you! You nobodies, you who have been turned upside down and emptied right out, you who are bankrupts and beggars, you who feel yourselves to be clothed with rags and covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores—you who are utterly bad through and

through and know it, and mourn it and are humbled about it—you may know that God has poured the holy oil without measure upon Christ on purpose that He might deal out mercy to such poor creatures as you are! What a blessing this is! How we ought to rejoice in the anointing of Jesus, since it benefits such despicable objects! We who feel that we are such objects ought to cry, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!"

IV. We must now CONSIDER OUR LORD'S DESIGN AND OBJECTIVE IN THUS PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR AND THE MEEK.

It was, you observe, that he might bind up the brokenhearted. "He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted."

Carefully give heed to the text, so that you may see whether this message applies to you. Are you brokenhearted because of sin—because you have sinned often, foully, grievously? Are you brokenhearted because your heart will not break as you would desire that it should break—brokenhearted because you repent that you cannot repent as you would, and grieved because you cannot grieve enough? Are you brokenhearted because you have not such a sense of sin as you ought to have, and such a deep loathing of it as you perceive that others have? Are you brokenhearted with despair as to self-salvation? Brokenhearted because you cannot keep God's law; brokenhearted because you cannot find comfort in ceremonies; brokenhearted because the things which looked best have turned out to be deceptions? Brokenhearted because all the world over you have found nothing but broken cisterns which can hold no water, which have mocked your thirst when you have gone to them; brokenhearted with longing after peace with God. Brokenhearted because prayer does not seem to be answered? Brokenhearted because when you come to hear the gospel, you fear that it is not applied to you with power? Brokenhearted because you had a little light and yet slipped back into darkness? Brokenhearted because you are afraid you have committed the unpardonable sin; brokenhearted because of blasphemous thoughts which horrify your mind, and yet will not leave it? I care not why you are brokenhearted—Jesus Christ came into the world, sent of God with this objective—"to bind up the brokenhearted."

It is a beautiful figure, this binding up—as though the crucified one took the liniment and the strapping and put it around the broken heart—and with His own dear gentle hands proceeded to close up the wound, and make it cease to bleed. Luke does not tell us that Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted. If you examine *his* version of the text, you will read that he came *to heal them*. That is going still further because you may bind a wound up and yet fail to cure it. But Jesus never fails in His surgery. He whose own heart was broken knows how to cure broken hearts! I have heard of people dying of a broken heart, but I always bless God when I meet with those who live with a broken heart because it is

written, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." If you have that broken heart within you, beloved, Christ came to cure you! And He will do it, for He never came in vain—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged." With sovereign power, anointed from on high, He watches for the worst of cases. Heart disease, incurable by man, is His specialty! His gospel touches the root of the soul's ill, the mischief which dwells in that place from whence are the issues of life. With pity, wisdom, power and condescension He bends over our broken bones and before He has done with them, He makes them all to rejoice and sing praises to His holy name! Come then, you troubled ones, and rely upon your Savior's healing power! Give yourselves up to His care, confide in His skill, rest in His love! What joy you shall have if you will do this at once! What joy shall I have in knowing that you do so! Above all, what joy will fill the heart of Jesus, the beloved Physician, as He sees you healed by His stripes!

"DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD"

AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
AT A PRAYER MEETING FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS IN THE YEAR 1877.

"And Reuben answered them, saying, Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and you would not hear? Therefore, behold, his blood is now required of us."
Genesis 42:22.

[A Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the same text is #840, Volume 14—also entitled DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD. It was delivered as a preface to a series of services for children conducted in the Tabernacle in the year 1868, by the late Mr. E. Payson Hammond.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

YOU know how Joseph's brothers, through envy, sold him into Egypt and how ultimately they were, themselves, compelled to go down into Egypt to buy corn. When they were treated roughly by the governor of that country, whom they did not know to be their brother, their consciences smote them and they said one, to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us." While their consciences were thus accusing them, the voice of their elder brother chimed in, saying, "Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child?" From which I gather that if we commit sin after being warned, the voice of conscience will be all the more condemning, for it will be supported by the memory of disregarded admonitions which will revive again—and with solemn voices say to us,

"Said we not unto you, Do not sin against the child?" We who know what is due to children will be far more guilty than others if we sin against their souls. Wiser views as to the needs and hopes of the little ones are now abroad in this world than those which ruled the public mind 50 years ago—and we shall be doubly criminal if we now bring evil upon the little ones!

The advice of Reuben may well be given to all grownup persons, "Do not sin against the child." Thus would I speak to every parent, to every elder brother or sister, to every schoolmaster, to every employer, to every man and woman whether they have families or not, "Do not sin against the child"; neither against your own child, nor against anybody's child, nor against the poor waif of the street whom they call, "nobody's child." If you sin against adults, "do not sin against the child." If a man must be profane, let him have too much reverence for a child to pollute its little ears with blasphemy! If a man must drink, let him have too much respect for childhood to entice his boy to sip at the intoxicating cup! If there is anything of lewdness or coarseness on foot, screen the young child from the sight and hearing of it! O you parents, do not follow trades which will ruin your children! Do not select houses where they will be cast in evil society. Do not bring depraved persons within your doors to defile them! For a man to lead others like he is into temptation is bad enough—but to sow the vile seed of vice in hearts that are as yet untainted by any gross, actual sin is a hideous piece of wickedness! Do not commit spiritual infanticide! For God's sake, in the name of common humanity, I pray you, if you have any sort of feeling left, do not play the Herod by morally murdering the innocents! I have heard that when, in the cruel sack of a city, a soldier was about to kill a child, his hand was stayed by the little one's crying out, "O sir, please don't kill me. I am so little!" The feebleness and littleness of childhood should appeal to the worst of men and restrain them from sinning against the child.

According to the story of Joseph, there are three ways of sinning against the child. The first was contained in the proposition of the envious brothers, *"Let us slay him*...and we shall see what will become of his dreams." "Shed no blood," said Reuben, who had reasons of his own for wishing to save Joseph's life. There is such a thing as morally and spiritually slaying boys and girls—and here even the Reubens unite with us—even those who are not so good as they should be will join in the earnest protest, "Do not sin against the child"—do not train him in dishonesty, lying, drunkenness and vice! No one among us would wish to do so, but it is continually done by bad example. Many sons are ruined by their fathers. Those who gave them birth give them their death. They brought them into the world of sin and they seem intent to bring them into the world of punishment—and will succeed in the fearful attempt unless the grace of God shall interfere! Many are doing all they can, by

their own conduct at home and abroad, to educate their offspring into pests of society and plagues to their country. When I see the number of juvenile criminals, I cannot help asking, "Who slew all these?" And it is sad to have for an answer, "These are mostly the victims of their parents' sin." The fiercest beasts of prey will not destroy their own young, but sin makes men unnatural so that they destroy their offspring's souls without thought! To teach a child a lascivious song is unutterably wicked—to introduce him to the wine cup is evil. To take children to places of amusement where everything is polluting—where the quick-witted boy soon spies out vice and learns to be precocious in it—where the girl, while sitting to see the play, has kindled within her passions which need no fuel—to do this is to act the tempter's part! Would you poison young hearts and do them lifelong mischief? I wish that the guardian of public morals would put down all open impurity, but if that cannot be, at least let the young be shielded! He who instructs a youth in the vices of the world is a despicable wretch—a panderer for the devil, for whom contempt is a feeling too lenient! No, even though you are, yourself, of all men most hardened, there can be no need to worry the lambs and offer the babes before the shrine of Moloch!

The same evil may be committed by indoctrinating children with evil teachings. They learn so soon that it is a sad thing to teach them error. It is a dreadful thing when the infidel father sneers at the cross of Christ in the presence of his boy, when he utters horrible things against our blessed Lord in the hearing of tender youth! It is sad to the last degree that those who have been singing holy hymns in the Sabbath school should go home to hear God blasphemed and to see holy things spit upon and despised. To the very worst unbelievers we might well say—Do not thus ruin your child's immortal soul! If you are yourself resolved to perish, do not drag your child down with you!

But there is a second way of sinning against the child of which Reuben's own proposition may serve as an illustration. Though not with a bad motive, Reuben said, "*Cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness* and lay no hand upon him." The idea of many is to leave the child as a child and then look him up in later days and seek to deliver him from destruction. Do not kill him, but leave him alone till riper years! Do not kill him—that would be wicked murder—but leave him in the wilderness till a more convenient season, when, like Reuben, you hope to come to his rescue! Upon this point I shall touch many more of you than upon the first. Many professing Christians ignore the multitudes of children around them and act as if there were no such living beings. They may go to Sunday school or not—they do not know and do not care. At any rate, these good people cannot trouble themselves with teaching children. I would earnestly say, "Do not sin against the child by such neglect." "No," says Reuben, "we will look after him when he is a man. He is in the pit now, but we are in hopes of getting him out later." That is the common

notion—that the children are to grow up unconverted—and that they are to be saved in later life. They are to be left in the pit, now, and to be drawn out by-and-by. This pernicious notion is sinning against the child! No word of Holy Scripture gives countenance to such a policy of delay and neglect! Neither nature nor grace pleads for it. It was the complaint of Jeremiah, "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast. They give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness." Let not such a charge lie against any one of us! Our design and objective should be that our children, while they are yet children, should be brought to Christ! And I ask those dear Brothers and Sisters here present who love the Lord not to doubt about the conversion of their little ones, but to seek it at once with all their hearts! Why should our Joseph remain in the pit of nature's corruption? Let us pray the Lord at once to take them up out of the horrible pit and save them with a great salvation!

There is yet a third way of sinning against the child, which plan was actually tried upon Joseph—they sold him—sold him to the Midianite merchantmen. They offered twenty pieces of silver for him and his brothers readily handed him over for that reward. I am afraid that some are half inclined to do the same now! It is imagined that now that we have school boards, we shall not need Sabbath schools as much, but may give over the young to the Secularists. Because the children are to be taught the multiplication table, they will not need to be taught the fear of the Lord! Strange reasoning, this! Can geography teach them the way to heaven, or arithmetic remove their countless sins? The more of secular knowledge our juveniles acquire, the more will they need to be taught in the fear of the Lord! To leave our youthful population in the hands of secular teachers will be to sell them to the Ishmaelites! Nor is it less perilous to leave them to the seductive arts of Ritualists and Papists. We who love the gospel must not let the children slip through our hands into the power of those who would enslave their minds by superstitious dogmas! We sin against the child if we hand it over to teachers of error!

The same selling of the young Joseph can be effected by looking only to their worldly interests and forgetting their souls. A great many parents sell their children by putting them out as apprentices to men of no character, or by placing them in situations where ungodliness is the paramount influence. Frequently the father does not ask where the boy can go on the Sabbath, and the mother does not inquire whether her girl can hear the gospel when she gets out—but good wages are looked after and not much else. They count themselves very staunch if they draw a line at Roman Catholics, but worldliness and even profligacy are not reckoned as barriers in many cases. How many there are of those who call themselves Christians who sell their daughters in marriage to rich men! The men have no religion whatever, but "it is a splendid match,"

because they move in high society! Young men and women are put into the matrimonial market and disposed of to the highest bidder—God is not thought of in the matter. Thus the rich depart from the Lord and curse their children quite as much as the poor. I am sure you would not literally sell your offspring for slaves, and yet to sell their souls is by no means less abominable! "Do not sin against the child." Do not sell him to the Ishmaelites. "Ah," you say, "the money is always handy." Will you take the price of blood? Shall the blood of your children's souls be on your skirts? I pray you, pause awhile before you do this!

Sometimes, *a child may be sinned against because he is disliked*. The excuse for undue harshness and severity is, "He is such a strange child!" You have heard of the swan that was hatched in a duck's nest. Neither duck, nor drake, nor ducklings could make anything out of the ugly bird and yet, in truth, it was superior to all the rest! Joseph was the swan in Jacob's nest and his brothers and even his father did not understand him. His father rebuked him and said, "Shall I and your mother and your brothers, indeed, come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth?" He was not understood by his own kin. I should fancy that he was a most uncomfortable boy to live with, for when his elder brothers transgressed, he felt bound to bring unto his father "their evil report." I doubt not that they called him, "a little sneak," though, indeed, he was a gracious child. His dreams also were very odd and considerably provoking, for he was always the hero of them. His brothers called him, "this dreamer," and evidently thought him to be a mere fool. He was his father's pet boy and this made him even more obnoxious to the other sons. Yet that very child who was so despised by his brothers, was the Joseph among them! History replicates itself and the difference in your child, which now causes him to be pecked at, may perhaps arise from a superiority which as yet hasn't found its sphere. At any rate, "do not sin against the child" because he is different, for he may rise to special distinction. Do not, of course, show him partiality and make him a coat of many colors—because if you do, his brothers will have some excuse for their envy. But, on the other hand, do not allow him to be snubbed and do not allow his spirit to be crushed.

I have known some who, when they have met with a little Joseph, have *sinned against him by foolish flattery*. The boy has said something rather good and then they have set him upon the table so that everybody might see him and admire what he had to say while he was coaxed into repeating his sage observations. Thus the child was made self-conceited, forward and pert. Children who are much exhibited are usually spoiled in the operation. I think I hear the proud parents say, "Now *do* see—*do* see what a wonderful boy my Harry is!" Yes, I do see. I do see what a wonderful stupid his mother is! I do see how unwise his father is to expose his boy to such peril! Do not sin against the child by fostering his pride, which, as it is an evil weed, will grow apace of itself!

In many cases, *the sin is of quite the opposite character*. Contemptuous sneers have chilled many a good desire and ridicule has nipped in the bud many a sincere purpose. Beware of checking youthful enthusiasm for good things. God forbid that you or I should quench one tiny spark of grace in a lad's heart, or destroy a single bud of promise! We believe in the piety of children—let us never speak, or act, or look as if we despised it!

"Do not sin against the child," whoever you may be. Whether you are teacher or parent, take care that if there is any trace of the little Joseph in your child, even though it be but in his dreams, you do not sin against him by attempting to repress the noble flame which God may be kindling in his soul. I cannot just now mention the many, many ways in which we may be offending against one of the Lord's little ones, but I would have you remember that if the Lord's love should light upon your boy, and he should grow up to be a distinguished servant of the Lord, your conscience will prick you and a voice will say in your soul, "Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child?" And if, on the other hand, your child should not become a Joseph, but an Absalom, it will be a horrible thing to be compelled to mingle with your lamentations the overwhelming consciousness that you led your child into the sin by which he became the dishonor of your family! If I see my child perish and know that he became a reprobate through my ill teaching and example, I shall have to wring my hands with dread remorse and cry, "I slew my child! I slew my child! And when I did it, I knew better, but I disregarded the voice which said to me, 'Do not sin against the child.'"

Now, dear Sunday school teachers, I will mention one or two matters which concern you. *"Do not sin against the child" by coming to your class with a chilly heart*. Why should you make your children cold towards divine things? Do not sin against them by coming too late, for that will make them think that punctuality is not a virtue and that the Sunday school is of no very great importance. "Do not sin against the child" by coming irregularly and absenting yourself at the smallest pretense, for that is distinctly saying to the child, "You can neglect to serve God when you please, for you see that this is what I do." "Do not sin against the child" by merely going through class routine, without really teaching and instructing. That is the *shadow* of Sunday school teaching and not the *substance*—and it is in some respects worse than nothing. "Do not sin against the child" by merely telling him a number of stories without setting forth the Savior, for that will be giving him a stone instead of bread. "Do not sin against the child" by aiming at anything short of his conversion to God through Jesus Christ the Savior!

And then, you parents, "*do not sin against the child" by being so very soon angry*. I have frequently heard grown-up people repeat that verse, "Children, obey your parents in all things." It is a very proper text—*very*

proper text—and boys and girls should carefully attend to it. I like to hear fathers and mothers preach from it, but there *is* that other one, you know. There *is* that other and—"Likewise, you fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Do not pick up every little thing against a good child and throw it in his or her teeth, and say, "Ah, if you were a Christian child, you would not do this and you would not do that!" I am not so sure about that—you who are heads of families do a great many wrong things, yourselves—and yet I hope you are Christians! And if your Father in heaven were sometimes to be as severe with you as you are with the sincere little ones when you are out of temper, I am afraid it would go very hard with you. Be gentle, kind, tender and loving.

At the same time, *do not sin against any child by over indulgence*. Spoiled children are like spoiled fruit—the less we see of them the better. In some families, the master of the house is the youngest boy, though he is not yet big enough to wear knickerbockers! He manages his mother and his mother, of course, manages his father. And so, in that way, he rules the whole house. This is unwise, unnatural and highly perilous to the pampered child! Keep boys and girls in proper subjection, for they cannot be happy themselves, nor can you be so unless they are in their places. Do not water your young plants either with vinegar or with syrup. Neither use too much nor too little of rebuke. Seek wisdom of the Lord, and keep the middle of the way.

In a word, "do not sin against the child," but train it in the way it should go, and bring it to Jesus that He may bless it. Cease not to pray for the child till his young heart is given to the Lord! May the Holy Spirit make you wise to deal with these young immortals! Like plastic clay, they are on the wheel. Oh that He would teach us how to mold and fashion their characters! Above all, may He put His own hands to the work—and then it will be done, indeed!

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

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A VISION OF THE KING
NO. 3238

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1863.

"Your eyes shall see the king in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."
Isaiah 33:17.

THIS morning [See Sermon #533, Volume 9—THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, OR, THE EARNEST INQUIRER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I spoke to you concerning the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon and tried to use it as illustration of the spirit in which sinners should come to Him who is far wiser and greater than Solomon. This evening I am going to continue in much the same strain while I try to speak to you, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from the well-known words which I have just read in your hearing. This passage is a rather difficult one to explain—at least certain expositors have done their best to make it appear to be so! They imagine that we have here a threat that the Jews should be carried away to Nineveh as captives and that in that far-off land they should see the Assyrian "king in his beauty." But I venture to say that if you read our text in its context, you will see that a threat would be altogether out of place here in the midst of so many precious promises to the people of God! There is nothing but love and kindness for them—where there *are* threats, they are for their enemies!

It is possible that the historical setting of the text is this—that the Jews who had seen their king, Hezekiah, in his "day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy"—when Sennacherib's vile letter had been brought to him, should live to see that same "king in his beauty" when the angel of the Lord had so mysteriously smitten the great host in the camp of the Assyrians and Hezekiah had gone up to the house of the Lord to return public thanks for the miraculous deliverance which had been worked in answer to prayer and in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy. But all students of Scripture must agree that "the King" here mentioned is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ—and that the promise of the text relates partly to the latter day glory, and more fully and more gloriously to the saint's experience in heaven—"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

Without any further preface, I will try to direct your thoughts to these four things. First, *a King pre-eminent.* Secondly, *a vision predicted.* Thirdly, *a peculiar beauty.* And, fourthly, *a land possessed.*

I. First, dear friends, we have plainly enough in the text, A KING PRE-EMINENT—"Your eyes shall see *the King*." No name is given and no name is needed. It is here as it was when the spouse began the Canticles by singing, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." There was no need to say to whom she was referring, for the chaste bride wanted no kisses from anyone but her beloved!

I am speaking to those who know the Lord and, therefore, I say to them—You know, beloved, that our Lord Jesus is King by divine right. He is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. God has appointed Him heir of all things, and by Him God made the worlds. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be 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." He "is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Well did the inspired prophet write concerning Him, "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." It is by His permission that other kings reign! And when He pleases, He can in a moment remove the mightiest monarchs from their throne! He is the only sovereign who is King by divine right—the absolute disposer of all events, to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given by His Father—in whose hands are the issues of life and death, and at whose belt hang the keys of the unseen world!

You remember too, beloved, that *our Lord Jesus Christ was a King even when He was upon the earth as a man*. He ruled over all the forces of nature. Stormy winds were hushed to sleep by His commanding word, "Peace! Be still." All diseases fled at His approach and the very demons proved that they, too, were under the control of His sovereign power! Even the king of terrors, Death, himself, had to openly acknowledge the sway of the far mightier King of kings and to yield up at His bidding those who had passed beneath the grim portals of his dread domains! Yet how shamefully wicked men maltreated this mighty monarch, before whom the holy angels had bowed in lowly obeisance, or waited on poised wings ready to fly on any errand on which He might deign to send them! You know the sad, sad story of the shameful indignities to which our King was subjected. They hung a soldier's coat around His shoulders in mockery of the imperial purple. They thrust a reed into His hand as a sham scepter. And for a crown, they twisted cruel thorns that pierced His blessed brow as they smote Him again and yet again, and bowed the knee before Him in the mere semblance of adoration. Yet there was a regal majesty about Him even when He was thus crowned King of grief; when Pilate asked Him the direct question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He did not deny it. And even when He hung upon the cross as a condemned criminal, the official title set up above His head in Hebrew, Greek and Latin was, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." He was much

more than that, for He was Lord *of all men and all angels, too,* and He could, in an instant, have summoned all the shining legions above to come to His relief! But He resolved to go through to the bitter end with the great work He had undertaken—and to be both Prince and Savior to give repentance and remission of sins to all for whom, as the great Kingly Substitute, He was laying down His life—

"To the shameful cross they nailed Him,
And that cross became His throne.
In the tomb they laid and sealed Him;
Lo the Savior bursts the stone
And ascending,
Claims all empire as His own!"

This same Jesus is now King in heaven. After His degradation came His exaltation. When He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, He was welcomed back to His throne with royal honors. The 24th Psalm gives a graphic and poetic description of the royal reception accorded to Him—"Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted 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 glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." This glorious King and Lord is also the ruler in providence—nothing can happen without His knowledge and permission! It is true that His universal sovereignty is not yet recognized and that this divine king is still "despised and rejected of men." But the day is coming when He shall appear again upon this earth. And at the hour decreed from all eternity, He shall be acclaimed as "King of kings, and Lord of lords," when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ: and He shall reign forever and ever." What "His beauty" is now, and ever shall be, mortal mind cannot conceive and mortal tongue can never tell. When John saw Him, as the "Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last," he fell at His feet as dead! And when Paul "was caught up into Paradise," he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter." Probably we can best express our anticipation of seeing our "King in His beauty" by singing, with Dr. Watts—

"There, where my blessed Jesus reigns,
In heaven's unmeasured space,
I'll spend a long eternity
In pleasure and in praise!
Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall over Your beauties rove;
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of Your love."

I must not forget to remind you that *our Lord Jesus Christ is still King in His church on earth*. That is the true established church, for it is founded upon the rock and it is so firmly established that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ's church is a royal church, for it

has a King—no, more—the "King of kings "at the head of it. "The Lord reigns" everywhere, but let us who are His loyal subjects especially set Him on high upon the throne of our hearts and—

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

II. Now, secondly, we have A VISION PREDICTED—"Your eyes shall see the King."

Mark well that this is not a vision to be seen by you who have never looked to Christ by faith and who have never trusted to His precious blood to cleanse you from your sin! The sight of the glorified Savior is only for those who have looked upon the dishonored Savior hanging on the cross of Calvary—it is *their* eyes that "shall see the King in His beauty."

And, first, *this will be a near sight*. By faith we have had, as it were, a telescopic view of Christ, but we are yet to see Him face to face, and to talk with Him as we talk with a dear familiar friend. Even a distant sight of Him ravishes the heart, but oh, what must it be to see Him without a veil between us? We need not envy John who leaned his head upon his Master's bosom, for we shall have closer communion with our glorified Lord than even the beloved apostle enjoyed while here below!

Then, changing only one consonant, *it will be a dear sight*, as well as a near sight! We shall look upon our heavenly bridegroom with eyes shining with sinless love and we shall rejoice that He is our husband, our Beloved, our all in all! I must leave your sanctified imagination to conceive what this sight must be, for I cannot possibly picture it for you. I look upon a child and see some comeliness in it, but the child's mother can see beauties that no stranger can perceive—the love of the heart adds to the appreciation of the eyes. So is it with this near and dear vision of our King that is promised to the believer—"your eyes shall see the King in His beauty."—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below—
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy!"

And further, as it will be a near and dear sight, *so will it also be an assured sight*. We often fancy that we see certain things, but we are not sure that we really see them. There is much here that tends to cheat the eyes and pervert the vision, but when we see Jesus as He is, it will be an assured sight about which there will be no possible question. No one of us will then have to ask—

"Do I love the Lord, or no,
Am I His, or am I not?"

We shall not then have to search and see whether our spot is the spot of God's children, for we shall know even as we are known! And the King Himself shall say to us, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

And then, beloved, *it will be a satisfying sight*. There is no solid satisfaction in anything that the eye can see in this world. People say,

"See Naples and die," but I have met many who have seen even that fair city and they have all wanted to live to see something more! Even Naples could not satisfy them. The most charming vision that sea, or land, or even the starry sky can give, can never satisfy an immortal spirit! But the believer in Jesus says with David, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." When my "eyes shall see the King in His beauty," my soul will exclaim, "It is enough, my Lord! My eyes have at last found the one object upon which they can rest forever! I am perfectly satisfied with You."

Yet even the word, *satisfying*, cannot fully express all that this vision of the King will be, for *it will be a ravishing sight*, a rapturous, ecstatic, entrancing, transporting vision! I cannot find words that are adequate to describe this sight! One must see it to know how glorious it is. Heaven will be a place of many surprises, but the vision of our glorified King will astonish us forever! We shall be amazed to all eternity that such a wondrous being as God's eternal Son could ever have loved such worthless worms as we are—that so glorious a King could have stooped so low as to take up for Himself our nature—and then that He should have been willing to endure for our sakes the death of the cross! That will be a marvel that we shall never be able to understand! We shall also be surprised that we did not know Him more fervently and that we did not do, and dare, and even die for Him who had loved us so much that He did die for us! Perhaps some of us, now and then, have had such rapturous experiences that we have felt like the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." But the extraordinary seasons have never been permanent with any of us, and usually they have been very transient. Yet, up yonder it will be our normal ambition to be lost and swallowed up in a never-ending ravishing vision of our glorious and beauteous King!

I must not omit to remind you that *this will be an assimilating sight*. I don't like that long word, but I mean that it will be a sight that will make us like He, upon whom we shall then be gazing! "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." It is looking by faith to Christ that gives us any likeness to Him which we possess even now—but a clear view of our gracious "King in His beauty" shall transform us into a perfect likeness to Him. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren—and His brethren shall, ultimately, in all things be made like unto Him!

I will add only one more characteristic of this vision of Christ—*it will be an everlasting sight*. When our Sabbath services are over, some of you go out of the Tabernacle with heavy hearts. You have to go home to a sick household, perhaps to a persecuting husband or an ungodly wife. You are coming with us to the communion table and when you leave the assembly of the saints, you will have to go where you will cry with the Psalmist, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" I do not wonder that you sang with such heartiness just now—

"Oh when, you city of my God,
Shall I, your courts ascend
Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?"

Ah, well, that everlasting *Sabbatismos*—that eternal keeping of Sabbath may be nearer than you think! And when once you enter into that blessed state, you will remain in it forever. "Your eyes," my poor brother or sister, "shall see the King in His beauty," and you shall never lose that rapturous vision!

III. Time fails me, so I must go on to the third point, A PECULIAR BEAUTY—"Your eyes shall see *the King in His beauty*."

Now, the "beauty" of a king consists, first, *in his person*, so you shall see the beauty of Christ's person. It is delightful to think of the priestly, prophetic and royal offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, but our choicest meditations must ever cluster around His blessed person. All His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia. His name is as ointment poured forth, but He, Himself, is "altogether lovely." It is no phantom, no shadow at which we are to look, but we are to see the King, Himself—that King who once was the babe in Bethlehem, the carpenter at Nazareth—who went about doing good, preaching the gospel, healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the fainting multitudes—that same Jesus who agonized in Gethsemane and died on Calvary—this is the King whom we are to see in all the glory of His combined deity and humanity, very God of very God, yet just as truly man!

The "beauty" of a king also consists in part in the glory of his official robes and jewels and ornaments. "Your eyes shall see the king in His beauty—not as men saw Him when His ruby robe was formed from His own blood, when His only diamonds were His tears or the flashing of His eyes in pity for His foes—and who the only crown He wore was made of thorns. Pilate mockingly said to the Jews, "Behold your king!" But the heavenly heralds, with sound of trumpet, will cry to the saints in a far different fashion, "Behold your King!" and they shall behold Him "crowned with glory and honor." On His head shall be many crowns—the crowns which His Father has given Him, the crowns which He has won from His enemies, the crowns which shall be cast at His feet to tell of His universal sovereignty—and they shall see Him "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood…and on His vesture and on His thigh a name written—King of kings, and Lord of lords."—

"Sinners in decision crowned Him,
Mocking thus the Savior 's claim;
Saints and angels crowd around Him,
Own His title, praise His name;
Crown Him, crown Him;
Spread abroad the Victor's fame.
Hark! Those bursts of acclamation!
Hark! Those loud triumphant chords!
Jesus takes the highest station:
Oh what joy the sight affords!
Crown Him, crown Him,

'King of kings, and Lord of lords.'"

Again, a king's "beauty" consists *in the trophies that tell of his triumphs*. When kings return from their wars, they delight in displaying the flags that have been captured from their foes, or the prisoners and other tokens of victory by which they are surrounded. In the olden days, the great warrior kings would have their stricken foes chained to their triumphal chariots, or marching as slaves in the victor's possession. And the Lord has given to Christ the necks of His enemies and they will gladly grace His triumphal procession, for they are captives who have been made willing in the day of His power and who, strangely enough, share in the glory of His triumph, for they are now His friends, His brethren with whom He delights to divide all that He has!

Further, the "beauty" of a king sometimes consists *in the splendor of his court and the excellence of his courtiers*, and our eyes are to see our King in His beauty surrounded by "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues...clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," crying with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Beside these sinners saved by grace, there will be the innumerable host of holy angels who have never sinned and who all yield unfaltering obedience to our great Lord and King. What a sublime spectacle it will be when the great commander in chief shall have the whole army of the redeemed gathered before Him for the final review—not one soldier of the cross missing, not one dead, or wounded, or captured by the enemy, but all of them more than conquerors through Him that has loved them! May you and I, beloved, be among them!—

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity!"

IV. Now I close with but a brief mention of A LAND POSSESSED.

Read the text thus, "the land that is very far off" *from sinners*. They look upon this world as something that is present to their senses, but they regard the world to come as so "very far off " that it hardly seems to concern them at all! They take no more interest in the "land that is very far off" than a poor farmer in a country village takes in some republic in South America of which he has only heard the name. They know no more about heaven than swine know about the stars in the firmament, perhaps not as much, for the swine can see the stars, but heaven is "very far off" from sinners so long as they remain in their sins! Yet if they will but leave their sins and look to Jesus in all the beauty of His substitutionary sacrifice for the guilty, that far-off land shall be brought very near to them and, in God's good time, they shall enter it and abide there forever and ever!

Sometimes, heaven is "the land that is very far off" *from the doubting Christian,* so that he fears that he shall never get there. He dreams of a rough road that has no end, or cries out that he has no hope of escaping

from the Slough of Despond. Yet, to a believer in Jesus, heaven is not "very far off." No, it is so near that he may be there before I have finished my sermon, or even before I have finished this sentence—

'One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks:
We scarcely can say, 'He's gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne!"

Do not fret about tomorrow! You may be in heaven before tomorrow. Even if we have to abide here a while—

"Though in a foreign land,
We are not far from home;
And nearer to our house above
We every moment come."

I find that the marginal reading is "the land of far distances." Heaven is a land of magnificent distances where there shall be abundant room for the multitude that no man can number and where in all things, even in the number of the saved, Christ shall have the preeminence. Shall Satan capture the most of men? I do not believe that he will—if he could do so, he would have the preeminence, but that can never be! Christ "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." But do you think that a small number of souls saved would satisfy Him? Would that be a fitting sequel to His soul travail? Oh, no! I believe in a great heaven and a great multitude of great sinners saved by the great sacrifice of the great Savior, who shall bring great glory to His great name and the great grace of the great Father, Son and Spirit forever and ever! But, my dear hearer, however great it all is, of what use will it be to you if you do not have a share in it? My text says, *"Your* eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." That applies to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! Is that what *you* are? If so, my text is a promise to you as surely as if your own name had been mentioned in it! If you will now believe in Jesus, if you will trust Him, if you will rely upon Him—it all means the same thing—this promise is for you and it shall be fulfilled in your experience in God's own time! May God the Holy Spirit give you the grace to turn your eyes by faith to the Lamb of God who died for sinners upon the cross of Calvary! And then to you, even to you, I can repeat the promise of the text, *"Your* eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land of far distances." The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 7:9-17; ISAIAH 49.

Revelation 7:9. *After this.* I thought I would read this familiar and very precious passage once more as so many of our number have gone home to heaven during the past few weeks. There has been a great flight of the Lord's doves upward to the heavenly dovecotes lately. We will think of them as we read these well-known words—"After this"—

9. *I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.* Their purity is indicated by the white robes in which they were clothed and possibly, also, their royal priesthood, while their victory over all their foes is typified by the palms which they held in their hands. Montgomery was right when he wrote—

"Palms of glory, raiment bright,
Crowns that never fade away,
Gird and deck the saints in light,
Priests, and kings, and conquerors they."

10. *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb.* They all sing one song and it is the same song that we sing on earth, "Salvation to our God." They know nothing up in Heaven of any salvation by the works of the law or by human merits. Oh, no! They sing, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

11, 12. *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.* You see that all the glory is given to God—man is lost sight of—humanitarianism has no place of honor in heaven, though many, nowadays, make so much of it here on earth. It is unto Father, Son and Spirit—unto the one and only creator, Savior, inspirer that the angels ascribe "blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might…forever and ever."

13-17. *And one of the elders answered saying unto me, Who are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* [See Sermon #1316, Volume 22—WHY THE HEAVENLY ROBES ARE WHITE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple—and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountain of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* [See Sermons #643, Volume 11—NO TEARS IN HEAVEN; #1800, Volume 30—HEAVEN BELOW and #2128, Volume 36—HEAVEN ABOVE AND HEAVEN BELOW—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is a vision of the heavenly life above. I want you to keep the last two verses in your minds, for we shall presently meet with very similar expressions in a place where, perhaps, you would scarcely have expected to find them—and there you will see that those expressions are used concerning the heavenly life below as here they are used concerning the heavenly life above. Turn to the book of the prophet Isaiah, the 49th chapter, and there you will read a passage which brings

us back to earth. It takes us from the Lamb in the midst of the throne in heaven to the Lamb amidst the despising and rejecting sons of men. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who is here speaking—

Isaiah 49:1-3. *Listen, O isle, unto Me, and hearken, you people from far; The LORD has called Me from the womb, from the bowels of My mother has He made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He hid Me and said unto Me, You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* Our Lord became, by His incarnation—by His very birth so marvelous and mysterious—He became that servant of Jehovah by whom God would be glorified! He was, as it were, hidden away, like a sword in its master's scabbard—concealed and protected like an arrow hidden in its owner's quiver—until the time came for God to use Him. And then God did use Him both as a sharp sword and as a polished shaft.

4. *Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God.* The Jews, as a nation, were not gathered unto Christ. The highly favored people, as a whole, did not believe in Him. He was expressly sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet John was obliged to write, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." So few became His personal followers that it really appeared as if His lifework had been a failure—but He did what all God's true servants must do—He referred His work to the Lord. He said, "Surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work (or My *record*) with My God." If we are faithful, that is all that our gracious Master requires of us—we are, none of us, bound to be successful! If we bear our sincere testimony to the truth of God and everybody rejects it, our reward will be none the less in the day when the Lord calls us to give an account of our stewardship. If you, my brother or my sister, are loyal and true to Him whose servant you are, when your Lord comes again, He will say to you, "Well done, you good and faithful servant…enter you into the joy of your Lord."

5, 6. *And now, says the LORD that formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribe of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth.* Though Jesus seemed to fail with the Jews, He has succeeded in a far greater measure with the Gentiles, for great multitudes of them have gladly accepted Him as their Savior!

7, 8. *Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to the servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You. Thus says the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard You, and in*

a day of salvation have I helped You. Jehovah will bless His Anointed! He will accomplish His great purposes of love and mercy through Him.

8, 9. *And I will preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people,* [See Sermon #103, Volume 2—CHRIST IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages, that You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.* [See Sermon #2397, Volume 41—"OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is Christ's work today, to call out the forgotten ones who are hidden away in the dungeons of the bastille of despair. He comes and calls them, "Go forth…show yourselves." And at His bidding they appear, even as Lazarus came forth from the grave at His command. Now listen—this is what becomes of those who come out of sin's prison at Christ's call! They become His sheep—

9. *They shall feed in the ways*—On their way to the one great fold on the hilltops of glory, they shall find suitable and sufficient pasture—"They shall feed in the ways."

9, 10. *And their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.* Now recall those verses from the revelation that we read just now and note what blessings the good shepherd has prepared for His sheep even while they are upon this earth!

11-13. *And I will make all My mountain a way, and My highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD has comforted His people.* [See Sermon #3012, Volume 52—GOD COMFORTING HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Well may heaven and earth and mountains sing when they have such a theme for their songs as this!

13, 14. *And will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.* Zion said so, but it was not true! Hear what the Lord says—

15, 16. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.* [See Sermons #512, Volume 9—A PRECIOUS DROP OF HONEY and #2672, Volume 46—NEITHER FORSAKEN NOR FORGOTTEN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] However unnatural an earthly mother may prove to be, God will never forsake or forget one of His children—

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

16-21. *Your walls are continually before Me. Your children shall make haste, your destroyer and they that make you waste shall go forth from you. Lift up your eyes round about, and behold: all that gather themselves*

together, and come to you. As I live, says the LORD, you shall surely clothe yourselves with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you, as a bride does. For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed you up shall be far away. The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell. Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive and moving to and fro? And who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? [See Sermons #2692, Volume 46—CHURCH INCREASE and #2776, Volume 48—THE CHURCH A MOTHER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, that we might often have such a glad surprise as this and be made to marvel at the Lord's gracious dealings with us!

22-26. *Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people: and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be your nursing fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers: they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet, and you shall know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus says the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children. And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.* The enemies of the Lord's people are His enemies, too, and He will overthrow them in His own good time—and make the whole world know that He is their Savior and Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob!

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WOE AND WEAL
NO. 3239

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me, He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness."
Micah 7:9.

THOSE who expect to find the road to heaven smooth and unobstructed will discover little in the experience of the ancient saints to support the expectation. The Lord's people have, in all ages, been tried people. Cowper well says—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Though, perhaps, to the youthful mind this may sound rather harsh, yet there is a large amount of comfort in it to the more advanced saint, for he says to himself, "Then my difficulties, my distresses, my tribulations, are no new thing. I am in the footsteps of the flock. I can see that I am traveling in the good old way that leads to God—

'The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment.'

Did I meet with no chastisement, I might fear that I was not a child of God, but inasmuch as I am made to smart under the rod, I may hopefully infer from it, if I feel the spirit of adoption within, that my Father has not forgotten me."

All sorts of trials have beset the saints of God. Rough winds have blown upon them from all points of the compass and they have had bad weather in all seasons of the year. They have been plagued from within and assailed from without. The arrows of temptation have come upwards from the pit and often the blows of the rod have come downward from the throne. There is no form of sorrow, I suppose, which has not been experienced by the chosen of the Lord, though, blessed be His name, the Lord has delivered them out of it all!

Micah appears to have been troubled by a combination of difficulties and afflictions. He was grieved at the low estate of the church—a combination which ought to affect some of us a great deal more than it does. Alas, there are some who will always be contented enough if their own house shall flourish, though God's house should be utterly ruined! Micah loved the church of God—and the low estate of it cut him to the quick. Moreover, the generation among whom he lived added to his grief. "The best of them," he said, "is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge. "Doubtless he sympathized with the cry of David when he said, "Woe is me, that I sojourn Mesech; that I dwell in the tents

of Kedar!" Ill company vexed his soul as the Sodomites vexed the soul of the righteous Lot. And it appears, from reading the chapter though, that he also had a personal difficulty—probably in the matter of slander. He speaks of "her that is my enemy." You may notice how he dwells upon it—upon himself being persecuted and maligned—but he implies his belief that God would arise and plead his righteous cause. Slander is no uncommon injury for the children of God to bear. That which false tongues glibly utter, ungenerous minds easily credit—and a pure conscience is exquisitely sensitive. The birds will pluck at the ripe fruits, whatever they may do with the sour ones. The longest trees cast the longest shadows and those who stand the highest are often said by men of the world to be the most base. God was slandered in paradise—why should we expect to escape being slandered in the midst of this world of sinners?

It seems that in the midst of all this affliction which had befallen Micah—affliction far heavier than any words of mine can describe—the prophet was led into meditation! And in this meditation he penned the words of our text, in which we may discern, first, what *the prophet felt*. He says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Secondly, *what he believed*—"until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me." And, thirdly, *what he expected*—"He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness."

I. While tracing out WHAT THE PROPHET FELT, if we happen to be feeling the same, it may comfort us to hear the voice of a fellow pilgrim passing through the valley of death-shade.

Doubtless *he felt the smart of the rod*. The tone of his utterance shows this. He speaks like a man who could not be callous, for his had been touched in his inmost soul. I think God intends that His people should feel the rod. If we had manifold temptations, but were never depressed in spirit by them, I question whether they would answer any good design. The "necessity" is not only for the trial, but for the "heaviness" which results from the trial, for you remember that the apostle says, "If necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There is a "necessity" that the rod should make the child smart. To play the Stoic under trouble is a very different thing from playing the Christian. In fact, it is the very opposite of it! Our great Savior did not stand at the grave of Lazarus and say coldly, "It is well," without any show of emotion—but "Jesus wept." So we are permitted, no, *expected*, to weep when God chastens us. Do not ask, dear friends, that your nerves may became steel and you have sinews of iron. This would be no excellence—it is rather an excellence to be sensitive under the hand of God! I see not how, excepting by the blueness of the wound, the hurt can be made better. It is when the trouble really stings that it blesses—when the flail falls heavily upon the wheat that it separates the chaff from the pure grain! Expect not to play the bravado with God! Expect, rather, to have to humble yourself before Him and out of the depths to cry out, as others

have done, unto the Most High! It is clear, from the language he uses, that the prophet felt the smart of the rod.

It is equally clear that *he readily perceived that the rod was held in the hand of God*. Not all Christians can see this, especially in the case of slander. We generally exhaust our thoughts upon the second cause and vent our indignation upon the framer of mischief. We are angry with the person who has caused us our loss, or put us to shame, instead of knowing that God uses even the wicked to chastise His people! Beat a small dog and it will try to bite the stick—if it were a reasoning creature, it would try to bite you! Sometimes you and I are doggish and we snap at the instrument that makes us smart. We are irritated with the missile which has smitten us to our grief. Oh, that we would but look up and see that there is a hand—an unseen hand that wields the agencies of providence—and realize that not a stroke comes upon the Christian but is given by his heavenly Father's will! Would to God we were not so accustomed to generally stop at second causes! I am afraid that this is a part of the philosophy of the age. When the world was very ignorant, men used to pray for rain and thank God for it when it came—they believed that thunder was the voice of God and lightning was the glittering of His spear! Now we have grown so wise that we attribute all startling visitations to natural causes. We will scarcely pray to have cholera or plague removed; or ask for anything desirable as the bountiful gift of heaven; the philosophy that puts God farther off from us than He used to be, would be better unlearned and a truer philosophy known.

At any rate, as far as personal sorrows are concerned, it would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which God never sent me—that the bitter cup was never filled by His hands, that my trials were never measured out by Him, nor sent to me by His arrangement of their weight and quantity. Oh, that would be bitterness indeed! But, on the contrary, the prophet sees the hand of God in all his trials! And I pray that you and I may do the same. May we see that our heavenly Father fills the cup with loving tenderness and holds it out, and says, "Drink, My child; bitter as it is, it is a love potion which is meant to do you permanent good." The discerning of the hand of God is a sweet lesson in the school of experience.

As he felt the smart and traced that smart to the hand of God, *the prophet discerned that he had sinned*. "Because I have sinned," he said. We do not always see that quite as clearly in health as we do in sickness. A night or two of weary tossing upon our bed will do more for us as to heart work and as to the depravity of our nature than a hundred sermons! To be despised and misrepresented, to have to creep into a corner away from one's best friends because they are alienated from you, or to have to go to the grave with one after another of the dearest objects of one's affection—these are sermons under which we cannot sleep and sermons, the responsibility of which we cannot shift to another. God's children, if they are as they should be, are greatly profited and benefited in the discovery of sin by the affliction which God sends them. I had

never known the loathsomeness there was in my heart if the spade of tribulation had not turned over the green sods of my profession and made me see therein holes and places where loathsome things did creep and crawl within. Do not shun the furnace, dear friends! You certainly need *not* pray for it—you will have enough of it without praying for it—but if God sends it, do not be afraid of it. There is no more enriching place in the world to go to than to the Egypt of bondage, for you shall come up out of it with jewels of silver and of gold. I am of Rutherford's mind when he said that "Of all the wine in God's cellar, birch wine may be the most bitter, but it is the best." And so it is. You shall never see the stars shine with such splendor as at the North Pole where the sharp frosts and the long winter have taken away the light of the natural day. All the Arctic voyagers tell us that there seems to be an excessive sparkle about the stars there—as it is in the winter of trouble! We then see the sparkling of the grace of God as a contrast to the evil which we discover in our own hearts.

Another thing the prophet felt was *the trouble he then experienced from God dealing with his sin*. We must always discriminate between things that differ. God never *punishes* His people for sin in the sense of a loyal and vindictive infliction. That would be unjust, for Christ, their substitute, was once and for all punished in their place. They owe no debts to divine justice, for all their debts were paid by Christ to the utmost farthing. But now they are placed under a different government. They are not summoned before a judge, but they are put under *parental care*—and like as a father chastens every child who he loves, so our heavenly Father chastens us. Again, I say not with a *legislative punishment* for sin, but with a *father's chastisement* for our offenses.

Antinomians have gone the length of saying that there is no such thing as chastisement for sin; very likely not, as far as they are concerned. I do not suppose that they were ever worth chastening, or that God ever took the trouble to chastise them. But He does chastise His own children and I think they who know their adoption will not be long before they get a very clear realization of it in the tingling of their flesh under the rod of the covenant. Why, of all the blessings of the covenant, the sharpest, but one of the best, is the rod. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Your word," said David—and that testimony of David's is the testimony of all the saints! They will all tell you that they have to bless the hand of a chastening God quite as much as they have to bless the lips of a caressing God when He kisses them with the kisses of His mouth. No, the children of God cannot sin without smarting for it, even as God said to the children of Israel, "You, only, have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If some boys were breaking windows in the street, tonight, and you went by, you might let them all alone save and except your own boy if you saw him there! And most likely you would make him smart for it. And when God goes through the world, as this is not the Day of Judgment, He winks at the sins of many sinners, but if He

sees His people transgressing, He will not wink at them! I have often felt very glad when I have seen some of God's people come down in the world to poverty. I have not rejoiced at their misfortunes, but I have been glad of the gracious discipline it indicated. I have sometimes said of such and such a man, "If that man prospers, acting as he does in business, I shall know that he is not a child of God. If he is a child of God, he cannot do as other men do without making a terrible misadventure of it before long." If you only want gain in this world do not be a Christian, nor pretend to be one! You cannot expect God and mammon to agree together. If you are a Christian, God will watch you more narrowly than others. If you are a king's counsel, a little thing will be treason in you which would not have been treason in an ordinary subject. God expects great things where He gives great things—and if He honors us so much as to tell us the secret of His covenant, He expects us to walk with the greatest possible circumspection. So, Christian, whenever you are in trouble, though it may not be distinctly the result of sin, yet you may well inquire whether it is so or not. Say with Job, "Show me why You contend with me." At the bottom of our sorrow there is generally a sin—at the roots of our grief we shall find our guilt.

Observe one more point. *The prophet felt that since he could connect his suffering with his sins, he could bear it.* "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." It was a grand point in Aaron when he "held his peace." In that case, "silence was golden," indeed! And when we distinctly see our trouble coming upon us and springing out of our wrong doing, what can we say, what can we do but put our hand upon our mouth and humbly bow before God? I am persuaded, dear friends, that we often make more trouble for ourselves by holding an argument with God about our trouble. When your child is stubborn, as long as he holds out and fights it out with you, you will not put away the rod. But when, with broken heart and weeping eyes, he confesses that you have done right and that he has been wrong, then your heart moves towards him and yearns with compassion! It is so with our God, so let us cast ourselves into His hands. It is a sweet thing to be able to say, "Well, Lord, do as You will with me." It is not easy to say it when the pain is acute, or when the inward grief is very heavy—but it is a sweet relief to let the knife, as it were, into the gathering—it gives us ease to say, "Not as I will, but as You will." You are not far from liberty when you are content to sit there in the dungeon till He wills to let you out! When you can say in your spirit, "Strike, Lord, if You will—only sanctify the rod to me! But go on striking if You so will—I will not say a single word against all that You do. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.'" Have you ever read Brooks' *Mute Christian Under a Smarting Rod?* If you have not, you might do so with great profit, if you can get a copy of it. But better than reading that will be to go out, yourselves, and be "mute Christians under a smarting rod."

If some of you do not know anything about this infliction, now, you will one day. You need not wish that the day may be very soon. But when it comes, remember what has been said to you, tonight, and "bear the indignation of the Lord" as the prophet Micah did.

II. Let us inquire, briefly, in the second place, WHAT DID THE PROPHET BELIEVE?

He believed that he had an Advocate above. Though he would not plead for himself, yet he says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord…until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me." Every believer has at least two advocates in heaven. His Father, Himself, is his Advocate. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Have you never felt your own heart plead for your child when you have said to him, "Now you are under my displeasure—go away, I do not want to see you again—go to your bedroom and stay there"? And if you have heard him moaning there, and sighing and crying, oh, your heart has ached to be with him! You have said to yourself, "Have I been too severe?" And though you may have come to the conclusion that you were not, but that it was necessary for his good, still your child does not need to plead for himself, for your heart pleads for him! "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." Oh, the tenderness of God's heart, even when you feel the roughness of God's hand! Oh to believe, Christian, that God is, as it were, doing despite to Himself when He smites you—that although His wisdom and His highest love appoint it—this tenderness of love would gladly let you go unchastened unless the knowledge and prudence of recognized love dictate that it was for your welfare that you should feel the smart! You have an advocate in your Father, Himself, and then you have another advocate whose office it is to plead for you—your blessed Lord Jesus! Could you want a better? In all your afflictions He is afflicted. He can sympathize with every pang that torments you, with every doubt that oppresses you—

"He takes you through no darker rooms
Than He went through before."

And at the everlasting throne, when you are being sifted like wheat, He is praying that your faith fail not, and so the rod passes away. And full often, what is worse than the rod, the axe, too, because the Intercessor pleads for us! Yes, we have an advocate above to plead our cause!

And do you notice that *the prophet puts with the pleading above, activity on earth*? He looks at his present trouble, which seems in his case to have been slander, and he says that the Lord, Himself, would execute judgment for him. When David took his sword in his hand and declared that not a single man of the house of Nabal would be alive by morning light, how furious was the son of Jesse as he marched at the head of his clan! And what a blessing it was when Abigail, the wise woman, knelt before him and stopped him, and said, "My lord fights the battles of the Lord." David stopped and thought to himself that when he became a king, it would be no small consideration to be able to feel that

he had not shed blood in haste—so he put up his sword and went his way. There was no need for David to slay Nabal, for ten days afterwards the Lord struck him and he died. Why, oh why, should we be in such a great hurry to fight our own battles?

Brothers and sisters, if anybody should speak hard words of us, we are up in arms at once. "Oh," says one, "I will have this wrong righted! My character is too precious to be lost in that way." "Yes," says another, "I will see the thing through! I will have the law after such and such people." Well, now, be still, or go and fight the Lord's battles, or let God fight for you! What is your name or your character, after all? Who will be any the better for your caring about such an insignificant creature as you are? Why, when you are dead and gone, the world will not miss you! It is amazing what great beings we are in our own esteem—and yet what little beings we really are, after all! When Mr. Whitelock was much troubled about the peril of England, his servant said to him, "Mr. Whitelock, did England get on pretty well before you were born?" "Oh, yes, John! Very well, indeed." "And do you think it will get on all right when you are dead?" "Yes, I think it will, John." "Very well, then. If I were you, sir, I'd leave it to God without troubling yourself about it." The fact is, the longer I live, the more I feel that the very things which I fret about are the things that go wrong! But the other matters that I can just put on the shelf and leave with God always go right! A line in one of our hymns says—

"'Tis mine to obey; 'tis His to provide."

While we are trying to provide, we neglect to obey—and so the obeying and the providing both go awry! If it is a battle of your own, leave it alone! In everything else, if you want a thing done, do it yourself! But in the matter of your own character, if you need it defended, leave it alone! God will take care of it and the less you stir in that matter, the better will it be for you—and the more for God's glory!

What a sweet thing it is, then, to believe that you have One to plead for you above—and that the same Lord will vindicate your cause below! How blessed it is for you to live with the consciousness that you have left everything in His hands, casting your burden upon the Lord—and making it your only burden to pray to Him and *serve* Him all the days of your life!

III. Now, lastly, WHAT WAS IT THAT THE PROPHET EXPECTED?

He said, "He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness." Believer, will you also expect this—*that God will bring you forth to the light*? "Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart." But if you are not of good courage, your heart will be weak. If Satan can persuade you that the night will never give place to the morning, then he can make an easy prey of you. But if you can say with Micah, "He will bring me forth to the light." If you can still feel persuaded that God never did cast one of His chosen ones down without intending to lift him up again, that He never kills without making alive and never wounds without intending to heal. Why, then, your worst and multiplied

afflictions can be borne with holy cheerfulness and confidence! "He will bring me forth to the light." Oh, what a mercy it is to come forth to the light after you have been in the dark! How sweet the light is then! I have heard people, who have been very sick, say that after they have recovered, life has been a perfect joy to them. I know one who very seldom has a day free from pain—and when she does have such a day, it is a day, indeed! You can see by the very sparkling of her eyes how good a thing it is to live! It is almost worthwhile to suffer pain to have the joy of being delivered from it! And so, when a child of God has been tried, tempted, afflicted—and he once gets out of it—what joy and peace he has! If you are baptized in trouble, when you lift your head, again, you shall come out all the fairer and the brighter for the washing—and thank each billow that breaks over you for the good it has brought you as you come forth to the light. Then you shall be able to sing—

"'For yet I know I shall Him praise
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yes, my own God is He.'

"He has succored me, before, so I can say to Him, 'Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.' If I cannot get the light of Your face, the very shadow of Your wings shall make me glad, for I shall feel that I am safe even under their shadow! O God, you will bring forth Your people to the light and they shall triumph in Your exalted right arm, O my delivering God!"

Then the prophet added, *"and I shall behold His righteousness."* One might have half-forgiven him if he had said, after being slandered, "I shall behold my own righteousness—men shall see it, too, and they shall honor me the more because they treated me so unjustly for a time." Oh, no, it is not so written! But, "I shall behold *His righteousness*." To see the righteousness of God in having tried us. To clearly discern His wisdom, His goodness, His truth, His faithfulness in having afflicted us—and more and more to see how suited to our case is the fullness of righteousness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus—this is the divine result from all our troubles! So may it be with us till the last wave of trouble breaks over us and we enter into everlasting rest!

Dear friends, I commend the text to you. May you live in the spirit of it, and may the Lord help you to glorify Him even as the prophet Micah did!

Alas I know that there are some here who have their troubles and they have no God to go to. How I pity you! The snow that falls tonight makes it very cheerless for you who have to be out in it—and the thaw makes the snow press through your boots till your very bones and marrow seem chilled. Thank God we can get the curtains drawn and sit around the fire—and even if the blast blows outside, it is all warm within. But what must it be to have no home to go to? What must it be to be a houseless wanderer on such a night as this? What must it be to pass by houses all alight and cheerful, and to say, "There is no 'home, sweet home' for me—I am an outcast and must tread these snowy streets all night"? I hope

there is no such creature in London who will have to do so. One could pity such a poor wretch indeed! But think, my dear friends, what it must be for your soul to have no home at the last—when the storm of wrath shall fall, to have nothing to comfort you—to be driven from God's presence! To have no Father in heaven; to find no warmth of love in the divine heart; to see the happiness of angels, and the joy of glorified spirits—perhaps to see your own children in heaven and to be, yourselves, shut out! Dear ones whom you loved on earth, divided from you by a great gulf forever! Happily, the day of grace is not yet over! The day of mercy is not yet past! The long eternal night has not yet set in! Hurry, sinner! There is a home for you if you have grace to knock at this door! The door is mercy! To knock is prayer! To step across the threshold is faith! Trust the Lord Jesus and you need not fear, though all your life you should be tried. You need not fear the accumulated terrors of the latter days, whatever they may be, nor fear the dread trumpet of judgment, nor the last tremendous day! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus now! May His Spirit draw you this night! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MICAH 7.

The prophet begins in a sorrowful strain and there is much that is sad in the chapter, yet there is also much of holy confidence in God.

Verse 1. *Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.* It is a terrible thing for a good man to find good men growing very scarce and to see wicked men becoming more wicked than ever. It makes him feel his loneliness very keenly—and joy seems to be banished from his heart.

2. *The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt, every man, his brother with a net.* Those were sad times in which Micah lived. And yet, under some aspects, one might be willing and even glad to live in such times, for if ever one could be useful to one's fellows, surely it would be then! God had need of a voice like that of the prophet Micah in the days when His worship was forsaken and the true faith had almost died out among men! Unless God had left a Micah here and there, the land would have been as Sodom and have been made like unto Gomorrah. So the more unpleasant the age was to the good man, the more necessary and profitable was he to that age!

3. *That they may earnestly do evil with both hands.* I wish the professed followers of Christ did *good* with both hands, that is, with every faculty, with every capacity, in every way and at every opportunity, just as wicked men "earnestly do evil with both hands."

3. *The prince asks, and the judge asks for a reward; and the great man, he utters his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.* Honesty seemed to have died out of the nation! The highest people in the land, who ought

to have been beyond the power of bribery, sold the administration of justice to the highest bidder. Ah, those were evil times, indeed!

4. *The best of them is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of your watchmen and your visitation comes; now shall be their perplexity.* Sin brings sorrow in its train and, as nations will have no future as nations, God deals with national sin here upon earth and visits it with national punishment! Now that sin had become so rampant in Israel, it would be the time of their perplexity—and when sins, like chickens, come home to roost, then will be the time of the sinner's perplexity. He lets his sins fly abroad and thinks that like the wandering birds of the air, they will soon be gone and he shall never see them again—but they will all come home to him and he shall be made to bitterly rue the day in which he thought that he could make a profit by transgressing the righteous law of the Lord!

5. *Trust you not in a friend. Put you not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of your mouth from her that lies in your bosom.* So saturated with dishonesty had the nation become that the evil had penetrated even into domestic life, so that where all should have been in a state of mutual happy confidence, the prophet felt bound to tell them that such confidence could not exist between those who appeared to be friends, or even between husbands and wives!

6. *For the son dishonors the father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.* And this is still true in a measure, for without the fear of God, you will find that even the nearest and dearest relationships will not keep the unconverted from being the enemies of the godly. In that respect, a gracious man cannot trust her that lies in his bosom, if she is not a true child of God. Now mark the grandeur of faith. Set this white spot right in the middle of the black darkness of which we have been reading—

7. *Therefore I will look unto the LORD*—There was nowhere else for the prophet to look! According to what he tells us, all men had become false! "Therefore," he says, "I will look unto Jehovah."

7, 8. *I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.* [See Sermon #2069, Volume 35—MY OWN PERSONAL HOLD-FAST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.* And this is all the light that God's people need! Even if it is the darkness of a black Egyptian night into which our spirit has fallen, yet if God shall but appear to us, there shall soon be light for us! Dr. Watts truly sang—

"In darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun!
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And He my rising sun."

9. *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.* Listen

to this testimony of the prophet, tried child of God! Even when in your own household you find enemies, put your trust in God, for He will yet appear to deliver you. Let this be your joy! Sit still in humble patience and "bear the indignation of the Lord," for even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not so heavy as it might have been—and it is not so severe as it would have been if the Lord had dealt with you in strict justice! Therefore in patience possess your soul and wait quietly before your God. Be not without hope. Expect that He will plead your cause and that He will execute judgment for you. Watch for His light, which will most surely come, and in which you shall behold not your own righteousness, but His!

10. *Then she that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD your God? My eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.* This verse relates to the nation which, at that time, was oppressing Israel. She would have her turn of suffering, for she would be crushed beneath Jehovah's foot as the mire is trodden in the streets!

11, 12. *In the day that your walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day, also, He shall come even to you from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.* This is what was to befall those who had sinned against God and oppressed His people—He would let loose the oppressors upon them and they would find foes in every quarter.

13. *Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.* That is an amazing expression, "the fruit of their doings." All doings bear fruit of one kind or another, and sinful doings bear bitter and deadly fruit! Woe to the man who is made to eat the fruit of his own doings! That which men eat on earth they may have to digest in hell—and there shall they lie forever digesting the terrible morsels which they ate with so much gusto here below!

14. *Feed Your people with Your rod, the flock of Your heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.* Sometimes there are pastures in the very center of woods—and God's people in Micah's day were like a little flock of sheep hidden away from their enemies in the midst of a wood, but God will bring them out, by-and-by, to far larger liberty. They shall yet have Bashan and Gilead to be their pasture, "as in the days of old." And so the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a great nation—and they that were hidden away because of their many enemies, shall have such liberty that they shall worship and praise the Lord their God everywhere!

15-17. *According to the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt will issue unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf: They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the*

LORD our God, and shall fear because of you. The day will come when there shall be such a fear of the people of God upon those who formerly persecuted them that they shall tremble before the Lord and be afraid of the very people whom once they derided and oppressed!

18. *Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.* He never delights in anger, especially in anger against His own people. That is but temporary anger and is, after all, only another form of love—for the parental anger which hates sin in a dear child is but love on fire! May God never permit us to sin without being thus angry with us! We might almost beseech Him never to tolerate sin in us, but to smite us with the rod rather than allow us to be happy in the midst of evil. Perhaps the worst of horrors is peace in the midst of iniquity—happiness while sin is yet all round about us.

19. *He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us, He will subdue our iniquities;* [See Sermon #1577, Volume 27—SIN SUBDUED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.* We read about their sins in the earlier part of the chapter—and what a horrible catalog of evils it was! Yet here we read, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons inquiry?" Even those mountainous sins of which the prophet writes, the Lord will tear up by their roots and cast them into the depths of the sea!

20. *You will perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.* There is our comfort! Our God is the covenant keeping God who will perform every promise that He has made. Even "if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Blessed be His holy name!

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THE BLOOD OF CHRIST'S COVENANT
NO. 3240

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 12, 1863.

"As for you, also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."
Zechariah 9:11.

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this same subject are #277, Volume 5—THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT and #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Verses 11 and 12 are #2839, Volume 49—"PRISONERS OF HOPE" and #2883, Volume 50—PRISONERS DELIVERED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE LORD is here speaking to His ancient people, Israel. That nation had always been preserved, although other nations had been destroyed—and the reason was that God had entered into a covenant with Abraham on their behalf. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant, so that God could truly speak of "the blood of your covenant." The Jews have never ceased to be a nation, though they have been scattered, peeled and delivered over into the hand of their adversaries because of their sins. They may enjoy various rights and privileges in the different countries where they sojourn for a while, but they cannot be absorbed into the nationalities by which they are surrounded. They must always be a separate and distinct people—but the day shall yet come when the branches of the olive tree, which have been so long cut off, shall be grafted in again. Then shall they, as a nation, again behold the Messiah, the true and only King of the Jews—and their fullness shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also!

All believers have some share in that covenant made with Abraham, for he is the father of the faithful. We who believe in Jesus are of the seed of Abraham, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise, and we are pressed by a covenant which like that made with Abraham, is signed and sealed with blood even "the blood of the everlasting covenant." We, too, are saved and kept as a separate and distinct people, not because of any natural goodness in us, or because of our superiority over others, but solely and entirely because the Lord has made an eternal covenant concerning us, which is "ordered in all things and sure," because Jesus Christ is, Himself, the surety on our behalf that its guarantees and pledges shall all be carried into effect.

I. So, applying our text to the covenant people of God in all ages, we have first to consider THEIR NATURAL AND YET PRIVILEGED

CONDITION. By nature they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, but by grace they are in covenant relationship to God!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, *when we were in our natural state, we were like prisoners*. A prisoner is one who has lost his liberty—and that was our condition before Jesus met with us and set us free. We were "carnal, sold under sin," in bondage to our own lusts and held captive by the devil at his will. No doubt we boasted of our free will, but our will, itself, was enslaved with all the rest of our powers. There is no greater mockery than to call a sinner a free man. Show me a convict toiling in the chain gang and call him a free man if you will! Point out to me the galley slave chained to the oar and smarting under the taskmaster's lash whenever he pauses to draw a breath—and call *him* a free man if you will—but never call a *sinner* a free man, even in his will, as long as he is the slave of his own corruptions! In our natural state we wore chains, not upon our limbs, but upon our hearts—fetters that bound us and kept us from God, from rest, from peace, from holiness—from anything like freedom of heart and conscience and will! The iron entered into our soul and there is no other slavery as terrible as that. As there is no freedom like the freedom of the spirit, so is there no slavery that is at all comparable to the bondage of the heart!

A prisoner is also one who feels that he cannot escape from his prison—and that is how we felt. We began to have longings after better things. A heavenly visitor came to us and dropped a new and strange thought into our minds—and we began to pant after something higher and nobler than this poor world could give us—but we could not reach it, for we were prisoners. We could not escape from the cruel grip of our captor and it became quite clear to us that we could never be delivered from the house of bondage by any power of our own. Do you not remember, my brothers and sisters, when you used to sorrowfully say—

"I would but cannot pray
I would but can't repent"—

and when you could use Paul's words as your own and sadly cry, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not?" You were still a prisoner, yet you were beginning to be one of the "prisoners of hope."

That is a strange kind of prison that is mentioned in the text—"the pit wherein is no water." In the East, pits were frequently used as prisons. When a tyrant king wished to keep anyone in safe custody and also in ignominy and shame, and sorrow, he would have him cast into one of these waterless pits where the poor prisoner would be beyond human sight or hearing—and with no possible hope of deliverance from his doleful dungeon. Such was our sad state by nature, and well do we remember our first efforts to obtain release! We were in dense darkness and we felt all round the walls of our prison to try to find a door, or window, or ladder by which we might escape, but all in vain. We tried to look up, but we seemed to have been thrust, like Paul and Silas, into some inner prison where no ray of light could penetrate. The fact that there was "no water" in our prison pit made our agonies all the more

terrible! Those of you who have passed through that state of deep conviction of sin know that in such circumstances there is no comfort for the present and no hope for the future—as to the past, there is nothing to look back upon but sin—and as to the future, there is nothing "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." To a sinner in that condition, there seems nothing within but a heart as hard as stone, nothing beneath but a gapping hell and nothing around but thick darkness. How dreary and dreadful is the state of man by nature—and how painfully conscious he is of his true condition when the Holy Spirit reveals it to him! Then is he, indeed, like a prisoner in a "pit wherein is no water."

This is the actual state, by nature, of all the elect—they are prisoners, just as other men are—and they are in as dark and dismal a pit and they have as little comfort in it as the very worst of mankind have. *Yet, by divine grace, they are in an altogether different condition from that of others*, for they are in covenant with God though they are not yet aware of that blessed and comforting truth! God's election of His people took place long before their creation. Those whom He has chosen unto eternal life were given to Christ in the covenant of grace, in that eternity of which we can form so slight a conception. And when they were born into this world, though they were born in sin and grew up to be the children of disobedience—enemies to God by wicked works—yet the covenant made with Christ on their behalf remained unbroken all the while!

"Well," says someone, "that is strange." Yes, it is strange, but it is true. We must never forget that we were under a covenant of works long before we were born. Adam stood as our federal head and representative in that covenant. You, my sister, never put out your hand to pluck the forbidden fruit—and you and I, my brother, never partook of it, yet we all have to share the consequences of Adam's transgression because he was our covenant head. Do you object to that and say that it was unjust to visit upon us the sin of another? If you do, then you must equally object to the gospel plan of salvation by the righteousness and death of another, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the one great federal head and representative of all who believe in Him! He took the place of the countless myriads of His elect who had been given to Him by His Father, and died on Calvary's cross in their place, although great numbers of them had not then been born and, consequently, could not have any virtue or merit of their own! Through His substitutionary sacrifice, they were even then "accepted in the Beloved" and, in the fullness of time, they become believers in Him and so enter consciously into the enjoyment of the covenant privileges which had been conferred upon them from eternity! The covenant is not made with them when they believe in Jesus—it was made on their behalf by the Father and the Son in the eternal council chamber long before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round!

See, then, the twofold condition of the chosen—they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, yet is there an eternal covenant concerning

them which guarantees that they shall be brought out of the bondage of their sins and shall be set at liberty forever! Does someone here say, "I trust that such a blessed covenant as that has been made on my behalf"? Dear brother or sister, if you have a sincere longing to be a sharer in the blessings of the covenant of grace, methinks that is a proof that you have an interest in it already! And if you will, at this moment, put your soul's trust in that precious blood that is their sign and seal of the covenant, then you may rest assured that grace has inscribed your name from all eternity in God's eternal book!

II. Now let us turn to the second part of our subject which is THE MEANS OF THE DELIVERANCE OF THESE COVENANTED ONES—AND THE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DELIVERANCE.

The text says, "*By the blood of your covenant* I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." I think this means, first, that *the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the essential matter of the covenant.* In order to make the conditions of the eternal covenant effective for His people, it was necessary that Christ should be obedient unto death and that His blood should be shed for many for the remission of their sins. When, by faith, I look upon the blood of Jesus—whether I see it streaming down in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane or flowing in the crimson rivulets at Gabbatha or in the sacred streams of Golgotha, I see in that precious blood of Christ the essential matter of the covenant, and I sing, with sadness on His account, but with rejoicing on my own—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin atoning blood!
By divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

Yes, O blessed Jesus, You have fulfilled on our behalf Your part of the eternal covenant! You have met all the demands of infinite justice even to the uttermost farthing! Your Father justly requires perfect obedience to His holy law and You have rendered it in Your pure and spotless life. The offended majesty of that law demands adequate punishment for man's multiplied violations of its just requirements—and Your one infinite sacrifice has fully paid the penalty, so that divine justice is completely satisfied and the dishonored law is magnified and glorified. Thus it is that God can "be just and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus," for in the person, life and death of Christ, their covenant head and representative, all claims upon believers have been discharged forever!

Further, *the blood of Jesus is also the seal of the covenant.* Speaking after the manner of men, until the blood of Jesus had been shed, the covenant was not signed, sealed and ratified. It was like a will that could only become valid by the death of the testator. It is true that there was such perfect unity of heart between the Father and the Son, and such mutual foreknowledge that the covenant would be ratified in due time—that multitudes of the chosen ones were welcomed to heaven in anticipation of the redemption which would actually be accomplished by Christ upon the cross. But when Jesus took upon Himself the likeness of men and in our human nature suffered and died upon the accursed tree, He did, as it were, write His name in crimson characters upon the eternal

covenant and thus sealed it with His blood. It is because the blood of Jesus is the seal of this covenant that it has such power to bless us and is the means of lifting us up out of the prison pit wherein is no water. Let me put it thus to some of you who have long been under conviction of sin. You have been trying in your poor way to keep the law of God, but you have utterly failed to do so. You know that there are many precious promises in God's word, but you get no comfort from them. Why is that? You feel that you are like a prisoner in a pit—and that you are shut away from the presence of the thrice holy God—and that His awful attribute of justice bars your way like the flaming sword at the gate of Paradise, so that you cannot come near to Him. Then you listen to the gospel, of which the sum and substance is this—that Jesus Christ has fully atoned for the sins of all His people, that He has suffered everything that they deserved to suffer and that God has accepted His substitutionary sacrifice as a sufficient atonement for all who believe in Him. As soon as you trust Him, you are lifted up out of the prison pit, your feet are set upon a rock and a mug of grateful praise is put into your mouth! You are not afraid of the sword of divine justice now—no, you go and stand beneath the flashing blade and trust to it to defend you against all your adversaries! You rightly say, "As Jesus suffered in my place, justice demands that I should go free! He has discharged all my liabilities. The law has no longer any terror to me." So you see, beloved, how the blood of Christ's covenant brings the poor, trembling, despairing soul up out of that dread prison "wherein is no water."

Now I want, dear friends, to ask you all to answer honestly one or two questions that I am about to put to you. The first is—Do you know what it means to be delivered from that pit by the blood of Christ's covenant ? Perhaps I ought first of all to ask—Do you know what it means to be a prisoner in that pit wherein is no water? Have you ever moaned and groaned under the weight of your sin? Have you ever smarted under the lash of that ten thonged whip of the law? Has your conscience, itself, been sufficiently awakened as to condemn you? Have you ever been brought to such a state of self-despair that you could see nothing but death and damnation written upon everything that pertains to you? Was your comeliness withered, your strength dried up and your pride humbled so that you had to sit in sackcloth and ashes and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" as the leper of old had to warn others to keep away from him? If not, I fear that you have never proved the power of the blood of the covenant, for he who has never been humbled has never been exalted!

I feel sure that some of us here can answer, "Oh, yes! We remember well when we were humbled so that we felt ourselves to be less than nothing and vanity—and we realized that, by nature, we were totally ruined and undone—and blessed be God, we also recollect the time when a power infinitely above our own, drew us up out of the pit in which we were imprisoned." But, my dear hearers, have you also been conscious of the working of this almighty power? Have you felt a mysterious influence,

which you could not comprehend, drawing you out of your natural state and giving you new thoughts, new desires, new hopes, new joy and also new pains? Certainly you have never been delivered from this waterless prison by any power less than the divine, so if God's hand has not yet been stretched out on your behalf, you are still in the pit! Or, as Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, you are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Is there anyone here who is in that pit, yet who earnestly longs to escape from it? Is your soul yearning to be delivered, not only from the consequences of sin, but from the sin, itself? Are you panting after reconciliation with God and acceptance in the Beloved? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then you are already among those whom the Savior calls blessed and to whom He has given that gracious promise, "they shall be filled." Such longings as these grow not in nature's soul—they are the product of divine grace. Therefore, be very thankful for them, for they are at least hopeful indications of the Holy Spirit's working within you! And you may rest assured that where He has begun a good work, He will continue it until He brings it to perfection. He will never lift you part of the way out of the pit and then let you fall back again into the prison—He will bring you right out, even as the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched out arm!

If you have been delivered, I feel sure that you will prize your deliverance. I would give little for what you call your grace if you would not willingly part with all else that you have rather that part with that! A slave who has been set free will value his liberty beyond all price. The man who can talk lightly of being free, never knew what bondage meant. I fear that none of us think highly enough of what the Lord has done for us. We get to worrying ourselves because He has not done more for us, because we are not yet perfect—how much better it would be if we would praise and bless Him for all that He has done for us! Remember that you are a free man even though some links of your chain are still clinging to you. Thank God that the chain is broken and that the last links shall soon be snapped—and you shall be perfectly delivered from the badge of bondage! Therefore be of good courage, prize your deliverance and praise Him who has done such great things for you!

Surely, too, if you have been drawn out of this pit wherein is no water, you will love your deliverer and you will desire above everything else to live to Him and to labor for Him all your life!

I hope you can truthfully say to your Lord—

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

I trust that you have dedicated yourself wholly to your Lord—perhaps not in writing, yet just as truly as if you had set your signature to such a covenant as some have felt moved to leave upon record. If you have resolved thus in your heart, you can say with me at the moment, "Lord Jesus, I am Yours—body, soul and spirit—wholly Yours, only Yours, always Yours. You have bought me for Yourself, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with Your own most precious blood and, therefore, You shall have me with all my powers, all my possessions, all my possibilities in life and in death, in time and in eternity! I give all up to You absolutely without reserve, that You may do with me whatever You please and whatever will bring most glory to Your holy name. I fear there is much dross still remaining in me—in all the gold You have given me in Your wondrous grace. If it seems good in Your sight, put me into the hottest furnace, but O Lord, do take away all the dross and then fashion me into a vessel meet for Your own use!" The man who can truthfully talk thus to the Lord Jesus is in the covenant! And by the blood of the covenant he has been brought forth out of the prison wherein is no water!

Perhaps you are afraid to say as much as this, lest it should seem to be presumption on your part. Well then, possibly you can say, "I dare not talk as some do about their attainments in spiritual things, but I do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. My sole reliance is upon His perfect righteousness and His one great sacrifice for all." Then, my brother or my sister, you are among those who have built upon the rock and you shall be preserved in the greatest storm that can ever beat upon you! You are no longer a prisoner in the pit wherein is no water! Faith in Jesus is not the heritage of the slaves of sin and Satan—it is the portion of those who are free men and free women in Christ Jesus—and if He has made you free, you are free, indeed, and you can never be enslaved again! You are at liberty to walk wherever you will on all the holy land which is the purchase possession of the children of the King! Every promise that He has given to His chosen people is a promise to you, so take full advantage of all your privileges as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! You are now His and you shall be His when this world is on fire and when all things that are of time and sense shall perish in the last great conflagration! You shall be His amid the pomp and terrors of that tremendous day and you shall be His amidst the splendor and glory of eternity!

If any here are still prisoners in the pit wherein is no water, may the Lord even now bring them forth by the blood of His covenant, that they may share with all the chosen ones, all the blessings of that covenant now and to all eternity! And to Him shall be the praise and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 9; 10.

As we read these ancient prophecies, we will not only notice how exactly they have been fulfilled, but we will also try to learn the lesson that they are intended to teach us.

Zechariah 9:1-4. *The burden of the word of the LORD against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, its resting place (for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel, are on the LORD). Also against Hamath which borders on it. And also Tyrus and Sidon, though they are very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will destroy her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.* Alexander the Great besieged Tyre and utterly overthrew it. The citizens thought that their "strong hold" was impregnable, but they had at last to surrender to the mighty monarch whose attacks they had so long resisted. All the mercenaries whom they could procure with their heaped-up silver and gold could not avert the doom which the Lord had foretold and which, through the instrumentality of Alexander, He accomplished—"The Lord will cast her out, and He will destroy her power in the sea."

5-8. *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear, Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes.* When Phoenicia had fallen into the hands of the conqueror, there was no power able to avert the overthrow of Philistia. And Jerusalem would also have come beneath his sway had not the Lord miraculously interposed for its preservation. Alexander was restrained by a power which perhaps he did not understand, but which he could not resist, so he passed by the holy city of which the temple of the Lord was the glory in the midst. They who are divinely protected are in absolute safety even in the most perilous times. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it and is safe."

9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.* You know how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled in our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem—when the multitudes welcomed Him with hosannas—probably the same crowds that soon hoarsely shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea, even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.* He shall yet be acclaimed as

the universal monarch, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," for, "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

11, 12. *As for you, also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.* This "stronghold" is very different from that of Tyre, which failed her in her hour of need. It is, indeed, that of which the Prophet Nahum wrote—"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust in Him."

13. *For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man.* Note well that it is the Lord who is doing all these notable deeds—bending Judah like a bow, fitting Ephraim to the bow as the archer presses his arrow to the string, and raising up the despised sons of Zion so that they may be able to overcome the proud sons of Greece! "The sword of a mighty man" owes its strength to the hand that wields it, and the sons of Zion are only mighty when the Lord holds them in His almighty hands and uses them as seems good in His sight.

14. *And the LORD shall be seen over them, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.* Then how safe must the Lord's people be! And what terror must spread among their enemies!

15. *The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour and subdue with slingstones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.* There seems to be a hint here of the strange scene that was witnessed in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the unbelieving mockers said of the Spirit filled disciples, "There men are full of new wine," but Peter repudiated the slander and declared that the wonder which the people could not comprehend was really the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy, "It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh."

16. *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land.* See how many metaphors the prophet was inspired to use in a single verse in describing the Lord's chosen ones—"as the *flock* of His people; as the *stones* of a crown…as an *ensign* upon His land." No human language can fully set forth all that their Lord thinks of them—and all that they are in His esteem!

17. *For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

Zechariah 10:1. *Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, grass in the fields for everyone.* The atheistic philosopher of the present day laughs at such a verse as this and sneeringly asks, "What possible connection can there be between men and women praying to God and

the showers of rain which fall upon the earth? Why," he says "according to the laws of nature, showers fall at such and such seasons and if the atmosphere should not happen to be in such and such a state, all the praying in the world cannot produce a single drop of rain!" But faith can clearly see where reason is blind—and the prayer of faith moves the arm of God and the arm of God controls what the philosopher calls the "laws of nature," and so the rain descends. Let us learn from this precept and promise, the power of believing prayer! Prayer has the key of nature as well as the key of heaven hanging at her belt! Observe also, that when we have received one mercy from the Lord, we are to go on to pray for another. These people must have had "the former rain," yet they were to ask for "the latter rain," also! And if you, dear friends, have had "the former rain" of conversion, go on to ask the Lord for "the latter rain" of sanctification. If, in our church fellowship, we have had "the former rain" of gracious additions to our numbers, we must ask for "the latter rain" by praying that God would continue thus to bless us. When we cease to pray for blessings, God has already ceased to bless us—but when our souls pour out floods of prayer, God is certain to pour out floods of mercy.

2. *For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain.* Observe the readiness of man to forsake the great fountain of living waters and to make unto himself broken cisterns which can hold no water! Notice, too, that some sort of comfort may, for a time, be derived from a false trust, but it is "comfort in vain." As a dream yields no comfort when a man wakes up and finds himself to not be rich—as he had vainly dreamed that he was—but miserably poor, so all confidence in the flesh, all reliance upon anything except the almighty arm of God, even if it should yield us temporary hope and consolation, will only make our grief the greater when its utter failure is discovered!

2. *Therefore the people wend their way as a flock, they were troubled because there was no shepherd.* The sheep that belong to Christ's flock will never find any true shepherd except He who is "the Good Shepherd." If, for a time, they should so lose their spiritual wits as to follow strangers—which, indeed, is not a natural thing for them to do, for "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers"—they will meet with a thousand troubles because they have no shepherd.

3. *My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds.* Whenever people are afflicted with unfaithful ministers, when God comes to visit these people, He will not only punish the ministers, but the religious leaders, the false professors in those churches, the he goats who led the flock astray! Oh, what a plague and a curse will an unfaithful minister be found to have been at the last day! A well which only yields bitter water like that of Marah, merely mocks a temporary thirst. But a minister who does not preach the gospel and who does not live the gospel, mocks the soul's eternal thirst! Whatever I may be, God grant that I may never be an unfaithful preacher of His word! Surely, if

there is an innermost hell, a place where the soul's feet shall be made faster in the stocks of the pit than anywhere else, it shall be reserved for the man who, professing to be an instructor of the ignorant and a leader of the flock, taught them lies and led them out of the way! May the Lord save us from shepherds against whom His anger must be kindled!

3. *For the LORD of hosts has visited His flock the house of Judah, and has made them as His royal horse in the battle.* As an expert horseman skillfully controls his steed and turns it according to his pleasure in the day of battle, and makes it obey himself, alone, so does the Lord rein in and direct His church, so that she becomes like a "royal horse in the battle."

4. *Out of Him came forth the corner, out of Him the nail, out of Him the battle bow, out of Him every oppressor together.* Let us learn from this verse that everything comes from the Lord of hosts, the God of providence, as well as of divine grace. Those statesmen who are the cornerstones of the great building of state, must come from Him. Those Christian men and women of experience who seem to be as the cornerstones of our spiritual building must come from Him. Those who are as nails, upon whom weaker Christians seem to hang, come from Him. And whoever is, in the day of battle, like God's bow, must also come from Him, for apart from the Lord there is no strength, nor power, nor wit nor wisdom among all His people. We must learn, then, to lift up our eyes unto God and look to Him for all that we need whether it is political, social, or religious needs that are to be supplied—all must come from Him.

5. *And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.* The Jewish infantry often turned to flight the Syrian cavalry, and I may fitly compare the apostles of old to humble fighters upon foot, while heathen and other philosophers were like mighty men on horseback! Yet they were turned back by the apparently weaker warriors of the cross—and it is still so. We can well afford to give our adversaries every advantage that they can ask—let them have state patronage, let them have worldly dignity, let them have learning, let them have wealth—yet, in the name of God will we vanquish them, for the truth of God is mightier than all the wisdom of man and the weakness of God is stronger than the greatest strength of man!

6. *And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back, for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off, for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.* [See Sermon #2588, Volume 44—PERFECT RESTORATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See, beloved, how the everlasting covenant is the great foundation of everything for the saints. "I am Jehovah their God," says He. The Lord has taken His people to be His own forever and, therefore, though He

may seem temporarily to reject them, yet permanently and everlastingly He will hold them fast and acknowledge them as His people.

7. *And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yes, their children shall see it and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.* Get a firm hold of this promise, believers, and plead it! Are you dull and heavy, desponding and sad? Then plead this promise, "Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord."

8. *I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.* The word, "hiss," is supposed by some to be an allusion to the Eastern custom of men who managed bees making a sound like hissing in order to gather them into the hive. Others, however, translate the word, "piping," as the shepherd pipes to his flock and they gather round him. In the words, "I will gather them, for I have redeemed them," we see that particular redemption is the groundwork of effectual calling those whom Jesus Christ has bought with His precious blood, the Holy Spirit will call by power out from the rest of mankind.

9-11. *And I will sow them among the people and they shall remember Me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction.* In the restoration of Israel, there is to be an even greater triumph than that which was achieved at the Red Sea.

11. *And shall smite the wave in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away.* For the glory of God in the deliverance of His people is sure to be attended by another form of glory in the destruction of His enemies! Christ is a sweet Savior unto God both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

12. *And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD.*

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A PAINFUL AND PUZZLING QUESTION
NO. 3241

[This sermon is the 1000th issued since the beloved preacher was "called home" at Mentone on January 31st, 1892. Regular readers of the Sermons will praise the Lord that the publication of them has been continued through all the intervening years, and they will rejoice to know that sufficient unpublished manuscripts still remain to continue the weekly publication of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit for several years.]

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"How is it that you have no faith?"
Mark 4:40.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1964—Volume 33—WHY IS FAITH SO FEEBLE?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS question may be very properly put to those who have no faith at all—and we intend to so put it in the second part of our discourse. But it was originally put to men who had some faith, men who had faith enough to make them disciples of Christ, faith which brought them to sail in the same vessel with Him. Even when they reproached Him and said, "Care you not that we perish?" they had faith enough to make them call Him, "Master." Yet, in comparison with the faith which they ought to have had, Christ calls their faith no faith at all! They were so wavering, so tossed about with unbelief that though they were His hearty, honest and sincere followers, He yet speaks to them as if they were unbelievers and says to them, "How is it that you have no faith?"

I shall address this question, then, first of all, *to God's people,* and in the next place, *to the unconverted.*

I. First, LET US SPEAK TO GOD'S PEOPLE.

Let me say to begin with, that *this is a question which must have been peculiarly painful to Him who asked it.* The faith in which they were lacking was faith in Him—their Master, their Lord who had loved them from before the foundation of the world and who intended to shed His precious blood for them—and to make them His companions in glory, world without end! Yet they had no faith in Him! Let the Lord Jesus come to you, my brothers and sisters, and I think you will detect much sorrow in the tone of His voice when He asks, "How is it that you have no faith, or so little faith in Me? I have loved you. I have loved you to the death—remember Gethsemane and Golgotha—remember all that I did and am still doing for you. How is it that you doubt Me?" Beloved, if we doubt our

fellow men, it is not strange, for Judas is one of a large family. But to doubt the Savior, the faithful and true friend that sticks closer than a brother—this is a cut as unkind as any of the lashes which fell upon His shoulders when He was chastised in Pilate's hall!

You will see that the question must have pained Him if you notice to whom He addressed it. "How is it that *you* have no faith?" You chosen twelve, you who have been with Me from the beginning, you to whom I have expounded the mysteries which have been left dark sayings to the multitudes—how is it that My choicest friends, the picked ones of My band, have no faith in Me? And the Lord seems sorrowfully to put this question to some of us—"How is it that *you* have no faith, you whose names are written in My book of life, no, written on My hands, and engraved on My heart—you who have been bought with My precious blood, snatched out of the claws of the lion by My almighty power and restored from all your wanderings by My loving care? How is it that you, My favorites—the King's own chosen companions—how is it that *you* have no faith?"

And the question was painful to Him for yet a third reason—namely, that they had no faith upon a matter in which one would have thought they might have believed. They were in the vessel with Him and if the ship went to the bottom, they would go to the bottom in good company, for their Lord was with them! And yet they had not enough faith in Him to believe that He would save their lives! Perhaps they knew His ability—if so, they questioned His willingness. Perhaps they knew His willingness—if so, they questioned His ability! In either case, it was very painful that they should think their own dear friend, their Lord and Master, would let them sink when the glance of His eyes could save them, or the will of His heart could deliver them!

And now, this question, as Jesus Christ puts it to us, must be very painful to Him. "Do not *you*, O My children, do not *you* believe Me? Mine is an unchangeable love, a love that is stronger than death, a love which led Me down into the grave for you—do you not believe *Me*? If others, who do not know Me, doubt Me, I can endure their unbelief—but unbelief from *you*, My close personal acquaintances, My own familiar friends—oh, this is hard, indeed! You have sat under My shadow with great delight and do you doubt Me? You have eaten of My fruit and it has been sweet to your taste, and do you doubt Me? My left hand has been under your head and my right hand has embraced you—I have brought you into My banqueting house—I have fed you with food such as angels never tasted, I have filled your mouths with songs such as seraphs never sang, I have promised you a heritage such as princes upon earth might well envy—and do you doubt Me? Do *you* doubt Me and do you doubt Me about such a matter as whether you shall have food to eat and raiment to put on? Do the lilies doubt Me? Do the ravens doubt Me? And will you doubt Me about a matter concerning which lilies have no care and the ravens

have no thought? Do your doubts relate to your eternal salvation? But have I not guaranteed to save you? Have I not sworn that I will surely deliver every soul that trusts in Me? What have I done to make you doubt Me thus? Wherein have I failed you? Show Me which promise I have broken, to which of My oaths I have been a traitor, or in what case I have turned My back upon My friends? Oh, doubt me no longer!"—

"'O fearful! O faithless!' In mercy He cries,
'My promise, My truth, are they light in your eyes?
Still, still I am with you, My promise shall stand,
Through tempest and tossing I'll bring you to land.'"

I wish I could speak in a way that would give some idea of the tenderness of the way in which my Master would put these questions to you. I think if He were here in bodily presence and showed you His wounds, He would then say to you, "can you distrust Me with these tokens of love in My hands, My feet and My side? Can you doubt Me now?" And as He put the question, He would make you feel that it stirred intense anguish in His soul if it did not in yours. So you see that this was a painful question to Him who asked it.

But in the second place, *it was a necessary question for them to hear, and it is a necessary question for us to hear, too.* I should like to individualize a little, to hold the mirror up before some of you that you may see yourselves.

There are some here who doubt Christ because they are in temporal trial. You never were in such a sad position as you are in just now. Business seems to go all contrary to your designs. Your flood tide has suddenly ebbed and your vessel threatens to be high and dry on a shoal. You have a promise from God that it shall not be so, for He has said, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." He has said, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Yet for all that, you still doubt. There is a trouble coming upon you tomorrow, or there is a season of trial coming in a week's time. You have taken it before God in prayer and yet, even after you had prayed over it, and asked God's help, you said to a friend, "I do not know how I shall ever get through it." Now, was that right? Was that trusting your heavenly friend? Has He not helped you before? Has He not delivered you in six troubles, and in seven shall any evil touch you? Come, dear sister, come, dear brother, come at once to the mercy seat with your burdens and may God give you faith enough to lay your case before Him, and you shall then hear Him say, "As your days, so shall your strength be."—

"In every condition—in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth.
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As your days may demand, shall your strength always be."

Another person is here whose trouble is not about gold and silver, food and raiment—it is much worse—it is a trouble about his soul. He has

lately been overwhelmed with a very terrible temptation and wherever he goes, it haunts him. He tries to run away from it, but he thinks he might as well try to run away from his own shadow! It clings to him. It seems to have fastened upon his hand as the viper did upon Paul, and he cannot shake it off. He is afraid, indeed, that he will never be able to overcome this strong temptation. Have you never read this inspired verse, "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it"? Then, "how is it that you have no faith?" Did not the Lord Jesus teach you to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"? You have prayed that and did He not tell you to add, "But deliver us from evil," as though, if the first petition were not answered, the second one might come in? You have prayed that and you believe that God hears prayer—how is it, then, that you have no faith to believe that He will hear you in this particular case? Beloved, Christ is not a Savior merely for some things, but for *all things.* And He does not come in to help His people simply on some days under certain assaults—but under all temptations and under all trials, He comes to their rescue! Weak as you are, He can strengthen you—and fierce though the temptation may be—He can cover you from head to foot with a panoply of proof in which you shall stand right gloriously clad and be forever safe!

The question of the text might just as properly be asked of some Christians in view of service which they might render to Christ. You do not preach in the street, though you have the ability to do so—you say you never could stand up to face the crowd. "How is it that you have no faith?" You do not teach in the Sabbath school, though you sometimes *do* think you ought to try it, but you can hardly get enough courage. "How is it that you have no faith?" You would like to say a word or two to an ungodly companion, but you are afraid that it would be of no use and that you would be laughed at. "How is it that you have no faith?" Can you not say as Nehemiah did, "Should such a man as I flee?" Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is crushed as easily as a moth? Be of good courage and do your Master's will! Has He not most certainly said, "Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel"? You know that these are His words—then "how is it that you have no faith?" If we had more faith, dear friends, we would be doing a great deal more for our Lord and we would succeed in it—but for lack of faith we do not try, and for lack of trying we do not perform—and we are little nobodies when we might serve the Master and do much if we had but more faith in Him!

There is another man here who is afraid to die. He has been a Christian for many years, but whenever the thought of death crosses his mind, he tries to shake it off. He is a believer in Christ, but he is afraid

that he shall not be able to endure the last trying hour. I recollect a sermon which my grandfather once preached and which was a rather curious one. His text was, "The God of all grace," and he said that God would give His people all grace, "but," he said, at the close of each point, "there is one kind of grace you do not need." The refrain came several times over, "There is one kind of grace you do not need." I think his hearers were all puzzled, but they learned what he meant when he closed by saying, "and the kind of grace that you do not need is *dying* Grace in living moments, for you only need that when dying time comes." It may be that as we are at this moment, we could not play the man in death, yet I am persuaded that the most timorous women here, the most desponding man, if they are but resting upon Jesus, will be able to *sing* in death's tremendous hour! Do not be afraid, beloved—there will be extraordinary courage given you when you come into extraordinary trial. Like Hopeful in the river, you will be able to say to your brother, Christian, "I feel the bottom and it is good." There is a good foothold through the river of death since Jesus Christ has died! Do not trouble yourself about dying if you are already dead with Christ, for His word is sure, "He that believe in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Be of good courage, or else the next time you are in bondage through fear of death, I shall venture to put to you the question of the text, "How is it that you have no faith?"

So might I run through the whole congregation, but perhaps it would be best to conclude the list by saying that this question might often meet us at our closet doors. I hope all of us who profess to be believers in Christ know the power of prayer, for if we do not, we are fearful hypocrites! But, brothers and sisters, is it not very possible that after you have been praying, you come down from your closet doubting whether you have been heard? You have asked for a certain mercy, but you do not really expect to receive it—and so the Lord might as well say to you, "How is it that you have no faith?" You often do not get the blessing because you do not believe that God will give you what you ask for! But remember that "all things are possible to him that believes." God denies nothing to a fervent heart when it can plead His promise and lay hold upon Him by the hand of faith. I would that we had in all our churches a growing band of men who could really pray. One of the Caesars had what he called, "a thundering legion"—they were men who were Christians and could pray! It is truly said that the man who is mighty on his knees is mighty everywhere. If you can conquer God in prayer—and that *can* be done—you can certainly conquer your fellow creatures. If, when wrestling with the angel as Jacob did, you can come off victor, you need not be afraid to wrestle with the very devil, himself, for you will be more than a match for him through the Lord Jesus Christ!

And now, thirdly, dear friends, I think that *this is a very humiliating question for us to answer*. I do not wish to answer it for you, but I want to propose it to every Christian so that he may answer it himself. But I will help you to answer it.

Can you make a good excuse for your unbelief? I will stand and frankly confess that I cannot find any excuse for mine. This is my history—I will tell it because I should not wonder if it is very much like yours. I was a stranger to God and to hope, but Jesus sought me. His Spirit taught me my need of Him and I began to cry to Him. No sooner did I cry than He heard me and, at length He said to me, "Look, poor trembler, look to Me, and I will give you peace." I did look and I had peace—a peace which I bless God I have never wholly lost these many years. I looked to Him and was lightened and my face was not ashamed!

Since then, He has led me in a very singular path in providence. My trials have been not as many as I deserved, but enough—and as my days, my strength has been. There has been in temporals an abundant supply. And in spirituals the fountain has never dried up. In my darkest nights He has been my star. In my brightest days He has been my sun. When my enemies have been too many for me, I have left them with Him and He has put them to the rout. When my burdens have been too heavy for me to carry, I have cast them upon Him and He never seemed to make much of them, but carried them as some great creature might carry a grain of sand! I have not a word to say against Him and if He acts to me as He has done, if I could live to be as old as Polycarp and were asked to curse Him, I would have to say with him, as I say now, "How can I curse Him? What have I to say against Him? He never broke His promise. He never failed in His word. He has been to me the best Master that ever a man had, though I have been one of the worst of His servants. He has been true and faithful to every jot and tittle, blessed be His name!" If He were to say to me, "How is it that you have no faith?" I am sure I do not know what I could answer—I could only hide my face, and say, "My Master, I seem to be almost a devil to think that I cannot believe more firmly in such an one as You are—so good, so true, so kind." No, I cannot make any excuse for myself and I do not suppose that you can make any excuse for yourselves, either!

I suppose, however, that the real reason of our lack of faith lies in this—that we have low thoughts of God compared with the thoughts of Him we ought to have. We do not think Him to be so mighty, so good or so tender as He is. Then, again, we have very leaky memories—we forget His mighty arm, we forget what He did in days past. Hermon's mount and Mizar's hill we pass by and we let His loving- kindness be forgotten. I am afraid, too, that we rely too much upon ourselves. Was it not Dr. Gordon who, when he lay dying, said that the secret of strength in faith in Christ was having no faith in ourselves? I am inclined to think that the problem of weak faith in God is our having too much self-reliance.

But when you cannot trust to yourselves, then you hang upon Christ and cling to Him as your only hope—then you give the grip of a sinking man and there is no hold like that! There is no hold like that of one who feels, "If I do not grip this, there is nothing else for me to cling to in all the world—

'Other refuge have I none
Hangs my helpless soul on You.'"

I am afraid it is our self confidence that comes in to mar our trust in God. And besides that, there is our "evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." I said, the other day, speaking of some sad, sad temptation into which a brother had fallen, that I wished the devil were dead. But after a while, I corrected myself and said I wished that I were dead, for if I were dead and gone, and Christ lived in me, I would not mind the devil—but when the devil and myself get to working together, we make a sorry mess of it. He might harmlessly bring the sparks if I had not any tinder, but it is the tinder in me that does the mischief! He might try his hardest to break into my house if my house were not such a poor clay tenement. O Lord Jesus, come and live in my heart! Fill it with Yourself, and then there will be no room for Satan! Hold me fast even unto the end—

"May Your rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart!
My zeal inspire!
As You have died for me
Oh may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be,
A living fire!"

So here I leave this point with you Christians, only I shall beg to come round in spirit and say to all doubting Christians here, "How is it that you have no faith?" I will set you the question of my text for you to answer between now and next Sunday. Give an account of your unbelief—and if you can give a good account of it, pray let us hear it! I never heard any good excuse made for that wicked sinner, Mr. No-Belief. He cannot be put to death, I fear, but I often wish that he could be blown to pieces from the muzzles of the guns of the promises! Oh, that the last rag of him and the last remnant of him were clean destroyed! John Bunyan, in his *Holy War,* pictures the citizens of Mansoul going round to pick up the bones of the traitors and burying them all, "till," he says, "there was not the least bone, or piece of a bone of a traitor left." I wish we could get to that state—that there might not be the least bone, or piece of a bone of a doubter left, so that we might sing confidently concerning our God.

II. Now, solemnly and most affectionately, I WOULD SPEAK TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER BELIEVED IN CHRIST.

To some of you, that head that once was crowned with thorns is no object of reverence. You have never looked up to "the man of sorrows,"

and felt that "surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." It is nothing to you that Jesus should die. Up to this moment you have been a stranger to Him, so I beg to ask you the question, "How is it that you have no faith?" The question is not an impertinent one, but a very natural one; allow one who would do you good to press it upon your minds.

Do you not know that *faith makes the Christian happy?* There are Christians here with very small incomes—a very few shillings a week. They are living in the depths of poverty and yet they would not change places with kings, for they are so happy because faith makes them rich! There are others of us who have an abundance of this world's goods and yet we can truly say that we would give them all up if God so willed it, for they are not our gods. Our wellsprings of joy come from Christ! Faith makes men happy. "How is it that you have no faith?" You squander your substance to get a day's amusement. You spend your money for that which is not bread and you labor for that which satisfies not—but here is something that is really bread and that would satisfy—how is it that you have it not? You working men, you sons of toil; with little here to make you blessed, "How is it that you have no faith?" Faith would make your cottage into a palace, and a scanty loaf to be better than a stalled ox!

You, know, too, that *it is faith which enables the Christian to die well.* You expect to die soon—then "how is it that you have no faith?" You are like the man who has to cross a river, but has made no provision for it! Or like one who is going a long journey, but takes no money with him, no shoes, no staff, and no scrip. How is it that you have nothing to help you to die? It is faith which conducts the Christian into heaven. We sing of "the realms of the blest," and of Canaan's "happy land," but faith is the only passport to the skies, so, "how is it that you have no faith?" Do you not desire a blessed future? Have you no wish for immortal joys? Does your heart never leap at the thought of the joys that the saints have before the throne of God? How is it that you let these things slip by, having no faith? "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and the faithless will have their portion in the lake that burns with fire! "How is it that you have no faith?" Do you mean to venture into that state of misery? Do you intend to dare the Day of Judgment without an advocate and a friend? You will have to rise, again, from the grave though the worms destroy your body, yet in your flesh you will have to see God! The trumpet will be sounding, the angels will be gathering, the judgment seat will be set and you will be called to account—and without faith you must be driven from God's presence into black despair! Then, "how is it that you have no faith?" When I think over these things, it seems to me to be strange that men should be living in utter indifference to Christ and in neglect of divine things! "How is it," can any of you tell us, "How is it that you have no faith?"

Is it that there are a great many difficult things that you cannot understand? Now, what is it that you are asked to believe? Simply this—that sin was so evil and bitter a thing that God must punish it, and that His own dear Son became a man and suffered for the sins of all those who trust Him—so that those sins may readily be pardoned because Christ suffered the punishment of them. Really, that does not strike me as being a very difficult thing to believe! To trust my soul with the Son of God, bleeding and dying upon Calvary, does not strike me as being, in itself, a very difficult thing. And if it *is* difficult, it surely must be the hardness of our hearts that makes it so, for there is not beneath the cope of heaven a doctrine more reasonable, which more deserves to be received than this—that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

I do not think that the most of you, when you are asked why you have no faith, can reply that it is because you do not know *what you have to believe*. I know that I have tried to make it plain enough as far as my preaching is concerned. If I knew of any words in the English language that would be plainer than those I have used, though they should be so outrageously vulgar that I would be overhauled for using them by all the gentlemen in England, yet I would use them before I left this platform if I thought I could win one soul by them! The simple truth of God is that whoever trusts Christ is saved—and we have tried to put this to you in every shape and form and way that we could think of, so that *lack of knowledge* is not the reason why you have no faith!

I am afraid that in many of you, *lack of faith is from a lack of thought*. Oh, how many of you are mere butterflies! You think about your work, or about your pleasures, but not about your souls! It is not always a bad sign when a man begins to be skeptical. I would sooner he were that than that he were thoughtless, for even to *think* about spiritual things is good! Men are often like some bats which, when they get on the ground, cannot fly—they must get on a stone and then, when they are a little elevated, they can move their wings. So, thoughtless men are on the ground and cannot fly—but when God sets them thinking, they seem as if they were moving their wings. I pray you, think about these matters, for certainly it must commend itself to every reasonable person that the better part of men ought to be the most thought of. This poor mortal rag, which is to drop into the grave, ought not to command my highest and most continuous thought—but the immortal principle within me which will outlive the stars and be a thing of life and vigor when the sun has shut his burning eye from dim old age—this immortal part of my nature ought certainly to have my most serious and my best regard! If you have been obliged to say that you have no faith because you have not thought, I pray you think—and may God help you that this thinking may lead you to faith!

But to close—for our time is gone—the question I have put to you is *a question which I hope will never need to be asked of you anymore*. May this be the last time that any man shall have to look you in the face and say, "How is it that you have no faith?" In order to make this wish true, however, you must believe now! To believe is to trust Christ Jesus. The Son of the everlasting God takes upon Himself the form of man and suffers. And He tells us that if we rest on Him, just as I now lean here on this rail with all my weight, He will be better to us than our faith! There never yet was a man who trusted in Christ and found Him a liar. If you trust Christ, you shall be saved—no, you *are* saved! And the proof of your being saved will be this—that you will not be the same man any longer. All things will become new with you. You will be saved from sinning as well as from the guilt of sin. The drunk shall become sober, the unchaste shall become pure, the mere moralist shall become spiritual and the enemy of God shall become His friend as soon as He trusts Christ!—

"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn!
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return."

I cannot but love Him who has saved me from my sins!

May God bless this question to you; but if it has not yet been of use to you, I hope that it will follow you. I should like to pin it to your backs, but it would be better if we could put it in your hearts. I hope that it will wake you up at night—I trust it may be with you at breakfast tomorrow. And between the intervals of business I hope there will come up a voice from under the counter, or from the back of the workshop, "How is it that you have no faith?" And at night-fall, when you walk alone in the street a while, may it be almost as though someone had touched you on the shoulder and said, "How is it that you have no faith?"

But mark you, if this question does not haunt you, now, the day will come when stretched on that lonely bed, when you must bid the world adieu, there may seem, perhaps, to be the form of the preacher who now stands before you—or the ghastly form of death, who with bony finger uplifted, shall preach such a sermon to you as your very heart and the marrow of your bones shall feel, while He says to you—"*How is it that you have no faith*?"

Oh, may you never need to be asked that question again, but may you now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 4:35-41.

Verses 30, 36 *And the same day, when the evening was come, He said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude*—Telling them that Christ would give them no more

instruction that day, and that they had better go back to their homes. There are some preachers who have great gifts of dispersion, it does not take them long to scatter a congregation—but I expect that Christ's disciples found it to be no easy task to send away the crowds that had been listening to their Master's wondrous words. But, "when they had sent away the multitude"—

36. *They took Him even as He was in the boat. And there were also with Him other little boats.* Christ was Lord High Admiral of the Galilean Lake that night and He had quite a little fleet of vessels around His flagship!

37. *And there arose a great windstorm*—Our friend, John Macgregor, "Rob Roy," tells us that the lake is subject to very sudden and severe storms. It lies in a deep hollow and down from the surrounding ravines and valleys the air comes with a tremendous rush seldom experienced even upon a real ocean, for this was, of course, only a little lake though sometimes called a sea. I have been told that, on some Scotch lochs, the wind will occasionally come from three or four quarters at once, lifting the boat bodily out of the water—and sometimes seeming to lift the water up towards heaven with the boat and all in it! So it was that night, when "there arose a great windstorm"—

37. *And the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full of water.* No doubt they bailed out the boat with all their might, and did their best to prevent it from sinking, yet, "it was now full of water." But where was their Lord and Master, and what was He doing while the storm was raging?

38. *And He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow.* [See Sermon #1121, Volume 19—CHRIST ASLEEP IN THE VESSEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He was quite at home upon the wild waves—

"Rocked in the cradle of the deep"—

for winds and waves were but His Father's servants, obeying His commands. "He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow"—doubtless weary and worn with the labors of the day. We do not always think enough of the weariness of Christ's human body. There was not only the effort of preaching, but His preaching was so full of high thought, and the expressions He used were so pregnant with meaning, that it must have taken much out of Him to preach thus from the heart, with intense agony of spirit, and with His brain actively at work all the while! Remember that He was truly man as well as the Son of God and that what He did was of so high an order, not to be reached by any of us, that it must have exhausted Him and, therefore, He needed sleep to refresh Him. And there He was, wisely taking it, and serving God by sleeping soundly and thus preparing Himself for the toil of the following day.

38, 39. *And they awoke Him, and said unto Him, Master, care You not that we perish? And He arose and rebuked the wind*—It was boisterous and noisy and He bade it obey its Master's will!

39. *And said unto the sea, Peace, be still!* Can you not almost fancy that you can hear that commanding Voice addressing the raging, roaring, tumultuous winds and waves?

39. *And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* Not only was the wind quieted and the sea hushed to slumber, but a deep, dead, mysterious calm transformed the lake into a molten mirror! When Christ stills winds and waves, it is "a great calm." Did you ever feel "a great calm?" It is much more than ordinary peace of mind—it is to your heart as if there were no further possibilities of fear! Your troubles have so completely gone that you can scarcely remember them. There is no one but the Lord, Himself, who can speak so to produce "a great calm." Master, we entreat You to speak such a calm as that for those of us who need it!

40. *And He said unto them*—When He had calmed the winds and the waves, He had to speak to another fickle set—more fickle than either winds or waves! "And He said unto them"—

40, 41. *Why are you so fearful?* [See Sermon #2852, Volume 49—COMFORT FOR THE FEARFUL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *How is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly.*—They went from one fear to another, but this time it was the fear of awe—a hallowed dread of what might happen to a ship which had such a mysterious person on board. Though there was probably in their minds no fear of death, it seemed to them a fearsome thing to be in the presence of One who had such power over the raging elements. "They feared exceedingly"—

41. *And said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?* [See Sermon #1686, Volume 28—WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Blessed God man, we worship and adore You!

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UNPARALLELED LOVING-KINDNESSES
NO. 3242

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON TUESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 17, 1863.

"Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses, which You swore unto David in Your truth?"
Psalm 89:49.

THE LORD had made an everlasting covenant with David, ordered in all things and sure, yet that covenant was not intended to preserve him from trouble. When this Psalm was written, he had been brought very low. His crown had been cast down to the ground, his enemies had rejoiced over him and he had become a reproach to his neighbors. Then his thoughts flew back to the happier days of the past and the covenant which the Lord had made with him—and either David, himself, or Ethan, writing on his behalf, inquired, in the words of our text, "Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses, which You swore unto David in Your truth?"

I. Applying this passage to the people of God, I remark, first, that WE HAVE RECEIVED MANY MERCIES IN THE PAST.

Is that too common a matter for you to think and talk about? If you know it so well, why do you forget it so often? The mercies of God wake us every morning so that we are as used to them as we are to the sunlight, yet some of us think but little of them. They follow us till the night and we get as accustomed to them as we do to our beds, yet perhaps some of us think less of them than we do of our beds! We have providential mercies every moment of the day and every day of our lives—we can never count the number of them, for they are more than the sands upon the seashore! I am going, however, to speak of the spiritual mercies with which God has enriched us—the blessings of the upper springs—and it will help you to recall them if I take the list of them that is given at the beginning of the 103rd Psalm.

Turn to it and read, first, "*who forgives all your iniquities*." All of us to whom these words belong should constantly remember that we are pardoned souls. We were not so once—oh, what would we not have given, then, to know what we know now? At that time, our iniquities pressed upon us as a burden that we could not bear! The stings of conscience gave us no rest and the terrors of hell got hold of us! When I was under conviction of sin, I felt that I would willingly have given my eyes, my hands, my all, if I might but be able to say, "I am a forgiven soul." So, now that we are pardoned, let us not forget the Lord's loving-kindness in forgiving all our iniquities. If you, my hearer, can forget it, I may well question whether your iniquities have ever been forgiven, for the pardon

of sin is so great a mercy that the song which it evokes from the heart must last forever!

The next mercy in the psalmist's list is, "*who heals all your diseases*." Think again, my brother or my sister, what the Lord has done for you in this respect. Once, pride possessed you like a burning fever and long prevented you from submitting to God's simple plan of salvation—but you have been cured of that terrible malady and now you are sitting humbly at the feet of Jesus rejoicing in being saved by divine grace! Perhaps you were once like the demoniac of old. The chains of morality could not bind you and the fetters of human law could not restrain you. You cut and wounded yourself and you were a terror unto others. But, now, thanks be unto God, you are so completely healed that there is not even a scar left to show where you were wounded! Will you not praise the Lord for this unspeakable mercy? What would you not have given for it, once, when your many diseases held you in their cruel grip? Then cease not to praise Jehovah Rophi, "the Lord that heals you!"

The next mercy also demands a song of grateful praise—*"who redeems your life from destruction."* You have been saved from going down into the pit—the ransom price has been paid for you and you have been redeemed—not with silver and gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Remember there is no wrath against you, now, in the heart of God, for His righteous anger on account of your sin was all poured out upon the head of His dear Son, your surety and substitute! The devil has no claim upon you, now, for you have been redeemed by Christ unto the last farthing. Then can you forget to praise Him who has done such great things for you? What would you not have given, at one time, to have had half a hope that you were a redeemed soul when your poor knees were sore through your long praying, and your voice was hoarse with crying unto God? You would gladly have bartered the light of day, the comforts of life and the joys of friendship for the assurance of your redemption! Well, then, since you have now obtained that priceless gift, forget not to praise the Lord for all His loving-kindness towards you!

For the next clause in the Psalm is this, *"who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies."* Think, brother or sister in Christ, what the Lord has done for you. Not content with saving you from hell, He has adopted you into His own family, made you a son or a daughter of the King of kings and set a royal crown upon your head—a crown of "loving-kindness and tender mercies." You are made an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ! Is not this unparalleled loving-kindness? Is not this, indeed, the tender mercy of our God towards you? Then can you ever forget such loving-kindness and tender mercy? There have been times, in the past history of some of us, when that ancient prophecy has been most graciously fulfilled in our experience, "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." So, as we remember the former loving-kindnesses of the Lord, we

rejoice that He still crowns us with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies!

We must not forget the next verse—*"who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."* If we are in Christ Jesus, we have all that we need—we are perfectly satisfied. We do not need a better Savior, we do not need a better hope, we do not need a better Bible, we do not need better promises. We *do* need more faith, but we do not need a better ground of faith! We do desire to have more love to our Lord, but we do not desire a better object for our love! We desire to always dive deeper and deeper, but only in the fathomless sea of Jesus' love! Others are roaming here and there, vainly seeking satisfaction, but our mouth is so filled with good things that we are satisfied. We asked and the Lord gave to us. We prayed for pardon and the Lord fully forgave us for Jesus' sake. We have received so much mercy from Him that our soul is satisfied and soars aloft as on an eagle's wings, leaving all terrestrial cares, sorrows and doubts far below us amid the earthborn clouds above which we have mounted by God's grace!

II. Now, having thus briefly recalled the Lord's former loving-kindnesses, I have to remind you, in the second place, that WE ARE NOT ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF THE SAME FLOW OF MERCY TOWARD US.

The psalmist asks, "Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses?" Well, where are they? Why, they are where they used to be, though we do not always realize them! The Lord's mercies have not changed, but our perception of them is not always as vivid as it ought to be. Let us again consider the mercies of which I have already spoken to you.

"Who forgives all your iniquities." There are times when a Christian fears whether his sins are really forgiven. He is saved, yet he has a doubt whether he is saved or not. All his past sins seem to rise up before him and the foul suggestion of unbelief is, "Can it be possible that all those sins have been put away? Have all those mountains of iniquity been cast into the Red Sea of the Savior's atoning blood?" Many young believers, who judge themselves too much by their *feelings*, are apt to imaging that they have been deceived and that they are still under condemnation. If I have any brothers or sisters like that here, let me assure them that there are times when the very best of the saints have to cry out in the bitterness of their soul, "Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses?" The believer in Christ is always justified as far as the law of God is concerned, but he does not always hear the proclamation of pardon in the court of conscience! God's sun is always shining, but there are clouds that obscure its beams, yet it is only hidden for a while. So is it with the loving-kindness of the Lord with regard to the forgiveness of sin—whether we always realize it or not, the forgiveness that has once been bestowed upon us will never be withdrawn from us, world without end!

It is the same with the next mercy—*"who heals all your diseases."* It may be that there are some of us here who know that the Great Physician has healed our soul maladies, yet at times unbelief and other

evil diseases cause us pain and agony of spirit. It is with us as it was in the days of Noah when the fountains of the great deep were broken up—and happy are we if we can now float in the ark of our faith above the awful sea of our depravity which threatens to drown every spiritual comfort and cover every hope! If I were to look within my own heart for comfort and hope, I would often be in despair—but when I look away to my Lord, alone, then I realize what He has done and is still doing for me, for He still "heals" all my diseases! Marvel not, dear friends, if you cannot see yourselves growing in grace as you would like to do. When a farmer goes to look at his root crops, he is not so much concerned as to the appearance of the part that is above ground—he needs to know how that part is flourishing that is out of sight. So, very often a Christian is growing underground, as it were—growing in divine grace, knowledge, love and humility—though he may not have as many virtues and graces that are visible to other people, or even to himself. Sanctification is being worked in the saints according to the will of God, but it is a secret work—yet, in due time the fruit of it will be manifest, even as the farmer at the proper season digs up his roots and rejoices that his labor has not been expended upon them in vain.

Notice, too, that next mercy—*"who redeems your life from destruction."* Now mark this—those who are once redeemed are always redeemed! The price of their redemption was paid upon Calvary and that great transaction can never be reversed. I dare to put it very strongly and to say that they were as fully redeemed when they were dead in trespasses and sins as they will be when they stand in the full blaze of Jehovah's presence before the eternal throne of God! They were not, then, conscious of their redemption, but their unconsciousness did not alter the fact of their redemption! So is it with the believer—there are dark days and cloudy days in his experience, but he is just as truly saved in the dark and cloudy day as when the sun is shining brightly and the clouds have all been blown away! In the old days of slavery, when a slave's freedom had been purchased, there may have been times when he had not much to eat, or when he had many aches and pains, but such things did not affect the fact that he was a free man. Suppose someone had said to him, "My poor fellow, you have nothing in the cupboard, you are very sick and ill; you are still a slave"? He would have replied, "That is not good reasoning. I know that I was redeemed, for I saw the price paid for my ransom. I have my free papers and I shall never again be a slave!" So is it with believers—the Son of God has made them free by giving Himself as a ransom for them, so they shall be "free indeed." Their redemption does not depend upon their realization of it, but upon their Redeemer who has made it effective for them!

The same principle applies to the next mercy—*"who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies."* There may be some Christians here who need to learn a lesson that one good Methodist tried to teach another whom he met at a class meeting. It grieved him as he heard over and over again the story of his brother's trials and troubles, but nothing about the multitudes of mercies with which he was continually being

crowned. So one day he said to him, "My brother, I wish you would change your residence—you do not live in the right part of the town." "How is that?" inquired the other. "Why, you live where I used to live, down in Murmuring Street. It is very dark and narrow, the chimneys always smoke, the lamps never burn brightly and all sorts of diseases abound in that unhealthy quarter. I got tired of living in Murmuring Street, so I took a new house in Content Street. It is a fine, wide, open street where the breezes of heaven can freely blow, so the people who dwell there are healthy and happy. And though all the houses in the street are of different sizes, it is a very remarkable thing that they are, all of them, just the right size for the people who live in them! The apostle Paul used to live in that street, for he said, 'I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content," so I would advise you, my brother, to move into Content Street as soon as you can." That was very good advice—and we may pass it on to any murmurers or grumblers whom we know. Think, beloved, how the Lord is still crowning you with loving-kindness and tender mercies! I know you are not strong, but then you have not that acute pain you used to have. I know that you are growing old, but that only means that you are getting so much nearer heaven! I know your friends are fewer than they used to be, but then those who are left are true friends. So you see that you are still crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercies!

So is it with the last mercy in the list—*"who satisfies your mouth with good things."* I will venture to say that the Christian has not one real need that is not satisfied with the good things that God has provided for him. If he has any other need, or thinks he has, it is better for him not to have that need supplied. If we need the pleasures of sin, it is a great mercy that God will not give them to us, for the supply of such a need would be our soul's damnation! If we could gather any comfort through following that which is evil, it is of the Lord's mercy that such comfort is not our portion—

"This world is ours and worlds to come!
Earth is our lodge and heaven our home,"

so what can we need besides?

III. Now, thirdly, WHY ARE WE NOT ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF THE SAME FLOW OF MERCY TOWARD US?

Sometimes we miss our former comforts as the result of sin. Sin indulged is a certain barrier to happiness. No one can enjoy communion with Christ while turning aside to crooked ways. To the extent to which a believer is inconsistent with his profession, to that extent will he be unhappy—and it will be no cause for surprise if he has to cry, "Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses?" We must always distinguish between the punishment of sin which Christ endured on His people's behalf and the fatherly chastisement with which God visits upon them for their wrongdoing. Though He will not condemn them as a judge, He will chastise them as a Father. And they cannot expect to enjoy the loving-kindnesses of the Lord while they are enduring the strokes of His rod because of their transgressions!

We may also lose a comfortable sense of God's mercy *through neglecting to use the means of grace*. Leave off the regular reading of your Bible and then you will be like the man who misses his meals and so grows weak and languid. Neglect private prayer and then see whether you will not have to cry with Job, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me when His candle shined upon my head and when, by His light, I walked through darkness." Stay away from the prayer meetings and then if your soul is not sad, it ought to be! If a man will not come where there is a fire, is it surprising that he cries that he cannot get warm? The neglect of the means of grace causes many to enquire, "Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses?"

The same result follows *when any idol is set up in our heart*. While we worship the Lord, alone, the temple of our heart will be filled with His glory. But if we set up an idol upon His throne, we shall soon hear the rushing of wings and the divine voice saying, "Let Us go from here." God and mammon cannot abide in the same house! Remember that you serve a jealous God and be very careful not to provoke Him to jealousy. Every idol must be cast down, or His comfortable presence cannot be enjoyed.

Coldness of heart towards God is another cause of the loss of enjoyment of His favor. When the heart grows spiritually cold, the whole being soon gets out of order. If the heart is warm and vigorous, the pulsations throughout the entire frame will be kept strong and healthy, but when the heart is cold, the blood will be chilled in the veins and all the powers will be numbed and paralyzed. So, beloved, see to it that in the power of the Holy Spirit you maintain the love of your espousals—that pristine warmth of holy affection which you delighted to manifest when first you knew the Lord—or else you will soon have to cry, "Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses?" Live near to God and this shall not often be your cry! But if you backslide from Him, this shall soon be your sorrowful inquiry. If you have to mourn an absent God, seek to know the reason why He has withdrawn Himself from you—and repent of the sin that has separated you from Him.

IV. Now, Lastly, LET US REMEMBER THAT THE DIVINE COVENANT REMAINS FIRM AND STEADFAST UNDER ALL CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES. The covenant made with David was established by the oath of God. And Paul, writing to the Hebrews, says that "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

For our consolation, let us remember, first, that the *parties to the covenant are always the same*. God has not one set of chosen ones today and another set tomorrow. In the Lamb's book of life there are not erasures of certain names and the insertion of others in their place. No, beloved, that is not the way in which the Lord deals with His elect—He does not play fast and loose with them like that. He does not love them one day, and hate them the next. Oh, no!—

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

And, next, *the seal of the covenant is always the same*. It is sealed with the precious blood of Jesus! His one great sacrifice on Calvary made the covenant forever sure—

"'Tis signed, and sealed, and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

We do not seal the covenant—Christ has done that—it is His blood that makes the covenant sure to all for whom He stood as surety and substitute. This is our consolation even when we have no present enjoyment of the blessings that are secured to us by the covenant. Even the sealing of the Spirit is not the seal of the covenant, though it is to us the certain evidence of our interest in the covenant—it is like a seal on our copy of the covenant, the great deed itself, sealed with the blood of Jesus, is safely preserved in the archives of heaven where none can mutilate or steal or destroy it!

Further, *the efficacy of the covenant is always the same*. It is not like human covenants which may or may not be fulfilled, or which may become void through lapse of time. This covenant is *eternal*, covering past, present and future—and it shall be fulfilled to the last jot and tittle, for He who swore unto David will certainly perform all that He has promised to His own chosen people—

"The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

When God said, "Let there be light," there was light. And when that same God says, "Let there be light in that dark soul," the light at once enters the heart and it is divinely illuminated! Thus it has come to pass that we who were sometimes darkness, now are light in the Lord. And to us comes the apostolic injunction, "Walk as children of light." The efficacy of the covenant does not depend upon us—if it did, it would be a poor, feeble, fickle thing that would fail us just when we needed it most! There would be no hope of our ever getting to heaven if we had to depend upon our own efforts, or our own merits, or anything of our own—our comfort arises from the fact that the covenant is made on our behalf by our great representative and Redeemer, who will, Himself, see that all that is guaranteed to us in the covenant is fulfilled in due season! There rolls the glorious chariot of salvation in which all believers are riding to heaven! Death and hell cannot stop it! All the fears of any who are in it will not affect their eternal safety and not one of them shall be found to be missing in the day when the roll of the redeemed is called in glory! Be of good courage, believer, for you are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! Even though you have, for a while, to mourn the loss of the Lord's former loving-kindnesses, search your heart to see how far that loss has been caused by your own sin. And then return to the Lord with all your heart and He will renew to you His former favors and give to you new mercies of which you have not as yet even dreamed!

As for those here who have no former loving-kindnesses of the Lord to which they can look back, I pray that this may be the beginning of better

days for them. May they think of the mercies which the Lord has bestowed upon others and may they cry unto Him, "Lord, do to us as You have done to them! Adopt us into Your family as Your sons and Your daughters, and let us share in all the blessings that You give to Your children!" Remember, dear friends, that it is by simple and sincere faith in the crucified Christ of Calvary that sinners are eternally saved! It is by His blood that we who once were afar off, are now made near! Whoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed or confounded! Therefore, my hearer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and God shall be glorified. So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 89.

Verses 1, 2. *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* [See Sermon #1565, Volume 26—MASCHIL OF ETHAN, A MAJESTIC SONG—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Here is an eternal song concerning eternal mercy! The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, so the saints' praise for the never ending mercy must itself be without end. The psalmist has made known God's faithfulness to all generations, not only by speaking of it, but especially by writing of it, for that which is written abides when that which is merely spoken is soon forgotten. God's faithfulness concerns heaven as well as earth and He will establish it "in the very heavens."

3, 4. *I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah.* The complete fulfillment of this glorious covenant promise concerns not only David and his seed, but "great David's greater Son" and His spiritual seed—the chosen people with whom the Lord has made "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

5-7. *And the heavens shall praise Your wonders O LORD: Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heavens can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.* A holy reverence is becoming in all who draw near to the thrice holy Jehovah, whether in the upper sanctuary or in the congregation of the saints on earth! In His gracious condescension, He allows His people wondrous familiarity in their approaches to Him, yet this must never make them forget the infinite distance that separates the Creator from even the highest and holiest of His creatures!

8-10. *O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto You or to Your faithfulness round about You? You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, You still them. You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm.* The ruling of the raging of the sea, the stilling of the stormy waves

and the breaking and scattering of the might of Egypt are used by the psalmist to illustrate the omnipotence of Jehovah, before which the mightiest monarch on earth had no more power than if it had been a corpse!

11, 12. *The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.* The psalmist rejoices in the Lord as the Creator and Possessor of the heavens above and the earth beneath. "All things were created by Him, and for Him."

13. *You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.* [See Sermons #674, Volume 12—THE MIGHTY ARM and #1314, Volume 22 which has the same title—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Amid all the varying expressions that the psalmist uses, he continues to admire and magnify God's majestic might. Whether for the defense of His people or the overthrow of His enemies, His arm is mighty, yes, more than that, for it is almighty! No human language can adequately describe that glorious hand which has only to be opened to satisfy the desire of every living thing!

14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your throne: mercy and truth shall go before Your face.* What blessed heralds does the Lord employ! "Mercy and truth shall go before Your face." It is these gracious attributes, especially as they are displayed in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that enable us even to welcome those sterner attributes—"justice and judgment," which are the habitation of God's throne.

15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* There are many that hear it, but perhaps not one out of a thousand of them that really know it. The hearing of the joyful sound is not sufficient to make people blessed, though faith comes by hearing—it is the understanding of what is meant by the glad tidings—it is the reception of the gospel message which brings immediate and eternal blessedness!

15. *They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.* The practical effect of a saving knowledge of the gospel is a holy walk, a walk of communion with God! Dear friends, do you walk in that way? Do you know the joyful sound? Can you discern the difference between the true and the false gospel? Can you distinguish the contrast between the harmonies of the one and the discords of the other? Do you know the inner secret of the heavenly music? Has it ever vibrated in your own souls? Happy are you if this is the case with you! The psalmist goes on to show how such people are blessed.

16. *In Your name shall they rejoice all the day.* They shall not have mere passing fits of joy, but they shall be glad from morning to night!

16. *And in Your righteousness shall they be exalted.* They shall mount to a higher platform of joy than that on which the men of the world are standing! They shall be lifted up in soul and spirit by the righteousness

of God, especially as they see how that great attribute guarantees their eternal salvation!

17-19. *For You are the glory of their strength: and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Then You spoke in vision to Your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* [See Sermon #11, Volume 1—THE PEOPLE'S CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is the very marrow of the Gospel! This is, indeed, "the joyful sound" which makes us truly blessed—the fact that God did, of old, exalt "One chosen out of the people," with whom He entered into an eternal covenant, pledging Himself to bless us through Him.

20. *I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him.* David was the means of bringing great blessings to the people over whom he ruled. God blessed the whole nation through him and the covenant made with David was virtually a covenant made with all the people of Israel. In like manner, the covenant made with "great David's greater Son" is virtually made with all those for whom He stood as surety and representative. The essence of the gospel lies in the covenant which God has made with His Son, Jesus Christ, on behalf of all His chosen people. Notice that God found David and anointed him as king, even as He has taken the Lord Jesus, and anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

21. *With whom My hand shall be established: My arm also shall strengthen him.* The omnipotence of God is manifested in Christ, for He is "the power of God" as well as "the wisdom of God."

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.* "The son of wickedness" did afflict David for a while, but afterwards he came to the throne and ruled gloriously over God's ancient people. So is it with our covenant Lord and King. The wicked cannot now exact upon Him, nor afflict Him—He sits upon the throne of God in glory far beyond their reach!

23. *And I will beat down His foes before His face, and plague them that hate Him.* Who can ever stand up in opposition to Christ? He is that stone of which He, Himself, said, "Whoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

24. *But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with Him: and in My name shall His horn be exalted.* God is always with His Son, Jesus Christ, in the plenitude of His faithfulness and mercy, to make Him a continual blessing to His people.

25. *I will set His hand also in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers.* Our King is a great King and He rules over sea and land—there is no limit to His dominions—and there will be no end to His righteous rule.

26. *He shall cry unto Me, You are My Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.* All God's children are a praying family and His only begotten and well beloved Son sets a noble example in this respect as

well as in everything else! He is still the great Intercessor before the throne of His Father.

27. *Also I will make Him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.* Christ is, indeed, "higher than the kings of the earth," for He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." Do not your hearts rejoice as you think of this blessed King with whom God has entered into a covenant to bless all who are trusting in Him, even the very poorest and feeblest of them? What a joy it is to us to see Jesus striking hands with the eternal and entering into an everlasting covenant on our behalf!

28, 29. *My mercy will I keep for Him forevermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with Him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and His throne as the days of heaven.* There can never be an end to the throne of Christ, for His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and there can never be an end to the family of Christ, for His seed shall endure forever!

30-32. *If His children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then*—"Then"—what? "I will destroy them, and sweep them away forever"? Oh, no! "Then"—

32. *Will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* There is no sword in God's hand to be used against His own children, but He does hold a rod—and that rod makes us smart and causes the blueness of the wound which cleanses away evil. We are grieved when we feel its strokes, yet there is covenant mercy in them. The rod of the covenant is one of the best things that ever comes to us, since it whips our folly out of us! God grant us grace to kiss the rod whenever we transgress against Him and He visits our iniquity with stripes!

33. *Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from Him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail.* Notice the use of the word, "Him," here as if it was intended to teach us that God's love to His dear Son, and to His people in Him, is so great that though He may chasten us for our transgressions, He will never cast us away.

34-37. *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.* In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the dynasty of David shall endure forever, and the spiritual seed of Christ shall also never come to an end. By the most binding covenant and the most solemn pledge, and the most sacred oath, Jehovah has guaranteed the everlasting kingdom of His Son and the eternal endurance of "His seed."

38-45. *But You have cast off and abhorred, You have been angry with Your anointed. You have made void the covenant of Your servant: You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. You have broken down all his hedges; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. All that pass by the way plunder him: he is a reproach to his neighbors. You have set up the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies to*

rejoice. You have also turned the edge of his sword, and have not made him to stand in the battle. You have made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. The days of his youth have You shortened: You have covered him with shame. Selah. Spiritually, this sad description reveals the sorrowful state of the professing church of Christ in the times in which we live.

46. *How long, LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Shall Your wrath burn like fire?* That was the wisest thing for the psalmist to do, and it is our best course, also. In the darkest days of the most sinful age, we can always resort to prayer. Let us do so.

47, 48. *Remember how short my time is: Therefore have You made all men in vain? What man is he that lives, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.* The brevity of life makes it all the more important that we should waste none of it—and that we should appeal to the Lord to interpose speedily on the behalf of His truth and those who love it.

49-52. *Lord, where are Your former loving-kindnesses, which You swore unto David in Your truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; wherewith Your enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the LORD forevermore. Amen and Amen.* The Psalm ends upon its keynote of praise unto Jehovah. There had been much to sadden the writer, as there is much to sadden us in these days. But we can unite with him in saying, "Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen and Amen."

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THE VINE OF ISRAEL
NO. 3243

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

On behalf of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1878.

"Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." Psalm 80:14.

I FEEL somewhat straitened on this occasion because of the specialty of my subject. I have been persuaded by the Society to preach on behalf of the Jews, but my mind does not quite run in the direction which is prescribed for it. I have been so in the habit of preaching the gospel to everybody, knowing neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, that the very recognition of anything like nationality and specialty is somewhat difficult for me. I do not think that the recognition of the distinction is wrong—no, I think it right—but it is so unusual that I scarcely feel at home. I would sooner, by a thousand times, take a text and preach the gospel to sinners or to saints than discourse upon a special race. Yet is it necessary and, therefore, let it be done. And I trust the Holy Spirit may make our meditation profitable. Assuredly, if there *is* any distinction which might be maintained, and I think there is none, for that distinction of Jew and Gentile seems to me to be wiped out and obliterated—if there is any distinction, we may, at least, remember that which lingeringly subsists between the seed of Israel and the nations, for God's election of old fell upon them—and when the old world lay in darkness, gleams of light gladdened their eyes! To them belonged the oracles. They were long the sole preservers of the precious truth of God which they have handed down to us. And if through their unbelief we have taken their place, we cannot but recollect who occupied it for so many centuries—and we cannot but look with extraordinary tenderness and affection and earnest desire to that elder family whom the Lord loved so long and towards whom, I think, His love still burns, as shall be seen when the day comes in which He shall gather Israel again unto Himself!

We shall view the prayer of the text in its reference to Israel. "Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." The vine was peculiarly a type of Palestine and the Jewish nation. When this Psalm was written, the Gentiles were not in the psalmist's mind, but only Israel. So let us now speak of Israel and let us

pray to God that He will return in mercy, behold in pity and visit this vine and the vineyard which His right hand planted.

I. First, let us reflect upon WHAT AN AMOUNT OF INTEREST SURROUNDS THIS VINE—this chosen people.

Brethren, Israel has a history compared with which the annals of all other nations are but poor and thin. Israel is the world's aristocracy and her history is the roll call of priests and kings unto God. At the very beginning, what interest attaches to *the planting of this vine*! The psalmist speaks of the Lord bringing the vine out of Egypt and casting out the nations that He might find a trench wherein He might place Israel's roots that she might strike deep, and take possession of the soil. But what wonders God worked in the removal of Israel from the soil of Goshen, wherein her vine seemed to have taken deep root, until the wild boar of Egypt began to uproot her! Never can we forget what He did at the Red Sea. Even at the very mention of the name, we feel as if we could sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously and cast the horse and his rider into the depths of the sea! What marvels He worked all through the wilderness when He turned the rock into a pool of water and made refreshing streams to follow His chosen along the burning sand! Neither can we forget the Jordan—our hearts begin to sing at the mention of the name—What ailed you, O Jordan, that you were driven back when the Lord's ark led the way through the depths of the river and the priests stood still in the midst, while all the hosts of His people passed over dry-shod? Neither can we fail to exult as we think of the planting of the vine in Canaan. Saw you not the walls of Jericho tottering in ruins at the sound of the ram's horns when Israel gave her shout, for the Lord was in the midst of His people? Therefore the sword of Joshua smote the Canaanites till they were utterly destroyed! The sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, because the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, working marvelously with His people, that He might settle them in the land which He gave unto their fathers—the land which flowed with milk and honey!

When I think of such a planting, it seems to me that this vine can never be given up to be utterly burned with fire after wonders as these! It is not God's fashion to cast away a people for whom He has done so much. The commencement of Israel's national history is by far too good to close, as we fear it must, if we judge only according to carnal reason. An era brighter and more glorious must surely dawn and the Lord must bring again from Bashan, and lead up His chosen nation from the depths of the seas. Once again He will make bare His arm, even He that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon—and the whole earth shall behold all Israel, both spiritual and national—singing in one joyous song, the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb! The very planting of the nation makes us feel the deepest possible interest in its welfare. O God, behold and visit *this* vine, as the vineyard which Your right hand has planted!

Let us reflect again upon *the prosperity of Israel and the wide influence which the nation exercised for centuries.* I am keeping closely to the Psalm, which is really my text, for we are told that after the planting of the vine, "the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." No nation has ever exercised such an influence upon the thought of the world as the Jewish people have done. I grant you that some other nations exercised greater influence upon the world's art and sculpture and the like, for Israel eschewed much of art and science, not greatly to her loss, especially since the reason for it was so greatly to her gain. But the idea of one God, which the Lord had graciously written upon the hearts of His elect people, though it took many an age to erase the natural lines of idolatry which nature had imprinted there; that idea of the unity of the Godhead is a treasure handed to us by the seed of Abraham! The grand truths which were contained in type and shadow and outward ordinance, and given to the chosen people of God, exercised a far more powerful influence over the world than, perhaps, most of us have ever dreamed! I feel certain that the religion of Zoroaster came from the Jews. I believe that much of whatever is pure in Eastern religions might be distinctly traced to the teachings of Moses, to gleanings of the Israelite vintage which were carried to the nations through their commerce and intercommunication—perhaps directly and distinctly by the teachings of Jews who journeyed there as exiles in captivity.

The earth had become corrupt even in father Abraham's time. And though, here and there, there might have been found goodly individuals like the patriarch, Job, adhering to the simple worship of the one only God, yet for the most part, the whole world was sunken in idolatry. But the light of God came to it and remains in it, gleaming strangely in the darkness like flashes of lightning amidst the blackness of a tempest! That light has always come, I believe, by the way of Israel! The original light of tradition grew dimmer and dimmer and threatened to die out, for in transmission from father to son its brightness was sadly clouded with human error. But the truth retained much of its vitality and purity in the midst of Israel and from Israel it influenced the rest of the nations. In the days of Solomon, how proudly did the temple stand upon its holy hill, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the one Pharos of the midnight sea of humanity! That little country—we often forget what a very little district Palestine occupied—was, nevertheless, the very queen among the nations! From far-off Sheba they came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to other lands the rumor of his glory extended—and all his greatness was connected with the worship of God, for she who came from Sheba, came to hear all the wisdom of Solomon "concerning the Lord, his God." That little land thus influenced all lands and transmitted far-off down the centuries what was known of the ever blessed God among the people! To me it seems so sad that she that sat over against the treasury

should now be poor. That she that laid the daily showbread before the Lord should now be famished. That she that piled the temple and brought the offering, should now turn away from the one only sacrifice and should these many days remain without priest or temple! Alas poor Israel! Our hearts take the deepest interest in you and we pray the Lord to look down and behold, and visit this vine, when we remember the days of your glory and all the splendor of the revelation of the Most High in the midst of His people!

Nor does the interest become one particle the less when we come to *the time of Israel's decay.* She would imitate the heathen and go aside to false gods—nothing could cure her of it. She was chastened again and again and, at last, it came to banishment and the people were scattered. Alas for the tears that Judah and Israel shed! What ocean could hold them all? How God's people were made to smart, and cry, and groan! Let the waters of Babylon tell how salty they flowed with Judah's griefs. How could they sing the Lord's song in that strange land? What a history of woe has Israel's story been! And then, when they were brought back cured of idolatry as, thank God, they most effectually are, there came an equally mournful decay—for formalism, the absence of all spiritual life—the mere observance of *outward ritual,* came into the place of idolatry and the people in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed had the Christ among them, but refused Him! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Woe was the day! Speak of it with sevenfold sorrow. *He* came for whom they long had waited—Israel's hope—and they refused Him! Yes, they crucified Him.

My tongue will not attempt to tell what came of it, when His blood was on them and on their children. Earth never saw a more terrible sight than the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! Then did they sell the ancient people of God for a pair of shoes and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. The enemy plowed the holy place, sowed it with salt, and the seed of Abraham were scattered to the four winds of heaven! Alas, the evil ceased not when the last stone was overthrown, but wrath followed the fugitives. Through many, many centuries Israel was persecuted—shame covers my face—persecuted by those who called themselves Christians! The blood of Israel hangs in great clots upon the skirts of Rome and will bring down upon that thrice accursed system the everlasting wrath of the Most High! Did they not grievously oppress the Jews in Spain and every other Catholic country—remorselessly hunting them down as if they were unfit to live—torturing them in ways that it were impossible for us to describe, lest your cheeks should blanch as you heard the horrible story? The men that were of the same race as the Christ of God were so hated by the professed followers of Jesus that no indignities were thought to be great enough, and no severities to be fierce enough for execution upon those they thought to be the execrable Jews!

Thank God, such persecution is now over; let us hope forever—at least in the Western world. The race would have been stamped out, however, if

Rome's tender mercies could have worked their will. Go to the Ghetto, today, in the Jews' quarter in Rome, and see the church, as I have done, in which a certain number of Jews were compelled to hear a sermon, once in the year, leveled at their own race and faith, and over the door of which is written what from such a quarter is a wanton insult to them—"To Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Verily it would be so eternally if the hands of Rome were the hands to be stretched out—when she encouraged, if she did not command the racing of Jews in the Corso, and the pouring of contempt upon them in the rudest fashion! Israel would never worship images, saints and virgins! Blessed were they as a nation for this thing, at least, that they utterly rejected the idolatry of which Rome is shamelessly guilty! It were far better to not be a Christian than to think Popery to be Christianity, for it is one of the vilest forms of idolatry that ever came from the polluted heart of man! Alas, poor Israel, what have you suffered! What tongue can tell your woes? I feel compelled to apply to Israel the language which Byron applied to Rome, when he called her "the Niobe of nations," and reckoned all sorrows beside hers but petty misery—

"What are our griefs and sufferance?
Come and see Jerusalem in heaps, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples."

Look, too, on a princely people crushed under persecution, laboring and finding no rest. Princes were hanged up by their hands. The faces of elders were not honored. Then was fulfilled Jeremiah's Lamentation, "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! They that did feed delicately, are desolate in the streets—they that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills."

But we will not end here, my brothers and sisters. The interest which we feel with regard to Israel and which makes us pray, "Lord, visit this vine," rises as we think of *its future*. I am no prophet or interpreter of the prophecies, but this much seems clear to me—that the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, will have dominion over them and they shall be converted and shall acknowledge Him to be the Messiah who was promised to their fathers—so does the New Testament teach us as well as the Old! It seems to me that we may work for the conversion of Israel with the absolute certainty that if we do not see it, ourselves, yet it shall be seen, for the natural branches of the olive, which for a while were cut off, shall be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved. The future of the Gentiles in the fullness of its glory can never be accomplished, till first of all, the Jews shall be ingathered. You shall have no millennial day, or full brightness of Messiah's glory, until yonder, by Jordan's streams and Judah's deserted hills, where once the Savior worked, and walked, and preached, the song shall yet again arise of Hallelujah to the God of Israel!

One more thought and then I leave this point of the interest we take in Israel. We must forever take a special interest in the Jews because *of*

them came our Lord. He was so completely a man that one forgets that He was a Jew, and, perhaps, for the most part it is best that we should, for He is more a man than a Jew. But still, "He took not up the nature of angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." Jesus is the Son of David. The Jews have a part in Him, after the flesh, which we have not. And, amid all the privileges which we enjoy, we can well afford to let them have everything that they can claim. And they can certainly prove a special kinship to Him whom our soul loves. Oh, if it were for nothing else but that our Savior was of the Jews, we ought to love them and make them the subject of our prayers and of our earnest efforts! Surely the mention of that will suffice and I need not say so much as one solitary word more! Interest in the Jews, indeed, is a very wide subject, and we have said enough for the present purpose.

II. NOW, SECONDLY, WHAT IS IT THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE NEED? We have been exhorted by all these things to pray for this vine. What is it that is needed?

The answer of our text is, "Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." A *visitation from God* is the one thing necessary for Israel. For what purpose should God visit the Jews, then? I say, brothers and sisters, it is the one essential thing in order to give them *spiritual life*. Our acquaintances with the interior of the Jewish commonwealth, at the present time is not very large, but some of us have observed that there are two sorts of Israelites. Some are devout—devout men with some of whom it has been our privilege to have hearty fellowship in matters of common interest touching the things of God. When we have spoken together of the providence of God and of faith in the divine mercy, we have been much of the same mind. In the late debate brought on by Colenso, we were able, in comparing notes, to feel the same zeal for the value of the Old Testament and for the glory of the ever blessed God! Whether we were Christians or Jews, we were equally zealous to repel the infidel assaults of the famous master of arithmetic. We meet now and then with men whose sincerity and devotion we could not doubt at all—would to God that their sincerity led them to search the Scriptures and to examine the claims of our Lord Jesus! Such men lament that many of their people seem to have no religion, or—what is almost the same thing—to have nothing more than the outward form. Their being of the Israelite race is distinctly recognized and never for a moment held back—the Sabbath is almost universally hallowed, for which let Israel put to shame many so called Christian lands! Much is done that is commendable, much which exhibits high integrity and uprightness, but yet, to a large extent, the race is sunk in worldliness and misled by superstition. Oh, that God would visit the Jew and endow him with an inquiring and unprejudiced heart, with longing after the God of his fathers, with a deeper reverence and a truer zeal for the glory of Jehovah!

The visitation of God may well be entreated that He would next grant *enlightenment* to His people, taking away the veil which has been cast over their eyes and enabling them to see the true messenger of the

covenant. There are thousands of Israelites today who only need to know that Jesus is the Messiah and they would as gladly accept Him as any of us have done. It seems to us so strange that they can read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah and so many other plain passages of the Prophets and of the Psalms without seeing that the man of Nazareth is the Christ of God! Yet they do read, but the veil is on their hearts so that they do not perceive Christ in their interpretations. Alas that the Son of Righteousness should shine and Israel should be in darkness! With many of the seed of Abraham there is an honest desire to receive whatever can be shown to be the truth of God. If the Lord will touch their eyes and remove the scales—what enlightenment on the whole nation would follow! A nation would be born in a day! What joy for us, what honor to God, what happiness to themselves if they might but be delivered from their present alienation! O God, You alone can do this! We cannot. All arguments seem to be in vain, but do You behold, and visit this vine!

When the spiritual life of the nation shall have been revived and there shall be an enlightenment of the intellect, they will only need the Spirit to work upon the heart. Even as the Holy Spirit has quickened and regenerated us, so must it be with them, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in this matter. The same regenerated work is needed—the same enlightening of the Holy Spirit—and if the Lord will do this, our hearts shall be exceedingly glad!

III. WHAT, THEN, CAN WE DO? We are great debtors to Israel, what can we do for her?

Some people are always afraid of telling Christian people to do anything. They mutter between their teeth, "The Lord will do His own work," and they are afraid that they should be interfering with God's prerogatives. Ah, my dear brothers and sisters, I am not afraid that some of you will ever do the Lord's work, for you do not do your own! That part which you *can* do is neglected! Do not be so mightily frightened lest you should be too active! It is God's work to visit Israel and gather out His people and He alone can do it—but *He works by means*. What, then, would He have us do?

I answer, the first thing we can do is *to pray for Israel.* You believe in the power of prayer, do you not, my brothers and sisters? Why, some of us can no more doubt the power of prayer than we can doubt the force of a steam engine or the influence of the law of gravity, because to us the effects and results of prayer are everyday things! We are in the habit of speaking with God about everything—and receiving replies which to us are as distinct as if He had spoken to us with words. We can speak boldly in prayer to God concerning Israel! No nation can be nearer to God's heart than the Jews. We may be bold with the mighty God. We may open our mouth wide, for He will fill it. We may plead with Him urgently after this fashion—"Will you not glorify Yourself by the salvation of the Jews? What could You do that would more signally strike the

whole world with awe than if you were to turn this wonderful nation to the faith of Christ? You have taught them the unity of the Godhead, you have burnt this truth into their very souls—now teach them the deity of Your Son who is one with You! Bring them to rejoice in the triune God with heart and soul, and all lands shall hear of it and say with wonder, 'Who are these?' Great God, were not these Your messengers of old? When You needed heralds, did You not look to Israel? You took James and John, and Peter and Paul. You will find such as these among them, now, if You will call them—both boastful Peters and persecuting Pauls—whom Your grace can transform into mighty testifiers for the name of Jesus!" Let us pray to God to do this. We can pray!

The next thing we can do is *to feel very kindly towards that race.* I know all that will be said about converted Jews, and I lament that there should have been grave occasion given in many instances. But, for my part, I have been glad of late to smart a little for the sake of my Lord. I have said, "Well, it was a Jew that saved me and even if this professed convert should have a hypocritical design upon my purse, I had better be deceived by him that turn away an honest kinsmen of my Lord." I do not marvel that there should be deceivers among the Jews, for have not we plenty of such in our churches, who, for the sake of loaves and fish and pelf, creep in among us, pretending to be followers of Christ when their hearts know nothing about Him? In all ranks and conditions of man, hypocrisy is sure to be found! But for all that, we do not turn round and say, "The Gentiles are a bad lot. We will have nothing more to do with them because two or three of them deceived us." The Gentiles are always taking us in! We know they are and still we have hope for them. And so must we always have hope towards Israel—and instead of thinking bitterly and speaking bitterly, we must cultivate kindness of spirit both to those who become Christians and to those who remain in unbelief. I, for one, thank God that this land has now for several years swept away the civil disabilities of the Jew. He is no longer a stranger in the land, but he settles down in the midst of us and exercises all the rights of citizenship. May the kindness of feeling which has prompted this change—and it came, I think, mainly from earnest Christians—lead the Israelites to think kindly of our faith!

Another thing we can do, dear friends, is *to keep our own religion pure.* I marvel not that Jews are not Christians when I know what sort of Christianity, for the most part, they have seen. When I have walked through Rome and countries under Rome's sway—and have seen thousands bow before the image of a woman carried through the streets—when I have seen the churches crammed with people bowing down before pieces of bone, hair and teeth of dead saints, and such like things—I have said to myself, "If I were a worshipper of the one true God, I would look with scorn upon those who bow before these cast clouts, moldy rags, pieces of rotten timber and I know not what besides!" No, no, good Jew! Join not with this idolatrous rabble! Remain a Jew rather than degrade yourself with this superstition! If the Lord has taught you to

know that there is an unseen God who made the heavens and the earth, and who alone is to be worshiped—if you have heard the voice of thunder which says, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God,' stand you to that and go not one inch beyond it, if the way before you invites you to the worship of things that are seen, and the reverence of men who call themselves priests—and the whispering out of every filthy thought into a confessor's ear! No, no, no, Israel! You are brought very low, but you are far too noble to become an adorer of crosses and wafers, and pictures and relics!"

Even in our own land there is a good deal which one would not wish a Jew to regard as Christianity. To my mind, baptismal regeneration is about as glaring a piece of Popery as there is to be found in the world! And they can hear that lie publicly taught in England! Grievous, too, it is to my very heart that they may hear it among those who profess a purer form of faith than that of which we have spoken. Try, brothers and sisters, to keep Christ's religion as Christ taught it. Purify it. Let it come back to its original form!

Labor also to be Christians in ordinary life. If a Jew says, "I would like to see a Christian," do not let him see a person full of superstitions. Let him see one who believes in the triune God, who tries to live according to the commands of God, and who, when he talks about Jesus, lets you see the mind which dwelt in Jesus—the same mind being in him. When once the church of God shall bear a clear testimony to the truth of God both with lips and life, great hindrances will be taken out of the way of Israel. I know you say, "Well, Jews ought to know that we hold a very different faith from Romanists." I know that you think so, but I am not able to perceive how the Jews are to learn the distinction, for Papists are called Christians as much as we are! Their religion is dominant in some countries—it is prominent in every country. How is the Jew to know that it is not the religion of Christ? As he thinks that it is so, he declares that he will have nothing to do with it—and I, for one, cannot condemn him, but approve of his resolve! I only hope that as the years roll on, we who worship God in sincerity and have no confidence in the flesh, we who are saved by the faith which saved Abraham, who is our father after the spirit though not according to the flesh, that we, I say, may be able to bring this purer faith more clearly to the knowledge of Israel and that God will lead His ancient nation to be fellow heirs with us! We must keep our doctrine pure and hold it individually with clean hands and a pure heart—or we have not done all that we can for Israel.

This being done, I will next say that *we must each one evangelize with all his might*. Do this not among Jews, only, but among Gentiles, also. Wherever you are, tell abroad the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Do not live a single day, if opportunity serves you, without testifying concerning the love of God which is revealed in the cross of Calvary. Your prayer should be for the whole church of God, "Behold, and visit this vine." And as a large number of God's elect ones are as yet hidden in darkness, let us

pray unto the Lord that He would visit this vine and make these branches to spring out into the light of God—that on them, also, there may be rich clusters to His praise!

Brothers and sisters, we are, ourselves, saved, are we not? Come, before you go away, let the question be put to you, Are you saved? Are you really believers in Jesus? Is the Christ formed in you? Have you realized that He is your Savior? Are you trusting Him now? Will you live to Him? Are you consecrated to Him—spirit, soul and body? If you are, that is the first thing. If you are not, I cannot ask you to pray for Israel, or for anybody else till, first of all, God has put a cry into your soul for *yourselves*. If you are saved, then let me ask myself and you, "Are we doing all we might for the honor and love of Jesus?" Sitting on these seats, might not many say, "We have not yet begun to live for Christ as we ought"? May the Lord quicken you!

There was a young man here, one Thursday night, when I closed with some such words as these, who derived lasting benefit from them. He was a gentleman doing a large business, to whom it had never occurred that he might preach Christ. It did occur to him that night—and he straightway went to the town in which he lived and began to preach in the streets! He is now the pastor of a large church, though he still continues his business—and his is an example to be imitated by many! I would to God that some young man might be quickened to feel that he must do something, for Israel perhaps, for Christ, certainly! And you, sisters, may you feel a divine impulse upon you while you pray God to visit the vine which He has planted! May He also visit you and make you fruitful vines unto His praise! The Lord bless every one of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 46.

To the Chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

This Psalm is often called "Martin Luther's Psalm." Whenever there was any great trouble, Luther used to say, "Let us sing the 46th Psalm together and then let the devil do his worst." This is the Psalm, too, from which Mr. John Wesley preached in Hyde Park at the time of a great earthquake. While the earth was shaking and there was a great storm, Mr. Wesley preached from the second verse—"Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Verse 1. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* All creatures have their places of refuge. "As for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats and the rocks for the conies." All men also have their places of refuge, though some are "refuges of lies." But God is our refuge and strength," the omnipotence of Jehovah is pledged for the defense and support of His people. "A very

present help in trouble"—one who is near at hand—always near, but nearest when He is most needed. Not much entreaty is required to bring Him to the aid of His people, for He is close at hand and close at heart, "a very present help in trouble."

2, 3. *Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* [See Sermon #1950, Volume 33—EARTHQUAKE BUT NOT HEARTQUAKE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Here we have, you perceive, a mention of the greatest convulsions of nature, yet the believer fears not! Doubtless, too, these verses are intended to be a picture of the great convulsions that take place in the providential dealings of God. States and kingdoms that seem to be as solid as the earth will one day be removed. Dynasties that seem as fixed and firm as mountains may soon be swept away into the sea of oblivion. We may have famine, war, pestilence and anarchy until the whole earth shall seem to be like the sea in a great storm! Yes, hope may fail with many and the stoutest hearts may shake at the swelling thereof. Yet let the worst come to the worst, God's people are still safe! As one old writer says, "Though God should, to use His words concerning Jerusalem, wipe the earth as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down, yes, though He should break it into a thousand shivers, yet need not His people fear, for if He does not protect them under heaven, He will take them up to be with Him in heaven!" If heaven and earth could be mingled together, and chaos could return, yet as long as God is God, there is no use for the believer to fear!

3. *Selah.* We may well pause and renew our confidence in the God who has never failed us, and who never will fail any who trust Him.

4. *There is a river, the stream whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.* Whatever river may have been in the psalmist's mind, it was the symbol of sovereign grace flowing freshly and freely from the sacred fountain of eternal love to make glad the people of God! And now we have the inspired book, we have the preached word, we have the many precious promises, we have the blessed Spirit, Himself, and all these make a glorious river, the streams whereof "make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."

5. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.* The Hebrew expression is, "at the turning of the morning." Our marginal reading gives it, "when the morning appears." "God shall help her at the turning of the morning." At that period when the night is the blackest, just before the light begins to come, then shall God help His church. Child of God, this promise is to you, also! When the night gets thickest and the gloom is the heaviest, then God shall help you "at the turning of the morning." He may tarry for a while, but He will tarry no longer than is wise. You shall find, in looking back upon God's

dealings with you, that although He sometimes seemed to be long in coming to your help and you cried out, "Lord, how long?" yet, after all, He did help you and that "right early," too!

6. *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted.* God has but to speak and His stoutest foe shall dissolve like snow when the sun shines on it.

7-9. *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the work of the Lord, what desolation He has made in the earth. He makes wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; He burns the chariot in the fire.* [See Sermon #190, Volume 4—THE DESOLATION OF THE LORD, THE CONSOLATION OF HIS SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Here the psalmist invites us to behold what God has done in the past. He has desolated the desolaters and destroyed the destroyers! War has been a terrible scourge to mankind, but our God is Master even over war. When I look at the old ruined castles all over our land, I cannot help saying to myself and others, too, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth," and when I stumble upon some broken down abbeys, or monasteries and Popish cathedrals, I can but wish that there were more of them, that we might see many such desolations which the Lord has made in the earth! He will get the victory over all His foes and break all His adversaries in pieces—however long He may wait before putting forth His great power in judgment upon them!

10. *Be still, and know that I am God*—Here is the command and here is the reason which will help us to obey it. Judge not the Lord hastily! Murmur not at His providential dealings with you! Be not hurrying and scurrying here and there, but, "be still." In silence and in confidence shall be your strength. "Be still, and know that I am God"—

10. *I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.* If God is willing to wait, you need not be impatient. His time is the best time and He will be exalted in due time.

11. *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

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"OUR LIGHT AFFLICTION"
NO. 3244

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1870.

"Our light affliction."
2 Corinthians 4:17.

PERHAPS someone here thoughtlessly says, "Well, whoever calls affliction, 'light,' must have been a person who knew very little about what affliction really is! If he had suffered as I have done, he would not have written about 'our light affliction.' He must have been in robust health and known nothing of sickness and pain." "Just so," says another, "and if he had been as poor as I am and had to work as hard as I do to maintain a sickly wife, and a large family, he would not have written about 'our light affliction.' I expect the gentleman who used that expression lived very much at his ease and had all that his heart could wish." "Yes," says another, "and if he had stood by an open grave and had to lament the loss of loved ones, as I have done. And if he had known what it was to be desolate and forsaken, as I have known it, he would not have written about 'our light affliction.'"

Now, if you talk like that, you are, all of you, mistaken, for the man who wrote these words was probably afflicted more than any of us have ever been! The list of his afflictions that he gives us is perfectly appalling—"in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness." Is there anyone here who could truthfully make out such a catalog of personal afflictions as the Apostle Paul endured?

"Well then," says one, "he must have been so hardened that he took no notice of it, like the Red Indian who will endure terrible torture without a groan, or like the Stoic philosopher who conceals his inward feelings beneath an unmoved countenance." No, you are also mistaken. If you read Paul's letters to his private friends and to the Churches, you will see that they bear abundant evidences that he was a man of great

tenderness of spirit and of intense emotion—one who could suffer and who did suffer most acutely. His education and training had fitted him for a life among the most learned and refined of his countrymen, yet he had to support himself by laboring as a tent-maker and to journey here and there in peril and privation. And though he endured all this in absolute submission to the will of God, yet there was nothing stoical about his resignation!

"Well then," says another, "he must have been one of those careless, lighthearted people who never trouble about anything that happens and whose motto is, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" Oh, no! The Apostle Paul was not at all that kind of man! He was the most thoughtful, logical, careful, considerate man of whom I have ever read. He knew what it was to be joyful, yet there was never any sign of levity about him. He had a grandly buoyant spirit which lifted him above waves of sorrow in which most men would have sunk, yet he was never frivolous! He wrote of "our light affliction" even when he was heavily afflicted and while he acutely felt that affliction! The sailor forgets the storm when he is again safely on shore, and we are all apt to think less of our sickness when we have been restored from it—but Paul was in the midst of affliction when he called it "light." He felt the weight of it, and was fully conscious of the pressure of it upon his spirit, but the elastic spring of faith within his skull was so vigorously in action that he was enabled at that very time to call it, "our light affliction."

We must not forget that Paul had afflictions which were peculiarly his own. There are afflictions which Christians have because they are Christians and which those who are not Christians do not have. And Paul, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, had sufferings which were peculiarly his because he was an Apostle. Because he was specially called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Because he was chosen to carry the Gospel to many nations. Because he was called to stand even before the cruel Emperor Nero—for that very reason—he who was peculiarly gifted and especially chosen above all others to do most arduous and onerous work was also called to endure unusual trial. He had spelt out the word, "AFFLICTION" as perhaps no other mere man had done—he had seen it written in capital letters across his whole life—so he could speak, not as a novice, but as one who had graduated in the school of affliction, and yet he wrote concerning "our light affliction." Before I have finished my discourse, I hope that most, if not all here will agree with the Apostle and say, "We also call our affliction light."

I. I am going to speak, first, especially TO CHRISTIAN WORKERS. And to them I would say—Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *our affliction is light compared with the objectives we have in view.*

Much of the affliction that the Apostle Paul had to endure came upon him because he was seeking the conversion of the heathen and the inga-

thering of the elect into the Kingdom of Christ. If this is the objective you also have in view, my dear Friend, and you are made to suffer through your sedulous and faithful pursuit of it, I think you may truly call anything you have to endure a light affliction. If you have ever seen a mother sit up night after night with her sick child, you must have sometimes wondered that her eyes did not close in slumber. You were amazed that she did not permit someone else to share her task, but she seemed to think nothing of the cost to herself if she might only be the means of saving her little one's life. True love made her labor light. And he who truly loves the souls of sinners will willingly bear any affliction for their sakes if he may but bring them to the Savior! Yes, and he will also patiently endure affliction from them as he remembers how, in his own willfulness and waywardness, he caused his Savior to suffer on his behalf. If a man could know that all through his life he would have to wear a threadbare garment and exist upon very scanty fare—if he were sure that throughout his life he would meet with but little kindness from Christians, and with nothing but persecution from worldlings—and if, at the close of his career, he could only expect to be devoured by dogs or his body to be cast to the carrion crows, yet might he think all this to be but a light affliction if he might but win *one soul* from the unquenchable flame! Such trials as these are, happily, not necessary—but if they were, we might count them as nothing in comparison with the bliss of bringing up from the depths of sin the precious pearls that are forever to adorn the crown of the Redeemer!

Still speaking to Christian workers, I have next to say that *our affliction is light compared with our great motive.*

What should be the great motive of all who seek to spread the Gospel and to win sinners for Christ? Surely there is no motive comparable to that of seeking to bring Glory to God by gathering into the Kingdom of Christ those for whom He shed His precious blood! Always keep in memory, Beloved, what Jesus has done for us. He left His radiant Throne in Glory and condescended to take upon Himself our nature, and also our sin—

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

Saved by His almighty Grace, cleansed by His ever-precious blood, living because we have been made partners of His life, how can we help loving Him who has made us what we are? When that sacred passion burns vehemently within our hearts, we feel that any affliction that we have to endure in order to glorify Christ is too light to be even worth mentioning! O you devoted lovers of the Savior, have you not known hours when you have envied the martyrs and wished that you, too, might be allowed to wear the ruby crown? When you have read about how they had to lie for years in cold, damp dungeons, and then at last were dragged forth to die

at the block, the stake, or the scaffold, have you not felt that your lives were poor and mean compared with theirs and that you would gladly sacrifice all the comfort you now enjoy if you might be permitted to die for Christ as they did? I hope that many of you could truthfully say to your dear Lord and Savior—

"Would not my ardent spirit vie
With angels round the Throne,
To execute Your sacred will,
And make Your Glory known?
Would not my heart pour forth its blood
In honor of Your name,
And challenge the old hand of death
To dampen the immortal flame?"

It was such a spirit as this that must have possessed the Apostle Paul when he wrote concerning "our light affliction."Let us, also, as workers for Christ, reckon as light affliction anything we have to endure by which we may glorify Him who bore such a terrible weight of suffering and sorrow for us!

II. Now, secondly, I am going to speak TO THOSE WHO COMPLAIN OF THE WEIGHT OF THEIR AFFLICTION.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let me remind you that *your affliction is light compared with that of many others*. Think of the horrors of a battlefield and of the armies of the poor wounded men who have to lie there so long untended. Living in peace in our happy island home, it is difficult for us to realize the misery and wretchedness that are being endured in Paris even while I am preaching to you. [It will be seen, from the date at the head of the Sermon, that it was preached during the Franco-Prussian War.] Some of you complain of shortness of breath, but you have not to suffer the pangs of hunger as so many of the inhabitants of the French capital are at this moment suffering. There are some who are vulnerable as soon as any little ache or pain seizes them, yet their affliction is very light compared with that of many who never know what it is to be well and strong. Even if we are called to suffer pain, let us thank God that we have not been deprived of our reason. If we could go through the wards of Bethlehem Hospital, not far from us, and see the many forms of madness represented, I think each one of us would be moved to say, "My God, I thank You that, however poor or sick I am, You have preserved me from such mental affliction as many have to bear." How thankful we all ought to be that we are not in prison! Does it seem improbable that such good people as we are could ever be numbered among the law-breakers of the land? You know how Hazael said to Elisha, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yet he did all that the Prophet foretold—and but for the restraining Grace of God, you and I, dear Friends, might have been suffering the agony and remorse that many are tonight enduring in the prisons of this and other lands! I need not go on multip-

lying instances of those who are suffering in various ways in mind or body or estate, but I think I have said enough to convince you that our affliction, whatever form it may assume, is light compared with that of many others.

Next, *our affliction is light compared with our deserts*. We can truly say with the Psalmist. "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." If the Lord had not dealt with us in mercy and in His Grace, we might have been at this moment beyond the reach of hope, like that rich man who in vain begged, "Father Abraham" to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his parched tongue! Yes, ungodly one, you might have been in Hell tonight—in that outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! Let the goodness of God in preserving you alive until now lead you to repent of your sin and to trust in the Savior! Thank God you are still out of the Pit—the iron gate has not yet been opened to admit you—and then been closed upon you forever! Yet remember that you are, as it were, standing upon a narrow neck of land between two unbounded seas and that the waves are every moment washing away the sand from beneath your feet! Rest no longer upon such an unsafe footing, lest it should give way altogether and you should sink down into the fathomless abyss! As for any affliction that you ever can have to endure on earth, it is not merely light, it is absolutely unworthy of mention in comparison with the eternal woe that is the portion of the lost! Be thankful that, up to the present moment, this has not been your portion—and lest it should be—flee at once for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the Gospel!

Then next, *our affliction is very light compared with that of our Lord.* Do you, dear Friend, murmur at the bitterness of the draft in the cup which is put into your hand? But what heart can conceive of the bitterness of that cup of which Jesus drank? Yet He said, "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" Is the disciple to be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Did Christ have to swim through stormy seas and—

"Must you be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?"

I think there is no consolation for an afflicted child of God so rich as that which arises from the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus. The remembrance of the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane has often dried up the sweat of terror upon the anguished brow of the Believer. The stripes of Jesus have often brought healing to his wounded followers. The thirst, the desertion and the death on Golgotha—all the incidents of our Savior's suffering and the terrible climax of it all—have been most helpful in comforting the sorrows of stricken saints! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, your sufferings are not worth a moment's thought when compared with the immeasurable agonies of Jesus, your Redeemer! My soul would

prostrate herself at His dear pierced feet, and say, "I have never seen any other affliction like Your affliction. I have beheld and seen, but I have never seen any sorrow like Your sorrow. You are, indeed, the incomparable Monarch of Misery, the unapproachable King of the whole realm of grief! Of old, You were the 'Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,' and no man has ever been able to rob You of Your peculiar title." I think that such reflections as these will help us to realize that however heavy our affliction appears to be to us, it is very light compared with that of our dear Lord and Master—

"Sons of God, in tribulation,
Let your eyes the Savior view,
He's the Rock of our salvation,
He was tried and tempted, too—
All to succor
Every tempted, burdened son."

And further, Beloved, *our affliction is very light compared with the blessing which we enjoy.* Many of us have had our sins forgiven for Christ's sake—and the blessing of full and free forgiveness must far outweigh any affliction that we ever have to endure! When we were lying in the gloomy dungeon of conviction and had not a single ray of hope to lighten the darkness, we thought that even though we had to be kept in prison all our days and to be fed only upon bread and water, we could be quite joyous if we could but be assured that God's righteous anger was turned away from us and that our sins and iniquities He would remember against us no more forever! Well, that is just what many of us have experienced—our transgressions have been forgiven and our sin has been covered by the great atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! Then let us rejoice and be glad all our days! But this is not all the blessing that we have received, for we have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ and adopted into the family of God! Now we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. We even now share in all the privileges of the children of God and there are still greater favors and honors reserved for us in the future, as the Apostle John says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." We already have a foretaste of the bliss that is laid up in store for us, for—

"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow!"

So it is quite true that in comparison with our blessings and privileges, our affliction is, indeed, light.

And, dear Friends, we specially realize that *our affliction is light as we prove the power of the Lord's sustaining Grace.* Some of you have never personally proved its power, but many of you know by practical expe-

rience what I mean. There are times when through acute physical pain or great mental anguish, the soul is at first utterly prostrate. But at last it falls back in sheer helplessness upon the bosom of Jesus, gives up struggling and resigns itself absolutely to His will. And then—I speak what I know and testify what I have felt—there comes into the soul a great calm, a quiet joy so deep and so pure as never is experienced at any other time! I have sometimes looked back upon nights of pain—pain so excruciating that it has forced the tears from my eyes—and I have almost asked to have such suffering repeated if I might but have a repetition of the seraphic bliss that I have often enjoyed under such circumstances! I made a mistake when I said, "seraphic" bliss, for seraphs have not the capacity for suffering that we have and, therefore, they can never experience that deep, intense, indescribable bliss that is our portion when, by Grace, we are enabled to glorify God even in the furnace of affliction!—

"Let me but hear my Savior say,
'Strength shall be equal to your day!'
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient Grace.
I can do all things, or can bear
All sufferings, if my Lord is there—
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While His left hand my head sustains."

We may well say that no affliction weighs more than a gnat resting upon an elephant when the Lord's upholding Grace is sweetly manifested to our soul in times of perplexity, anxiety and pain. It is just then that Jesus often so graciously reveals Himself to us that we even come to love the cross that brings Him specially near to us. I can understand that strange speech of Rutherford, as some have regarded it when he said that he sometimes feared lest he should make his cross into an idol by loving affliction too much because of the blessed results that flowed from it! The bark of the tree of affliction may be bitter as gall, but if you get to the pith of it, you will find that it is as sweet as honey!

Once more, affliction—*sanctified affliction—becomes very light when we see to what it leads.* Sin is our great curse and anything that can help to deliver us from the dominion of sin is a blessing to us. It seems that in the constitution of our nature and in the Divine discipline under which we are being trained, our growth in Grace is greatly assisted by affliction and trial. There are certain propensities to evil that can only be removed in the furnace—as the dross is burnt away from the pure metal—and surely, Brothers and Sisters, you who know the exceeding sinfulness of sin would not think any affliction too severe that should humble your pride, or subdue your passions, or slay your sloth, or overcome any other sin that so easily besets you! You will not merely acquiesce in the Lord's dealings with you, but you will devoutly thank Him for using the sharp

knife of affliction to separate you from your sin! A wise patient will gratefully thank the surgeon who cuts his flesh and makes it bleed—and who will not allow it to heal up too quickly. And when God, by His gracious Spirit's operation, uses the stern surgery of trial to eradicate the propensity to sin, we do well to kiss the hand that holds the knife and to say with cheerfulness as well as with resignation, "The will of the Lord be done."—

"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."

Now, lastly, *our affliction is light compared with the Glory which is so soon to be revealed to us and in us.* Some of us are much nearer to our heavenly Home than we have ever imaged. Possibly we are reckoning upon another 20 or even 40 years service, yet the shallows of our life's day are already lengthening although we are unaware that it is so. Perhaps we are anticipating long periods of fighting without and fears within, but those anticipations will never be realized, for the day of our final victory is close at hand and there doubts and fears shall never again be able to assail our spirits. In this House, tonight, there may be some who are sitting on the very banks of the Jordan—and just across the river lies the land that flows with milk and honey—the land which is reserved as the inheritance of the true children of God! Their eyes are so dimmed with tears that they cannot see—

"Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where their possessions lie."

They even imagine that they are captives by the waters of Babylon and they hang their harps upon the willows, for they fear there are many years of banishment still before them. Yet the King's messenger is already on the way with the summons to bid them to appear before Him very soon! Even if the call does not come to some of us at once—if the Master has need of us in this world a little longer—how soon our mortal life must end! What is our life? "It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." But does the brevity of life cause us any anxiety? Oh, no! "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"! And when once we reach that blest abode of all the saints and look back upon our earthly experiences, we shall feel that any affliction we had to endure was light, indeed, compared with the unutterable bliss that shall then be our eternal portion! We are pilgrims bound to Zion's city and we necessarily have certain privations and difficulties—but when our journey is at an end—

"One hour with our God

Will make up for it all."

If we have not this good hope through Divine Grace, we may well say that our affliction is *not* light. I cannot imagine how any of you, my Hearers, can go on living without a Savior —you poor people, you hard-working people, you sickly, consumptive people—how can you live without a Savior? I wonder how those who are rich and who have an abundance of earthly comforts can live on, year after year, without any hope (except a false one) of comfort and blessing in the life that is to come? But as for you who have so few earthly comforts, you whose life is one long struggle for bare existence, you who scarcely know what it is to have a day without pain, *how can you live without a Savior*? Remember that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to some." So, "seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." May the Lord give you the Grace to come to Him this very moment! And to Him shall be all the Glory forever, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 4.

Verse 1. *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not*—We are sometimes ready to faint, but we cast our fainting spirits into the arms of God and our strength is again renewed. At times the very importance of an errand first weighs down the spirit of the messenger, yet afterwards it seems to impel him to more than ordinary exertion. So is it here—having been Divinely entrusted with this ministry and being ready to faint under the tremendous responsibility that it involves, we are yet awakened to action by the very pressure which seems to deprive us of the power to act! And, therefore, "we faint not"—

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.* Far be it from the teacher of the Truth of God to ever use words in an unnatural sense, or to dissemble or equivocate, saying to the ear what he means not in the sense in which the hearer understands it. Far be it from us to mix with the Word of God anything of our own as vintners mix various kinds of wine, for such is the import of the word that the Apostle here uses. Let none of us ever handle the Word of God deceitfully. There is no deceit in it—it is all pure unmixed Truth of God. An honest mind is needed for the understanding of it, and then a truthful

tongue for the telling of it to others. If we preach undiluted, unadulterated Truths of God, we must not expect that the natural heart of man will commend our honesty. We are to commend ourselves to every man's conscience, not by cutting and trimming the Word so as to make it palatable to our hearers—leaving one Truth out to please this man, and dwelling too long upon another Truth so as to please some other hearer—but by bringing out the whole teaching of the Scripture in clear truthfulness that shall command the approval of the conscience even of those who may not accept the Truth that we proclaim!

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 is not hidden under the flowers of our oratory, not hidden under the darkness of our speech, not hidden through the fog of our philosophies—if it is hidden at all, it is hidden "to them that are lost." If they had any spiritual perception or apprehension at all. If they were not utterly lost to everything that is spiritual, they would be able to receive the Gospel that we are bid to preach and which, therefore, becomes "our Gospel."

4, 5. *In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not,* [See Sermon #2304, Volume 39—BLINDED BY SATAN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ,* [See Sermon #2077, Volume 35—THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *who is the Image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves*—What a miserable topic we would have if we preached ourselves! But we do not set up ourselves as "priests" having authority to administer "sacraments" to a lower order of beings who do not possess priestly sanctity! We do not claim to belong to a ministerial caste—we regard ourselves as simply equally with the rest of the Christian brotherhood and, therefore, "we preach not ourselves"—

5, 6. *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*—We cannot, therefore, darken the Gospel, or cover it up, "for God has shined in our hearts"—

6, 7. *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*—The most earnest and faithful minister of the Gospel must always remember that humbling Truth of God. He has this precious treasure of the Gospel entrusted to his charge. He knows he has it and he means to keep it safely, but still, he is nothing but an earthen vessel, easily broken, soon marred—a poor depository for such priceless Truths of God! Yet God has a good reason for putting this treasure into earthen vessels—

7. *That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* If angels had been commissioned to preach the Gospel, we might have attributed some of its power to their superior intelligence. And if only those

had been called to preach the Gospel were men of great intellect and of profound learning, we might have considered that the talent of man was the essential qualification for a preacher! But when God selects—as He often does, no, as He *always* does—earthen vessels and some that seem more manifestly earthen than others, then the excellency of the power is unquestionably seen to be of God and not of us! In Paul's case, the earthiness of the vessel appeared in the trouble which he had to bear.

8. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed*—He is not so far gone as that. He sees the stormy billows raging around outside the ship everywhere, and the ship is tossed here and there upon the waves, yet she does not leak, there is no water in the hold and the waves will not sink the ship as long as she can keep them outside—and trouble will not distress us as long as we can obey our Lord's injunction, "Let not your heart be troubled." "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed"—

8. *We are perplexed, but not in despair*—We scarcely know what to do, but, by His Grace we have not given way to despair. We are perplexed, but hope has not gone from us. *Dum spiro spero*, was the old Latin proverb—"While I live, I hope." But the Christian proverb is a still better one, *Dum expiro spero*—"Even while I die I still have hope," for "the righteous has hope in his death."

9. *Persecuted, but not forsaken.* For there is One who, when we are persecuted, is persecuted with us and persecuted in us, who has promised that we shall not be left desolate! He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."—

"Should persecution rage and flame,
Still trust in your Redeemer's name!
In fiery trials you shall see
That, 'as your day, your strength shall be.'"

9. *Cast down, but not destroyed*—Even if the adversary is able to cast us down, he is not able to destroy us, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." "Cast down, but not destroyed"—

10. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* Thus did these Apostolic saints in a very high sense die daily, and so must we, when called to suffer for the Truth's sake, bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

11, 12. *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. So then, death works in us, but life in you.* The disinterestedness of Christian affection is here seen in that Paul was willing even to be delivered unto death if only the Church in Corinth and other Christians might receive more of the Divine Life. This is the motive that actuated our blessed Lord, Himself. He saved others, but in order to do so, He could not save Himself—and he who would be a blessing to others must

expect that just in proportion to the good that he is able to impart to them, must be the cost to himself.

13-16. *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. For all things are for your sake, that the abundant Grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the Glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perishes*—As, in the case of most of the Apostles—it did absolutely and literally perish by martyrdom.

16. *Yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* As our body, through pain and disease, is constantly sinking towards the grave, here is our continual consolation—that our inner man is renewed day by day!

17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* This is one of the most remarkable verses in all Scripture! The contrast here drawn is perfect and the language is in the highest degree pertinent to the subject. When the Apostle speaks of affliction, he contrasts it with glory! The affliction he calls a lightness of affliction, but the glory he calls a weight of glory—and while he describes the affliction as momentary, he rightly says that the glory is eternal. And then, as though he would make the contract still more vivid, he says that this momentary, light affliction, "works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He can scarcely find words big enough to express the contrast between what Believers now have to endure and what they shall forever enjoy!

18. *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.*

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

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

OUR POSITION AND OUR PURPOSE
NO. 3245

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1.

KINDLING with strong emotion, constrained by the love of Christ and animated by the fellowship of all spiritual blessing, the apostle here strikes out an exhortation in which he appeals to the noblest passions of the children of God—to their sense of a divine lineage and a present endowment—as well as of an exalted destiny for an incentive to purity of character and holiness of life.

I. The first thought which he gives to stir up in us this godly ambition is that THE CHRISTIAN IS POSSESSED OF MOST GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES.

By such words—"Having therefore these promises," I understand not merely having the promises in reversion, as they belonged to the Jews, but having them in possession, having received them, having obtained them, having gotten them, having grasped them and being seized of them, as lawyers express it, so that the promises are no longer mere promises, but things which we have actually in our possession! I understand, by Paul's language here, that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have a thousand blessed promises in the enjoyment of which they daily live.

The promises he especially refers to are mentioned in the previous chapter. They appear to be these—first, *divine indwelling*—"I will dwell in them." Now, this is no light or inferior privilege of the Christian church. God has been pleased to make the bodies of His people to be the temples of the Holy Spirit. At this very moment, in every one of you who have put your trust in the Lord Jesus, deity resides! He dwells not in houses made with hands, that is to say, of man's building, but yet He dwells within these houses of clay, tabernacling in us—this is a promise which we have actually obtained and are now positively enjoying.

The next is *divine communion*—"I will dwell in them and walk in them."As God talked with Abraham, so He does with every believer. God is not to us afar off, but He is our near and dear friend, our close acquaintance—

"With Him high converse I maintain;
Bold as He is I dare to be."

If I can tell Him my heart, He will also tell me His heart, for, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Communion is not merely a matter

of promise to you and me, beloved, but we enjoy it now! I hope it has become habitual with us to abide with Jesus Christ. At morning break, we can frequently say, "When I awake, I am still with You." And when the sun has gone down and we toss upon the bed, and cannot sleep, in the night watches our soul talks with Him whose eyes never slumber. Blessed is His name, this walking of Christ with His people is one of the daily privileges of the heir of heaven!

Another promise we have obtained is that of *divine covenanting*—"and I will be their God and they shall be My people." God gives Himself to His people to be theirs, and they, by the purchase of His own Son, and by the effectual conquest of the arm of His grace, are His. He has chosen us for His inheritance and granted to us that He should become our portion and our inheritance. "I will be their God and they shall be My people." Yes, God has entered into covenant relations with us, bound Himself by promise and yet further by another immutable thing in which it is impossible for Him to lie, namely, by His oath. There are between us and our God bonds which cannot be snapped, links that can never be severed. Let us thank God, tonight, and summon every faculty of our souls to praise His name. This is one of the blessings which was communicated to some of the past saints, though they did not perfectly understand and comprehend it. Cannot you and I basking in sunlight—light compared with which theirs was but twilight—say that we have obtained this promise?

In addition to all this, we have *divine adoption*—"I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Is not this our blessed state? He loves us with a father's love, guides us with a father's care, protects us with a father's watchfulness, instructs us with a father's wisdom, bears with us with a father's patience, longs for us with a father's longing! We are His tender children and He is our loving parent. These are not things which are yet to come, like the Second Advent of our Lord in millennia splendor—they are promises which we have obtained! These are things common to the worshipers at that altar of which we have a right to eat, and familiar at that table where we daily feed.

How unspeakably great is the dignity of a Christian if we look at it in the light of these blessings! Before we understood it, how we thirsted after it! We thought, when under conviction of sin, could we dare hope be among God's people? It would be enough joy for us if we never had an earthly joy beside! I am afraid that since their blessings have become ours, we have not prized them as we should. Perhaps for this cause we are sometimes brought into the prison of doubt and our faith fails us. Just as we do not know the value of health till we are sick, so some of these blessed privileges are not valued by us until we have to walk in the dark and sigh and cry after unbroken fellowship amidst intermittent snatches of sweet assurance! The Lord give His people to know the value of these heavenly realities that in an abiding sense of their calling and

their standing, they may act in a way that is worthy of such great dignities!

Now you perceive that it is necessary for us to get a good clear view of the possessions of the Christian because it is from then Paul draws his argument—"Having therefore these promises." He uses not the logic of the law, nor the logic of threats, but the logic of love—"we have these mercies; we are so unspeakably favored; we are living in the daily enjoyment of divine indwelling, divine communion, divine covenanting and divine adoption." Therefore he takes a step in advance and says, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." It is clear, then, that the doctrines of grace, fragrant as they are of the privileges of the Christian, do not logically and spontaneously lead to licentiousness as some have profanely said, but they naturally and instinctively, lawfully and reasonably, lead to holiness of life! The fact that we are absolutely and unconditionally saved by God's grace, that our standing is secure and that we have become the children of God, is not an incentive to careless walking and to unholy living! Such an argument is the weak invention of malice—unworthy, I had almost said, of the father of lies—for Satan is known to palm off his offspring with a plausible appearance. But the argument is to gratitude in the heart and obedience in the life. What is obedience to God but holiness? True obedience would be holiness in perfection!

II. We now proceed to an appropriate inference. THE CHRISTIAN, BEING POSSESSED OF GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES, IS THEREFORE LABORING TO BE RID OF OBNOXIOUS EVILS.

"Let us cleanse ourselves," says the apostle. What then? Do they need cleansing? Are they such originally and by nature that they must be cleansed? God's blood bought, quickened people—and yet need cleansing? Ah, yes, brothers and sisters, every one of them, even the Apostle Paul, himself! Where will you find a warmer spirit, a more zealous heart, a more consecrated man than the Apostle Paul? And yet *he* says, "Let us cleanse ourselves." It surely would not be presumptuous on my part, if there should be in this assembly some venerable saint who has been for many years kept in the faith with unblemished garments and engaged above many in the service of the Master in winning souls—it would not be presumptuous if I should say to him—"Let us cleanse ourselves." I suppose that the nearer we get to heaven, the more conscious we shall be of our imperfections. The more light of God we get, the more we discover our own darkness. That which is scarcely accounted sin by some men, will be a grievous defilement to a tender conscience. It is not that we are greater sinners as we grow older, but that we have a finer sensibility of sin and see that to be sin which we winked at in the days of our ignorance. Yes, we may say to those whose gray hairs show that they are getting near home, "Let us cleanse ourselves." And if it is thus to the holiest and most eminent of the people of God, much more is it to us, beloved—common saints, scarcely worthy to be called saints at all—only that we trust we are washed in the

precious blood and are saved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ! "Let *us* cleanse ourselves."

How pointedly the apostle puts it! I want you to notice the points. The work is *personal*—"Let us cleanse *ourselves*." It would be more in accordance with our tastes to cleanse other people and attempt a moral reformation among our neighbors. Oh, it is easy to find other men's faults and to bring the whole force of our mind against then! It is delightful to expose vice and lampoon the follies of the age with a dash of wit to enliven it, or to preach virtue with a little of the sugar of scandal to sweeten a painful tale! It highly gratifies some people when they can find a fault in some highly respected brother—they pull him to pieces with about the same zest that might be displayed by a crow or an ape. That is their forte, the strength of their genius—detraction—pulling to pieces what they could not put together and attempting to raise themselves by lowering others! But notice the apostle says, "Let us cleanse ourselves." Oh, that we would all look at home! Oh, that we did more indoor work in this department! Yes, it is certainly our business to tell our brother of his faults—this ought we to have done, but certainly we ought not to have left the *other undone*, for that is our first business! "Let us cleanse ourselves." It is all very well to drag the church of God up to the altar, like some bleeding victim, and there to stab her with the sharpest knife of our criticism, and to say of the modern church that she is not this, and she is not that. One might rather ask, "How far do I help to make her what she is? If she is degenerate, how far is that degeneracy consequent upon my having fallen from the high standing which I ought to have occupied?" We shall all have contributed our quota to the reform of the church when we are, ourselves, reformed. There can be no better way of promoting general holiness than by increasing in personal holiness. "Let us cleanse ourselves."

There is activity needed, however, in discharging this personal duty. "Let us cleanse ourselves." It seems to imply that the Christian, while he is acted upon by divine influence and is cleansed by the Holy Spirit, is also an active agent of his own sanctification. He is not like the vessels and the pots of which the apostle speaks that were cleansed under the law—but man is a free agent and the holiness which God works in him is not the pretended holiness of candlesticks and altars, but it is the holiness of a responsible being—a holiness which is not forced upon him, but which his whole soul gives consent to! He purges himself. Depend upon it, you and I do not grow holy by going to sleep. People are not made to grow in grace as plants grow, of which it is said, "They grow you know not how." The Christian is developed by actively seeking growth, by earnestly striving after holiness and resolutely endeavoring to obtain it.

The utmost of our activity ought to be put forth in cleansing ourselves. Your bad temper—you will not overcome that by saying, "Well, you know I am quick tempered. I cannot help it." But you *must* help it! You must if you are a Christian. You have no more right to shake hands with a bad temper than you have to fraternize with the devil! You have got to

overcome it and, in the name of God, you must! Or if you happens to be of a slothful disposition, you must not say, "Ah, well, you know I am naturally so." Yes, what you are *naturally* we know—you are naturally as bad as you can be! But surely that is not the point we are concerned with—what you are to become by divine grace. Albeit sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, yet it is equally true and this we must always bear in mind, that the Holy Spirit makes us active agents in our own sanctification! In the first work of regeneration, doubtless the soul is passive because it is dead—and the dead cannot contribute to their own quickening—but being quickened, He "works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." He does not work in us to sleep and to slumber—His good pleasure is answered by us when we are constrained to will and to do! Hence the apostle's argument, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works it in you. He works it in—you work it out. You have to bring out in the outward life what He works in the inner springs of your spiritual being. You are to work it out because He works it in." Sin is to be driven out of us as the Canaanites were driven out of Canaan by the edge of the sword. Jericho's walls will come down, but not without being compassed about seven days. Weary may be your march, but march you must if you would conquer! How does the apostle put it? "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," and so on, but he represented the conquest as being a conquest gained by wrestling. He declares that he had to fight with his old nature and the conflict was stern. Although saved by grace, gracious souls make marvelous efforts—efforts beyond their natural powers—to enter into a state of rest from sin.

Nor must we stop short of *universality* in our purgation and cleansing—"Let us cleanse ourselves *from all filthiness*." Your eyes must not spare, your heart must not pity one pet sin. Most man would gladly be holy if it were not for *one* sin that they vainly flatter themselves to be harmless. "From all filthiness let us cleanse ourselves." O Christian, you may very well doubt your right to that name unless all sin is obnoxious to you! You have no right to say, "I will give up pride and vanity," if you excuse yourself for being covetous. If covetousness is the leak in your vessel, it will sink it quite as surely as pride! If neither pride nor covetousness should be there, yet if you have an unforgiving temper and cannot be heartily reconciled to those who offend you, you shall just as soon prove yourself to be reprobate that way by any other! It must be an interesting sight to be the father of a Jewish family purging out the leaven before the Passover. He lights a candle, you know, and goes to the cupboard under the stairs, or wherever the bread may be kept, and takes care that every bit is put away. He then has every cupboard unlocked and rummages with a brush in his hand—himself personally—and with a candle, too, to see lest there should be even a crumb of leaven—for he cannot keep the Passover if there is a crumb of leaven in the house! Such should be our earnest searching after all filthiness to get it all out! But search as best we may, I am afraid something will still be left. There will be some beloved idol hidden away somewhere in the recesses of the

mind. The heart will cling to its idols in such a style that we cannot find them all with one investigation! There is always the need to search again and again—they must be searched after—and we must, each one, be prepared to say—

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

The apostle shows *the thoroughness of this work* by saying, "Let us cleanse ourselves *from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.*" "Filthiness of to flesh." We may reckon this to include all the outside sins so well-known and so easily distinguishable—those degrading sins which even morality condemns. Possibly, Christian, although you may guard yourself against these, yet you will be in danger from the next class, namely, sins of the spirit. These are the mothers of the sins of the flesh! Someone killed a wasp in the early spring and it was said that he had killed a thousand wasps, for that wasp was full of eggs. Sins of the spirit are full of that spawn which, when matured, issues in shameful delinquencies. If you can cleanse yourself from these, you will save yourself from dangers you little reckon—the outward life will be right enough when the inward life is right. I wish we were more concerned about cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the spirit. I am inclined to think that some men heedlessly pollute their spirits—I mean that they do it willfully. I am not sure that when there is a divorce case in the papers, I have any business to read it—yet a great many very good Christian people who often pray to be delivered from temptation, take pretty good care that they master all its details! When there is a bad story afloat about anybody, I do not know that I should listen to it, yet that curiosity of ours often tempts the devil to tempt us! If there is any ditchwater, or any dirty puddle of water, I do not know that I am bound to get a drink out of it. True, I may be an officer appointed to taste the water, but if I am not, I would rather avoid the noxious sip—it would be better to leave it alone. We may all do a great deal of that kind of thing and, nowadays, when the press ventilates everything and it is published all over the world, I am sure that Christians pollute their spirits a great deal more than they have any occasion to do! And besides that, we can turn over a sin in our mind, you know, till we become so accustomed to it that we do not think it to be a sin. I know that some Christians have managed at last to trick their conscience into the idea that what they do is not sin in *them*, but would be sin in other people—that they are so constituted that they require to be tolerated in this point, and to take a little liberty in the other point so that, generally speaking, although it would be very, very wrong for other people to do the same—they have got a sort of spiritual indulgence such as used to be issued by Rome, and they never doubt that they can sin with impunity! Ah, dear friends, this will not do! "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

The drift of the argument is this—if God dwells in us, let us make the house clean for so pure a God. What? Indwelling deity and unclean lusts? Indwelling Godhead and yet a spirit defiled with evil thoughts? God forbid! Let us cry aloud unto the Most High that in this thing we may be cleansed and that the temple may be fit for the habitation of the Master. What? Does God walk in us, and hold communion with us, and shall we let Belial come in? What concord can we have with Christ? Shall we give ourselves up to be the servants of mammon when God has become our friend, our companion? It must not be! Divine indwelling and divine communion both require from us personal holiness. Has the Lord entered into a covenant with us that we shall be His people? Than does not this involve a call upon us to live like His people, as becomes godliness? Favored and privileged above other men to be a peculiar people. Separated unto God's own self—shall there be nothing peculiar about our lives? Shall we not be zealous for good works?

Divinely adopted into the family of the Most High and made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, what need is there of further argument to constrain us to holiness? You see the, "therefore." It means just this—because we have attained to such choice and special privileges, "therefore"—for this reason, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

III. The text goes on to DESCRIBE THE CHRISTIAN AS AIMING AT A MOST EXALTED POSITION—"Perfecting holiness."

There was a bitter discussion, at one time, about the possibility of perfection in the flesh. It was a most unhappy thing that this controversy arose at all. Between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady fierce altercations were carried on. Between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield I believe the dispute was conducted in a temper honorable to both sides. One admires the Christian love of the two brothers, who both of them stood to advocate what they believed to be the truth of God and did maintain, I believe, their own views of truth in a very proper spirit. But, as the dispute was carried on between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady, I do not think it was creditable to the Christianity of either—they both of them seemed to have lost their temper and to have forgotten that "the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God." Hence this doctrine of Christian perfection never seems to me to have had fair consideration at all. It has been made an arena for controversy then rather a subject for deliberate thought.

"*Can a Christian be perfect in this life?*" When this question was put to me, the other night, I answered, "No." "Well, but is not the Christian perfect when he gets to heaven ?" "Yes." "Well, then, he was perfect when he died, was he not?" I thought he must be—I do not understand any change taking place in the solemn article of death—between the moment of departure from this world and the moment of entrance into heaven. "Very well!" was the answer, "but he was in the flesh, then, you know." The question thus turned on being in the flesh—and the answer is obvious. The flesh is inherently sinful and all its carnal desires are at enmity against God. Perfection at present does not aim at regenerating

the old nature—such perfection will be effected at the resurrection of the just. But as many as are perfect must control and keep the flesh and its motions completely under dominion; that is our present duty. If the death of the body looses us from sin, the mortification of our members which are upon the earth must be our continual aim till we are delivered from the bondage of corruption. An illustration may explain my meaning. I can imagine a room in your house being perfectly clean, but I cannot imagine it being kept perfectly clean unless the process by which it was first cleansed is frequently repeated. Whether that room is in constant use, or whether it is shut up after a monastic fashion, it will require to be swept and dusted every day or it will not be perfectly clean very long.

I remember hearing a man say that he had lived for six years without having sinned in either thought, or word, or deed. I apprehend that he committed a sin, then, if he never had done so before, in uttering such a proud, boastful speech! It seemed to me that if he had known anything about his own heart, he would not have dared to speak thus! Were it true of me, I think I would be like a man who had diamonds about him and dared not tell anybody, for fear the mention of it should prompt someone to rob him of his treasure! I would keep it all to myself. If such a priceless pearl as perfection can belong to any of the saints—and I were the happy possessor—I would be very jealous of it, lest anyone should know it and seek to deprive me of it! No, no—I cannot believe that the flesh can be perfect, or, consequently, that a man can be perfect in this flesh! I cannot believe that we shall ever live to see people walking up and down in this world without sin. But I can believe that it is our duty to be perfect, that this law of God means perfection and that the law as it is in Christ—for there it is, you know—is binding on the Christian! It is not, as in the hands of Moses, armed with power to justify or to condemn him, for he is not under the law, but under grace. But it is binding upon him as it is in the hands of Christ! The law, as it is in the hands of Christ, is just as glorious, just as perfect, just as complete as when it was in the hands of Moses. Christ did not come to destroy the law, or to cast it down, but to establish it! And therefore, notwithstanding every point where I fall short of perfection as a creature, I am complete in Christ Jesus. That which God requires of me is that I should be perfect.

That I can understand. And the next thing I should know is that *for such perfection I ought to pray*. I should not like to pray for anything short of that. I should not like, at the prayer meeting, to hear any of you say, "Lord, bring us halfway toward perfection." No, no, no! Our prayer must be, "Lord, put away all my sin—deliver me from it altogether." And God would not teach you to pray for what He did not mean to give. Your perfection is God's design, for He has chosen you to be conformed to the image of His Son—and what is that? Surely the image of His Son is perfection! There were no faults in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be made like He and as this is the work and design of grace, then perfection is the center of the target at which God's grace is always aiming. All that He works in us is with this great ultimate end and aim—that He may

sanctify us wholly—spirit, soul and body, and that He may release us from sin and make us perfect even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect. Oh, when will it be? When will it be? Why, the very thought of it makes me feel as if I could sing—

"Oh, happy hour, oh, blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God."

What a joy it will be to be just like He—to have no more corruption of the flesh and no more temptations to sin to destroy the soul's delight and pleasure in her God! May the Lord hasten on the day! "Perfecting holiness."

Although a young artist, when he starts in his work, dares not hope that he shall came up to Praxiteles in sculpture, or to Apelles in painting, yet were he to set before himself anything short of the highest standard, he would not be likely to attain honor as an academician. When he begins to work, he studies not imperfect pictures, but the most perfect models he can find. He studies Raphael. He wants to see what Michelangelo could do. "Oh," says one, "what are you trying to paint? Are you trying to be a Raphael? Will you ever paint like Raphael or Michelangelo? Never!" What do your sneers and jibes mean? Would you have him go and buy some worthless printing at a pawnshop and copy that? What sort of an artist would he make, then? The only possibility of his being a good artist is his taking perfect models. So with you, Christian, your model has to be the perfect Savior—and this is to be what you are to aim at every day, "perfecting holiness." And for all you may say, "Ah, I shall never come up to that. Many failures have proved to me that I shall not reach it." Yet you will do better with that as your ambition than you could have done if you had selected some imperfect model and had said, "Well, if I am as good as that man that will suit me." Nothing but perfection must content you! Beloved, press forward towards it and God speed you in the race!

IV. Follow me one step further and observe how THE CHRISTIAN IS PROMPTED BY THE MOST SACRED OF MOTIVES—"Perfecting holiness *in the fear of God.*"

An abiding sense of God's presence, a perpetual feeling of our obligations to our Creator produces a reverent fear of God—not the slavish, servile fear which brings torment—but the fear which bows the tall archangel in adoration before the throne of God, the fear which makes the cherub veil his face with his wings while he adores the Lord. Such a constant fear as this is the mainspring of Christian holiness! Not the fear of man, though many people are kept moral by that. Not the fear of some Christian whom you respect, lest he should upbraid you—that fear may be very helpful, in some cases, to keep men from certain sins, but it is a fitter motive for an infant than for a man! No, your great motive is to be the fear of God. Not the fear of the public eye. This is a very marvelous thing. Have you not often noticed that the very thing which the world calls, "bad, shameful, horrible, detestable," if it does not succeed—would be thought clever, creditable, to be admired if it

succeeded? I believe that there have been scores of venturesome traders who have acquired wealth and gained a reputation for brilliant shrewdness by the very means which we see so much and so properly reprobated in certain other large traders nowadays—the only difference being that one man was fortunate enough to jump over the ditch, while the other man jumped in—but both were equally reckless! The world only appreciates success—that is the measure of the world's morality. The true Christian has a higher system of ethics. He perfects holiness in the fear of God—and if he should be successful, and the world should say, "Well done! Well done!"—yet, if he felt he had done a wrong thing or an unholy thing, his conscience would prick him. He would be as uneasy as though everybody pointed the finger of scorn at him! I think he would he as restless as Zacchaeus was until he had made a just disposition of his unholy gains.

I cannot speak to you as I would wish tonight. But ah, were the hour of my departure come, were I allowed but to utter one sentence and then must die, I would say to you members of this church, "Be holy!" Whatever you are, seek to be holy. And if you will not be holy—if you have a mind to keep your sins—do us the favor to lay down your profession! If you *will* have your sins and go to hell, you can do it so much better outside the church than you can inside. I cannot see why you need do Christ the double ill turn to be His enemy, and yet profess to be His friend. Get out of the church, you that are hypocrites! What profit can you get? There are no loaves and fishes that I know of to be had here. If you want them, there are some places where you can have them in abundance. There is no particular honor that I know of in being associated with *this* church—we are generally held in little enough esteem by the world. Why should you come unless you intend to be true followers of the crucified? Why, why, deacon, if you love the world, do you pretend to love the church? Judas, Judas, go sell somebody else! What need do you have to sell Christ and to be a son of perdition? O you who are unholy, you who cheat in business, you who can lie in your daily lives—there is scope enough for you outside of God's church—why do you need to come with your filthiness where you are not asked to come, nor wanted? The Word of God calls His saints to come out and be separate from such, but when once they thrust themselves into the church, what shall we say? We feel like the servants who would gladly root up the tares, but that we must not do. They must both grow together until the harvest! Yet we would not sleep, but be watchful to prevent the enemy sowing more tares among the wheat. Be holy, be holy, be holy! You that are servants, be holy in the family! You that are masters, show holiness among your employees; mothers and fathers, let your children see your piety! Children, may the Holy Spirit make you to be the holiest of children like the holy Child Jesus! And may it be a point with one and all of us that if we live, we will live unto Christ, so that when we die, we may be found in Him, made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 PETER 1:1-8.

Verse 1. *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.* Peter was pleased to be able to write those words. There was a time when he had thrice denied his Master, but now he is glad to call himself, "a servant of Jesus Christ." Once he had said, "I know not the man," but now he claims that he has been sent out by that glorious Lord to be His apostle—a sent one—"a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Probably he had ringing in his ears at that moment, those blessed words, "Feed My sheep. Feed My lambs." And he was going to do that work again in this, his second general epistle.

1. *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.* These epistles are not written to everybody. Some readers do not seem to remember this fact. This one is written, says the apostle, "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." The faith of the weakest believer in Jesus is the same kind of faith as that which was found in Simon Peter—who stands among the very first of the worthies in the college of apostles. "Like precious faith with us." Only think of it, you whose faith is of a very trembling sort, which might be well described as, "little faith." Yet yours is "like precious faith" with that of Peter and the rest of the apostles. The tiniest diamond is as truly a diamond as the Koh-I-Noor, and the smallest faith, if it is really the work of the Spirit of God, is "like precious faith" with that of the apostles.

2. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you*—You have some measure of these choice blessings—may you have a great many times as much! When we go to the multiplication table, we not only multiply by two and by three, but we can multiply by a hundred—we can multiply by ten thousand. Oh, that God would thus multiply to us the grace and the peace that He has already given us! "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you—

2. *Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.* The more we know of God, the more grounds and reasons shall we have for enjoying grace and peace. And the more we know of God and of Jesus, our Lord, the more will our enjoyment of grace and peace be multiplied.

3. *According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue.* It is through knowing God that we realize that "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," for all these things are in Him—and as we know Him, trust Him, love Him and become like He—we also come to possess all these precious things in Him.

4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped*

the corruption that is in the world through lust. [See Sermon #551, Volume 10—FAITH AND LIFE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See what God's great objective is in giving us these "exceeding great and precious promises." It is that we may become morally and spiritually like Himself—just and true and holy and righteous, even as God Himself is. O brothers and sisters, we fall far short of the high example that we find set before us in our gracious God! Nevertheless, we press forward towards the goal, strengthened by God Himself, who, having begun to make us like Himself, will never cease that blessed work until He has fully accomplished it.

5. *And beside this, giving all diligence*—For we cannot expect to go to heaven asleep. We are not taken there against our wills. It is not our will that accomplishes our salvation, but still, it is not accomplished without our will. "Giving diligence," yes, but more than that, "giving *all* diligence"—

5, 6. *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance.* It is ignorance that is intemperate and rash.

6-8. *And to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* What Christian ever wishes to be barren or unfruitful? Is it not the aspiration of every branch in the true vine to bring forth much fruit?

[The conclusion of this exposition is after Sermon #3248, Volume 57—GATHERING WITHOUT PLANTING—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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GOD'S THOUGHTS AND OURS
NO. 3246

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1868.

"How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!"
Psalm 139:17.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon verses 17 and 18 is #2609, Volume 45—
OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S THOUGHTS
—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT is very comforting to us to believe in a personal God and to be able to confide in One who condescends to think lovingly of us, considers our needs and supplies them. It would not be very comforting to us to believe in a mere abstract deity, or in what some people call, "the laws of nature" acting by themselves apart from God, or in a fixed fate that would crush us like some colossal car of juggernaut. Yet some people seem to be always struggling to get away from the thought of one true personal God—Creator, Preserver, Redeemer and All-in-All to His people. Those who deny the inspired record of the creation would have us believe that we are descended from monkeys or from something with even less intelligence than an ape possesses! But I could gather no comfort from such a belief as that if it were true. It fills me rather with pity or contempt for those who can be so foolish as to cherish such a delusion. But when I come back to the revelation of the Bible concerning a personal God—a revelation which has been confirmed by my own spiritual experience—and when I realize that this personal God takes a special interest in me and thinks of me with tender, loving, gracious consideration, then I lift up my hands in adoring wonder and say, as David did, "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" Yes, there is great comfort in being able truthfully to say, "Our Father, who are in heaven"—and those who are really the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty find it to be their chief delight that He thinks about them and plans all that is for their present and eternal good!

I. Coming to our text, I ask you to consider, first, HOW PRECIOUS ARE GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US AND HOW PRECIOUS IT IS TO US TO THINK ABOUT THESE THOUGHTS.

First of all, let me say that *the very fact that God thinks of us is, in itself, precious*. Perhaps someone here says, "It is not so in my case! I am

quite alarmed at the thought that God thinks about me. It is no comfort to me to say, 'You, God, see me.' Such a thought as that only fills me with terror." I can quite understand, dear friend, how you feel. Of course, if you only think of God as if He were an officer of justice with a warrant for your apprehension, it would be a dreadful thing for you to realize that He is thinking of you. But suppose you were His child—would it not then be a continual joy to you to reflect that your heavenly Father was constantly thinking of you? If you were completely reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. If no consciousness of guilt remained upon your conscience. If you knew that all God's thoughts concerning you were thoughts of love—then you would bless His name that He was so gracious and kind as to think of you!

Further, *those who are serving the Lord delight to remember that He is thinking of them*. After we have been reconciled to God, it becomes our great privilege to spend such strength as we have in promoting His glory. Well, no one is ashamed of being sent on a good errand! The eyes of God, instead of being dreadful to the man whose heart is right with Him, is one of His greatest encouragements! He feels that though his fellow men may never say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," it will be enough for him to know that God has seen him, that God keeps a book of remembrances, and that, at the last, a full reward, not of debt, but of grace, shall be given to him who is faithful. I do not know how it is with you idle professors who profess to be saved, but who do little or nothing for Christ—I do not see how the fact that God is observing you can give you any comfort. If it is true that you are not your own, but that you are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, can you calmly think of God watching your idle hours, listening to your many words that have no weight, no value in them and noting how you neglect your many opportunities of serving your day and generation? But, on the other hand, in proportion as you are constrained by the love of Christ to be instant in season and out of season, in the same proportion will it be sweet to you to remember that the Lord is observing you and that He is always at your right hand to help you in your service for Him!

We also learn the preciousness of God's thoughts to us *as we depend implicitly upon Him as the great Lord of providence*. It is of little use to you to have anyone thinking of you if his thoughts never bring you any practical help. But if you have a rich friend who has promised, as soon as possible, to find you a position in which you will be provided for as long as you live, I would not be surprised to hear that even while you have been at this service, you have been gratefully thinking of him. "Yes," you have been saying, "I could not make my way on my own account, but I have a friend at my back who says that he will see that I shall never be in need—and it comforts me to think that he is thinking of me." Well then, if the promise of an *earthly friend* affords so much consolation as that, how much more should this be the case with you who have a

heavenly friend who is both able and willing to fulfill all His promises? He is always thinking of what is best for you—what you require today and what you will require tomorrow—He is always anticipating your needs, providing Elims with wells and palm trees while you are traveling through the desert. And as you meditate upon the way in which He is thinking of how He shall bless, perfect and glorify you, His thoughts must, indeed, be precious to you!

One reason why God's thoughts concerning us are peculiarly precious is that *gracious men long to get near to God.* They are not satisfied with what they are. The wanderings of their thoughts towards inferior objects are a burden to them and they are continually longing to get nearer to God. If there is one cry that rises more frequently to our lips than any other, it is this—

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

But, alas, our thoughts of God are a very poor help to us in drawing us nearer to Him! They flag, tire and soon die—but the thoughts of God toward us are strong, like God, Himself, is—and these, like so many unbreakable cords firmly fastened to us, are drawing us always nearer to Him! Thought leads to action and God's thinking of us leads to the practical action of drawing us nearer to Himself. So the fact that He is continually thinking of us encourages us to believe that we shall one day be close to Him and be qualified to be close to Him—being perfectly conformed to the image of Christ—and drawn into the closest possible fellowship with God.

And *the nearer we get to God, the more precious will His thoughts of us become to us.* If we were not such babes in Christ and so carnal, we would prize every crumb from our Father's table—and much more—every thought from our Father's mind! We would prize, far above gold and rubies, what I may call the ordinary outgoings of the divine mind in His providential arrangements for us. But much more should we value those deep, eternal, infinite thoughts which have already secured our salvation and which shall, before long, complete our sanctification and our glorification, too!

II. Now, secondly, there are SOME POINTS IN CONNECTION WITH GOD'S THOUGHTS OF US WHICH RENDER THEM ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS TO US.

And, first, let us remember that *God's thoughts of us are everlasting.* When we begin to think of Jehovah's thoughts of love concerning His people, we have to go back beyond the region of time and get where all dates are lost in the shoreless sea of eternity! Beloved, you were loved of your God long before He created the world! Yes, from everlasting He had thoughts of love toward you—then must not those thoughts be, indeed, precious to you? Besides, as they were *from* eternity, so they will be *to* eternity—God will still be thinking lovingly of you when sun, moon and stars have fulfilled their mission and been forgotten—and when all things

which men now count solid and lasting shall have dissolved like the bubble upon the billow's crest and passed away forever! God has so linked you with His Son that He has made you also to have a life which is eternal and which can never die. Let all things perish and the pillars of the universe crumble and decay, and the whole visible creation fall with thunderous crash, yet you, the Beloved of the Lord, shall dwell safely with Him!—

"Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in."

His thoughts will always be directed towards you, He will never forget you! There has never been a moment in the past when He did not think of you. Even in your years of sin, He looked upon you with an eye of pity. In your deepest depression His heart was full of sympathy for you. Never has there been an hour, in the silent watches of the night, or amid the cares and businesses of the day, in which He has not always been thinking of you just as much as if you were the only being He had ever created! The Lord has from the first been looking upon you and thinking of you as though you were the sole center of His undivided attention—and so will He continue to think of you incessantly!

The Lord's thoughts of you are especially precious because *they have always been thoughts of love*. Even when you were dead in trespasses and sins and He hated your sins, He did not hate you, for He had loved you with an everlasting love—

"He saw you ruined in the fall,
Yet loved you, notwithstanding all.
He saved you from your lost estate,
His loving-kindness oh, how great!"

This is the love of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins." And ever since your conversion, God's thoughts concerning you have been thoughts of love. He has smitten you sorely until you have felt that surely He must be your enemy, but it was not so—never has there been anything but love for you in the great eternal heart of God. If—

"With afflictions He may scourge us,
Send a cross for every day"—

this is not a proof of His anger toward us—on the contrary, it is a token of His affection—

"All to make us
Sick of self, and fond of Him."

Besides this, *God's thoughts of us have always been wise thoughts*. They have not been such casual thoughts as pass through men's minds while journeying quickly by road or rail and merely noticing this object here and that other object over yonder. But God's thoughts have infinitely more in them than the deepest thoughts of men can ever have. You know that there are many ways of thinking of a certain thing—you may think of it in such a way as just to keep it in remembrance, or you may think of it so intently as to lie awake at night, turning it over in your

mind, looking at it from all points of view so that you may understand it in all its bearings. You may think of it with the careful consideration that a barrister gives to an important case for which he is about to plead, or that an inventor gives to the intricate details of a machine that he is seeking to perfect. Such consideration as that, only of an infinitely higher order, God gives to every one of His people! He is continually arranging that which is most for the good in His providential dealings with them and constantly thinking and working on their behalf with the ultimate view of bringing many sons unto glory. God's thoughts are always wise, but they are so high above our thoughts that we cannot attain to them! Yet the more we are able to comprehend them, the more wisdom and prudence shall we perceive in them.

Once more, *these thoughts of God towards us are preeminently practical.* God so thought of you, brothers and sisters in Christ, as to ordain you unto eternal life! Concerning the whole church of the living God this decree was pronounced, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Not only was there a divine decree concerning them, but there was an eternal covenant made between the Father and the Son by which the everlasting salvation of all the chosen is infallibly secured! More than that, in the fullness of time, those eternal thoughts of love took practical effect in the gift of God's only begotten and well beloved Son to die for His people, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." These thoughts of God further took effect by the coming into our hearts of the Holy Spirit so that now, through His divine power and energy, we have been converted, renewed in the spirit of our minds, helped thus far towards heaven and comforted with the full assurance that we shall, in due time, be brought into our heavenly Father's immediate presence, unblemished and complete! So you see, beloved, that the thoughts of God toward us should be exceedingly precious to us because they are of such a practical character that they bring to us all the blessings—temporal and spiritual—which we daily enjoy.

III. Now, thirdly, let us briefly notice SOME TIMES WHEN GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE PECULIARLY PRECIOUS TO US.

It is so *when we have been betrayed and deserted by some in whom we have confided.* When he that ate bread with us has lifted up his heel against us, then we turn to our ever faithful Friend and we rejoice to know that *His* thoughts concerning us are never false and treacherous! He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is always true even though everyone else should prove to be a liar. Ahithophel may forsake his king, Judas may betray his Lord and we, in our measure, may know what it is to be forsaken and betrayed—but God's thoughts towards us shall, all the while, be thoughts of love and faithfulness! Vain was the trust we reposed in some who went out from us because they were not of

us! But God has never forsaken us, He has always been thinking of us for good and, therefore, His thoughts are peculiarly precious to us.

So are they also *when we are neglected by our fellow Christians and by others who ought to esteem us*. It must be very hard to continue toiling on in some obscure sphere without having a kind word or a cheering smile from anyone—to be living, perhaps, as a servant in a family and striving to do your duty faithfully—yet never meeting with the slightest encouragement from those at the head of the household. Or to be earnestly working as a Bible woman or a city missionary in some back district and having so little success that your superintendent looks upon you as if you were doing nothing! I can imagine how painful this must be to your sensitive spirit and how comforting it is to you to think, "Well Jesus knows all about it and *His* thoughts are worth far more than the thoughts of men, for He can read my heart and He can see that it is love to Him that constrains me to do what I can in His service. Men may call me a fool, but if my Master knows that I only desire to be a fool for His sake—if He considers that I am faithfully serving Him to the best of my ability—how precious will His thoughts be to me!"

This is also especially the case *when our words and actions are misconstrued and misrepresented*. Some of us know what this trial means. When we have tried to be disinterested and have really been so, men have said that we have acted from some sinister motive. When we have spoken with the utmost plainness and simplicity, we have often been misunderstood and, worse than that, we have been willfully misrepresented! Well, what then? Our heavenly Father knows the sincerity of our motives and the meaning of our words, so we take the whole case away from this lower court where human tongues jangle and cause strife, and we appeal to the Supreme Court of King's Bench in heaven! Our petition is, "O Lord, You give the verdict in this case! You know who has desired to serve You faithfully and to speak Your truth with courage! You give a righteous decision which none can deny!" At such times as these, the fact that God thinks upon us is peculiarly precious to us.

So is it *in times of perplexity* when we are, as Bunyan said, "all tumbled up and down in our thoughts." I suppose, dear friend, you sometimes get into such a condition that although you have all the forces of omnipotence at your disposal, you are so distracted that you do not know how to make use of them. You are in a place where two seas meet—wave upon wave rolls over you and you fear that you will be overwhelmed. You do not know what to do! You cannot think of any way of escape out of your perplexity. Well then, do not try to do it—cease from even thinking about the matter and refer it to the great thinker who can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness and order out of confusion!

God's thoughts are also precious to us *when our own thoughts are bright and cheerful*. The genuine Christian does not run to his God merely in his times of trouble, but he delights himself in the Lord at all

times, and under all circumstances! He thinks of Him when he is in the land of drought, but he does not forget Him in the land of peace and plenty, for he sings then—

"If peace and plenty crown my days
They help me, Lord, to speak Your praise."

Let your brightest thoughts, beloved, always be those that concern your Lord! And above all the joys of earth let this joy rise to the very zenith—that your heavenly Father thinks of you! This is a better fortune for you than thousands of gold and silver! This is a better protection for you than the friendship of ten thousand times ten thousand earthly friends! This is a greater consolation than all the comforts of time can ever afford you! In your brightest hours, believer, I hope that you will still say with the psalmist, "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

IV. My time has gone, but I want to give you just A FEW PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ARISING OUT OF THIS SUBJECT.

The first is this—*if God's thoughts are so precious to us, how very precious His words ought to be!* Here, in this inspired volume, you have the thoughts of the divine thinker, incarnated, if I may use the word in that sense and, therefore, I would have you prize very highly every word in this blessed book. There are many, nowadays, who refuse to believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, but I fail to see how the sense of Scripture can be inspired if the words in which that sense is expressed are not also inspired! I believe that the very words, in the original Hebrew and Greek, were revealed from heaven! And notwithstanding every objection that can be brought from any quarter, I have never been able to get away from the firm belief that if I give up my Master's words, I give up His thoughts, also. I cannot well love a man's soul without having affection for his body, also. And I cannot love God's thoughts, which are the soul of His revelation, without loving the words which are the body in which it comes to us. Do not tamper with the words of Scripture, or even with a single letter of it, but say, "How precious also are Your *words* unto me, O God!" Have we not known times when the blessing which we have derived from a text has come to our hearts, not so much from the main thought contained in it, as from the use of one special word? Some of us, on turning to our Greek testaments, have been perfectly astounded to find that a particular word has been used which has exactly met the predicament in which we have been placed—and if the Holy Spirit had moved the writer to use any other word, it would not have been so suitable to the circumstances in which we then were! We praise Him for selecting that very word and not any one of its synonyms which would not so precisely have met our case. Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, prize the words of God above everything else that you possess!

Oh, for more Bible reading! I fear that this is an age when almost everything else is read except that which is most worth reading! I believe that many professedly Christian people positively poison their minds and

stop up all the avenues of sense with the masses of sawdust, chaff and smut that they get out of their light reading—which a man might read to all eternity without ever being the better for it! Yet, all the while, there are solid, sober, interesting books full of valuable information and instruction that are left unread and, worst of all, God's book, the Bible, itself, is lying neglected upon the shelf! True Bible readers and Bible searchers never find it wearisome. They like it least who know it least and they love it most who read it most. They find it newest who have known it longest, and they find the pasture to be the richest whose souls have been the longest fed upon it. When one of our missionaries had to read a certain book of the Old Testament through a hundred times while he was translating it, he said that he certainly enjoyed the 100th time of reading it more than he did the first, for he understood it better and it seemed to him to be fuller and fresher, the more familiar he became with it.

In the next place, as God's thoughts are so precious to us, *God's actions, which spring from His thoughts, ought also to be precious to His people*. They ought to be so, but are they? Perhaps one of God's actions has been to lay low in sickness one who is very dear to you—can you say to God, "How precious is that action"? No. You shake your head, for you cannot say that. Possibly you have had a great loss, today, and that loss came by the direction of God. Now, God first thought. Then He acted and took away something that you greatly prized. You say that you cannot see any preciousness in *that*—but if you judged according to *faith*, and not according to sense, you would say—"Yes, Lord, this trial is precious to me because I believe it comes from You. And I will not only submit to it, but I will thank You for it, and even fall in love with the cross which You have laid on me." As we look back over our past experience, we see how precious our trials have been to us. Someone said, "Give me back my bed of languishing. Give me back the aches and pains that I suffered in that long, trying illness if I may but have such enjoyment of my Master's presence as I had then."

Now, in closing, let me just say that as God's thoughts are so precious to us, *we should make the best return we can by thinking much of Him*. You, believer, are married to Christ. And as your husband is always thinking of you, can you be content to live without thinking often of Him? Have you lived through this day in forgetfulness of Him? Have you been so occupied with the toils and cares of this life that you have forgotten Him who has given you a higher, nobler and better life than this? If that has been the case with you, then blush for very shame and ask forgiveness of your Lord—and let this be your sincere prayer—"Lord Jesus, You are always thoughtful of me. From now on, by Your gracious Spirit's blessed working, make me always thinking of You."

I fear that I am addressing a great many who do not often think of God and that there are some of you to who it would be a comfort if there were no God at all. Or, if you do think of Him at all, He is only an all-powerful

being of whom you stand in dread because you fear that He will punish you for your sins. Then take warning, by your own thoughts of God and seek to be reconciled to Him so that you may no longer have cause to fear His righteous anger! That reconciliation may be obtained by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one mediator between God and men! So if you put your case into His hands and ask Him to act as your advocate, He will, by His Spirit, reveal to you the glorious truth of God that the reconciliation was effected long ago, when He laid down His life for you upon the cross of Calvary! Then, when you have received this blessed assurance, it shall be your continual delight to think of God, and your constant bliss to know that He is thinking of you. And you will say, in the words of our text, "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:105-120.

We will read tonight two of the stanzas which make up the 119th Psalm, beginning at the 105th verse.

Verse 105. *Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* God's word is full of brilliance. It is always giving out its blessed light. It casts a light upon all our daily life. It is a light for the house and a light for the way, and happy is the man who never walks abroad without this lantern to light up his pathway! There are many pitfalls on the road and many places where the traveler's garments may soon be smeared, so he has great need of this light to guide him.

106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.* I scarcely remember ever hearing of a man swearing and then approving of it, but this kind of swearing is right enough—"I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments." We are to determine with the most vehement resolution that, God helping us, we will keep His righteous judgments, for if we have only a weak resolution, we usually fall short even of our own determination. What shall we do, then, if that determination is itself weak? Some of us have lifted our hands to heaven and pledged ourselves to the living God that we will be His faithful people—

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear."

107. *I am afflicted very much.* Here is a good man, a better man than most of us, a man who is determined to do right, yet he gets into trouble because he is determined to do right. God's wheat will be threshed. His gold will be put into the furnace. If you were worth nothing to Him, God might not take the trouble to afflict you, but when you are resolved to do right, you may expect that resolution to be tried and tested! And if it is worth anything, it will stand the trial. "I am afflicted very much"—what

will be the next words, "Lord, deliver me"? No, no! "Lord, bring me out of the furnace"? Nothing of the sort! "I am afflicted very much"—

107. *Quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your word.* "Give me more spiritual life! Give me more spiritual strength! That is what I most need." Oftentimes that prayer is answered by the affliction, itself—we are afflicted very much and by that very affliction the Lord quickens our divine graces, strengthens our souls, drives away many of our wandering thoughts and brings us nearer to Himself!

108. *Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD.* "My prayers, my praises, my testimonies, my ministries—accept them all, O LORD"—

108. *And teach me Your judgment.* He who teaches others needs teaching himself. He who hopes that what he says will be accepted by those who hear it, opens his ears to hear what God says to him. There will be no acceptance of what you say to others unless you accept what God says to you!

109. *My soul is continually in my hand.* David's life was often in jeopardy. Saul hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains and he afterwards fled from Absalom. He was sometimes very sick and ready to die. Perhaps also, at times, he was in such great sorrow that he felt as if his soul was a thing that he held in his hand. We do not know exactly where our soul is, but we usually think of it as being somewhere in the very center of our being. David says that he had his soul in his hand—where he might at any time lose it. But what else does he say?

109. *Yet do I not forget Your law.* "If I have even to die for it, I am willing to die for it. If I have to lay down my life because I will do right, I will do right even while I lay down my life."

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts.* "If I had done so, I should have been caught in their snare, but as I kept straight on in the way of Your precepts, it little mattered how many snares they laid for me."

111. *Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.* Some take their own thoughts for their heritage, but it is a poor portion for anyone to have. Some take other men's philosophies for their heritage, but such a heritage as that is soon gone. But some of us can say, with regard to the eternal and immutable truth of God, that we have got such a grip of it that we cannot give it up! There may come a thousand other changes but, by God's grace, there will be no change in this matter! "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

111. *For they are the rejoicing of my heart.* [See Sermon #2415, Volume 41—THE BELIEVER'S HERITAGE OF JOY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Well may a man love that which rightly makes him glad. Shall we ever forsake that which is the source of our greatest comfort? If some men had greater gladness in the gospel, they would be more true to it. If they had ever eaten the sweet, and enjoyed the fat

things full of marrow, they would never go away from the old old gospel which has made their hearts so glad!

112, 113. *I have inclined my heart to perform Your statues always, even unto the end. I hate vain thoughts: but Your law do I love.* Notice that the word, "vain," is not in the original. The psalmist wrote, "I hate thoughts," yet the word for *thoughts* includes the idea of mere thoughts. So, if any teaching in the world is the result of human thought, alone, you may not rely upon it for a moment, for the Lord knows the thoughts of man, that "they are vanity," and they never will be anything better than that. The thoughts even of the most profound and the best instructed of men will not bear the weight and pressure of an immortal soul's eternal interests! Revelation is the one reliable thing that we can rest upon. What God has spoken is all true, but as for what men have thought, I have been so often disappointed and deceived that I can say with the psalmist, "I hate mere thoughts, but Your law do I love." In the law of the Lord there are verities, certainties, immutabilities—here may we abide and rest securely!

114. *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your word.* For You will be sure to do as You have said. Your promises are not like men's—they cannot be broken—and when I get one of Your promises, O my God, I hide behind it, I am protected by it and I am comforted through it.

115. *Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* Holy men often find that in order to be holy, they have to be solitary. It sometimes happens that the force of evil companionship is too much for the gracious heart to bear—and the Christian has to say to the ungodly, "Depart from me." Now, if even godly David had to say to evildoers, "Depart from me," you need not wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day say to all impenitent men, "Depart from Me, you evildoers." If we keep the commandments of our God, we shall often have to walk in a separate path from the ungodly. And even if we do not keep ourselves to ourselves, we shall keep ourselves to our God.

116. *Uphold me*—I thought we should soon come to that petition. We have been reading about David's resolutions and we might have thought that he was too bold in speaking so positively, but now he shows us the modesty of his mind—"Uphold me"—

116. *According unto Your word, that I may live.* The Lord upholds us as a nurse holds up a little child and teaches him to walk. 'Uphold me,' O Lord, for I cannot stand by myself. My good resolutions will soon evaporate unless You sustain me." There is a gracious promise which just answers this petition, "I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

116. *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.* "O my God, never let me have to say that I have hoped in You in vain! I know I never shall, but I

trust to You not to disappoint me. Cast me not off in the time of old age! Forsake me not when my strength fails me!"

117. *Hold You me up*—[See Sermon #1657, Volume 28—MY HOURLY PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] One is fond of that short, simple prayer. First it is, "Uphold me," and then, "Hold me up." Either way it is equally good—"Hold You me up"—

117. *And I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.* When God holds us up, there is no fear of our falling down! We have respect unto His statutes when He has respect unto us.

118, 119. *You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross.* Perhaps some of you have seen the great heaps of slag lying outside the furnace. That is a picture of the ungodly—"You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross."

119. *Therefore I love Your testimonies.* What? Does love to the truth of God and to the God of truth spring out of this putting away of the wicked? Yes, even the stern justice of God makes His people love Him and love His truth! I am of the same mind as the children of Israel were when Pharaoh and his army were swallowed up in the Red Sea, and the emancipated slaves sang unto the Lord who had triumphed so gloriously. Some cannot do that because their sympathy is so entirely with the wicked, but the destruction of all that is evil creates a flow of joy in the heart of the true believer! Still, it is a fearsome joy, full of holy awe and trembling!

120. *My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments.* Well may we also tremble when we see how terrible God is out of His holy places! There is a fear which is akin to love. As there is a fear which perfect love casts out, so is there another fear which love dandles on her knee—and such is the fear which David felt. May we, too, always have that holy awe of God in our hearts! Amen.

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UNREASONABLE REASONS
NO. 3247

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 1904,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
Matthew 14:31 (NKJV).

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #246, Volume 5—
MR. FEARING COMFORTED; #1856, Volume 31—
THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH and #2925, Volume 51—
REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST—
Read/download all three sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

OUR Savior did not ask Peter that question for His own information. He could have told Peter much more about his unbelieving heart than Peter knew! The Savior was well acquainted with those springs from which the unbelief of Peter arose. He asked it, therefore, rather that Peter might make the inquiry of himself—that he might look into the matter and see how groundless his unbelief was—so that on the next occasion he might not fall into the same error. I believe it is sometimes a very great cure for unbelief to look it in the face even while we are under it—and after we have escaped from it, it is still a preventive for the future if we look back upon it and reason concerning it. Remember how David, in the 42nd Psalm, twice asked himself, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" He was persuaded that the questioning of his unbelief would convict him of its folly. It only needs to be looked at closely to lose all its terror, to be robbed of its seeming foundation and to be overcome!

I am afraid that most of us have, sometime or other in our lives, been like sinking Peter and have cried, "Lord, save me," not in tones of faith, but in the language of unbelief. And if so, it will be as good a thing for us as for Peter to hear the Master say to us, tonight, "Why did you doubt? Why did you doubt? Was there any good reason for it? Was there any excuse for it? Did any good come of it? Why did you doubt?" And I hope, too, that after I have spoken to believers in that way, I may have a word for sinners—only for them I shall have to take liberties with the text and alter it into the present tense, saying to anyone who is desirous of peace in Christ, but who trembles and is afraid, "Why *do* you doubt? Why do you doubt? Why do you continue in this state of hesitancy and unbelief?"

I. First, then, I have to say TO THE CHILD OF GOD, *"Why did you doubt?"*

Some Christians appear to go from one form of doubt to another. Fears are with them perennial. They are plants that affect the shade—they seldom open their golden cups to drink in the blessed light of the divine sun! Even the strongest believers are, I fear, at times overcome with this disease. As King David, that matchless warrior, once waxed faint—the bravest servants of God sometimes faint even in the day of battle—I will ask them, each one, to look back upon any seasons of doubts or fainting, whether they are numerous or few, and I will then say to each one, "Why did you doubt?"

Did you doubt the promise thinking it was not firm enough? It was a promise to meet your trial—did you distrust it? It was the promise of *God*—did you think, perhaps, that it was fallible and might be broken? It was a promise sent to you by inspired apostles or prophets, as the case might be—did you still think it was no better than the word of a man and might fall to the ground? You have often placed great reliance upon the promises of those you love—could you not rely upon the promise of God? You have found man's promise sometimes true when you have trusted it—were you afraid that God's promise would not be true? Or was it that you had met with so many disappointments trusting in an arm of flesh that you thought the Lord to be altogether such as man is? Did you think that He was a man that He would lie, or the son of man that He would change His mind? Did you forget that Jesus Christ made the promises, Yes and Amen, in Himself to the glory of God? Was that the reason? If so, how wicked it was to doubt the promise of God! How could you do it?

Did your unbelief assail the promise in itself? Did you think your deliverance a matter of such difficulty that omnipotence could not accomplish it? Were you in such need that you supposed the stores of heaven could not supply you? Were you of their mind who said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Or of his who exclaimed, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" Did you conceive that anything was too hard for the Lord? That His arm was shortened, that He could not save, that His granaries were empty, that He could not feed you? Did you think that the river of God, which is full of water, was dried up? Did you conceive that the foundations wherein you dwelt were no longer of rock, but of crumbling sand? That your bread would not be given you and that your water would not be sure because God had failed? Beloved, if that thought lay at the bottom of your unbelief, was it not a baseless thing, indeed? What a slander upon God and upon God's almightiness, to think that He had promised what He could not perform! Whether it was His truthfulness or His power which your unbelief attacked, it was equally a wanton and an unpardonable thing! God will pardon it, I know, but I mean that it was unpardonable to yourself, for surely you must now feel as if you could

not forgive yourself for having doubted either the power or the truthfulness of your God!

Where else did the unbelief lie? *Had you something in your own experience which troubled you?* Was there something which you remembered in the past of failure on God's part? I will ask you—though I do not want you to answer to anyone but just to whisper the answer to yourself—Had there been a cause in some dark hour? Had He forsaken you? Had He proved as Ahithophel? Though you had eaten with Him, did He lift up His heel against you? Did He turn a deaf ear to you when you sought Him in the hour of peril? Had He then been false after all? Was there something dark and mysterious to others, which to yourself was made plain by the belief that the Lord had deceived you, that He had utterly failed and changed? Was it so? You repudiate with horror the thought! Then, beloved, "Why did, you doubt?" Since you already deny that the promise made you doubt, or that the promiser was one whom you had cause to doubt—since you also must now confess that there was nothing in your experience that could have caused you to doubt because the past had all been a proof of the faithfulness of God, then—"Why did you doubt?"

The child that has always been fed by its father, to whom the father has always been kind, loving and tender, who then doubts without any sort of reason, is surely to be blamed. Dear child, what is wrong with you? Here is a beloved wife, we will say, and for many years she has been the joy of her husband. He has done all for her comfort that she could desire—yes, and often before she has expressed her desire! He has anticipated her needs and made her life very happy in her confidence in him. And now is she going to doubt him? "No," she says, "I would not do him that injustice. In all my life with him I have had no reason to distrust him. Therefore I cannot wantonly throw away my confidence." Well, child of God, there was never husband so tender to His spouse as your God has been to you! There was never one on earth, in any relationship, that has proved His faithfulness to another as your Lord, your bridegroom, has proved His faithfulness to you! If you will never doubt till you have cause to doubt Him, doubting will never trouble your spirit. But you have doubted Him and the question comes cuttingly to you, under such an aspect, "Why did you doubt?"

Was there something about the experience of others that led you into doubt and fear? We will imagine that you met with some older person—someone who had long been a pilgrim on the road to heaven—who took you aside and holding you as the ancient mariner detained the wedding guest, said to you—"It is a fiction that God is true and you are a dupe if you trust Him, for I have gone on a pilgrimage, and though it was fair setting out, I found it foul along the road. And the promises I relied upon failed me. I came to them as wells in the desert, and found them dry. I

looked up to them feeling that they were as sure as the sunshine, but they did not warm me. God had forgotten to be gracious and in His anger He had shut up the heart of His compassion." Have you met with such a being? I have seen many of God's people—my experience and observation have been rather wide—but I have never met with one who has come to me to make an *exposé* of his God and say, "I have been deceived by Him."

We have seen some of them on their dying beds. Now dying men sometimes let out tales, and tell truths unthought of before. They are not able to keep secrets then. I think I have known some of them, honest men, who at such times, close upon the borders of eternity, could not have lied—they were not accustomed to do so at other times, but then I am sure the truth would have been imperative upon them had it not been so before—and they have declared that not one good thing had failed of all that the Lord God had promised. Their declaration was that they had found Him faithful and true. In six troubles He had been with them, and in seven He had not forsaken them. Well, then, "Why did you doubt?" If there has been no story told you by another, and no information from those who have gone further on the road than you have, which would lead you to distrust your God, why, oh, why, without any reason or cause whatever, "Why did you doubt?"

Did you doubt because you thought the covenant was an unworthy thing? You know it is "ordered in all things, and sure." You have learned from God's word that it stands fast like the great mountains and abides like the eternal hills. You are not of these who think that God has entered into covenant with His dear Son and yet will run back from it. You do not suspect that a covenant which has been ratified as the covenant of grace has been, will ever come to an end. I am sure you do not! Why, then, did you doubt when there is a covenant, a divine covenant, always standing?

Have you forgotten that the covenant was sealed with an oath? God swore and because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself! Will you look the fact in the face, that to doubt one promise in the covenant amounts to an accusation of perjury against the Most High? I tremble to think that such guilt may have lain upon my own soul and I desire to be cleansed from this high crime and misdemeanor of doubting my God. For who can imagine that God can lie when He swears that after having lifted His hand to heaven, and sworn by Himself, He can possibly draw back from a single word which that oath confirms?

Then, to make assurance doubly sure, there comes in, over and above the oath, the blood! The blood of victims always ratified the covenant—and the blood of Jesus Christ has ratified the covenant of grace. What? Can you not trust the bleeding Son of God? His blood is on the promise and can that promise be a slighted thing, never to be redeemed by a God of grace? Has He given it and will He make it to become a dead letter and

allow His enemies to throw it in His teeth and say, "He spoke, but He did not fulfill! He promised, but He did not perform!"? Rather let us say—

"The gospel bears my spirit up,
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, in promises, and blood."

"Why did you doubt?" In the sight of the eternal covenant, "Why did you doubt?" In the presence of the incarnate Son of God bleeding on the cross to make every promise sure, "Why did you doubt?"

Let me ask you another question. Do you remember that dear hour when Jesus first revealed Himself to you? He led you into the wilderness and there He spoke to your heart and in a *moment* blotted out your sins like a cloud! Then your love to Him was very warm. You went after Him into to wilderness, forsaking all for His dear sake. In the memory of that early love when He was near to you, how can you doubt Him? Since that time He has helped you in all difficulties, borne you up in all dangers and has carried you all the days of old, so why did you doubt Him? You have laid your head upon His bosom, you have broken bread with Him and dipped in the same dish with Him—and you have been as dear to Him as the ewe lamb in Nathan's parable was to its owner—you have been His darling! You have had chaste fellowship with Him. You have been admitted into the secret place of the Most High. There were times when you could tell others what a dear Savior and a blessed Lord He had been to you. Yes, there were "high days as holidays" to you, when your heart did dance at the sound of His name! Why did you doubt Him? What has He done, or what have you found out about Him that has led you into this state of heart? What has He done, or what have you heard of Him that could have brought you into such a condition that you should doubt the Lord your God?

Now I will suppose some of the answers that might be given to this question of Christ. I hear one say, "*I doubted because I was in peculiar circumstances.* I hardly think anybody ever was in a condition similar to mine. I felt as if I was made peculiarly the target for the arrows of the Most High. I felt that I was the man that above all others had seen affliction." Well, but do you think that these things were peculiar to *God*? Remember He had promised that He would deliver you and bring you through! He had said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Did that promise say, "except in a peculiar case"? Is there a caveat put at the end of such gracious words? "There may, however, arise some conditions in which this promise will not stand," you say. You know it is not so! That promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," has five negatives in it in the original text, sweeping away altogether all supposition that He could fail you! How could you say, "Mine was a peculiar case"? Peculiar as it is, Christ has suffered it—

"In every pang that rends the heart,

The Man of sorrows had a part."

You have not gone where Jesus has not gone! No, the way in which you have gone was first trodden by Him. In all your afflictions He was afflicted and, therefore we say to you, "Why did you doubt?" Your trial was peculiar to you, but not to Him!

"Oh, but," says another, "*I doubted because the difficulty was a new one.* It was so strong! I never before felt such perplexity. I never before experienced such a sensation of dismay!" But then your difficulty was not new to God. Had something happened to you which God had not foreseen? Did you suppose you were in a condition in which God never intended you to be and did not foreknow that you would be? Had you then outstripped His providence and outrun His love? Have you forgotten how the psalmist puts it? "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me." Why, the Lord knew all about your case of old and provided for it! Then, "Why did you doubt?"

"Oh, but," says one, "*my case was so terribly trying*—it consisted of a *series* of troubles—it involved such dire calamities and dangers." Still, what reason was there for doubt about that? Have you not heard that God's way is in the whirlwind, that His path is in the sea and that the clouds are the dust of His feet? If your way is through the desert, did not He lead His people through a great wilderness, wherein there were fiery serpents and terrible drought? Did He not guard them in their desert march? Were you in such a perplexing condition that you were worse off than the children of Israel in the Red Sea or by the brooks of Arnon? Yet the Lord helped them, so why should He not help you? Surely your circumstances must have been a small matter with Him who speaks and it is done—who wills and it is finished!

"Ah, but I *labor under such a sense of personal weakness*." Just so, dear brother, but is that a novelty? Did you not know at the beginning that you were weakness, itself, but that the eternal God faints not, neither is He weary? If you had cause to suspect Him of weakness, then there would be a reason for doubting Him—but to find out that *you* were weak was stale news, indeed, for you are weak as water and were always so! Did the covenant run thus—that you were to fight the battle alone at your own charges and carry yourself to heaven? Was it not stated in another place that God, Jehovah-Jireh, would preserve His people to the end? "Why did you doubt?" For a man to say, "I doubted because I was weak," is simply to give an unreasonable reason for perpetually doubting! If I doubt you, my brother, because of something in myself, that is an absurd thing to do! I can only reasonably doubt you because of some failure in *you!* If I doubt because of some weakness in myself, I put the saddle on the wrong horse! I may be led to doubt and despair about myself—that is right enough, it is clear and logical—but to doubt God

because I am weak is fantastic and ridiculous! Oh, be rid of that, I pray you!

"But my doubt," says one, "arose from another reason. *I lost so many friends, one after another.* They died or they deserted me." Well, was your faith dependent upon your friends? If so, it is little marvel that your faith failed you! Have you learned that wonderful 62nd Psalm which we call the "only" Psalm because it has the word, "only," so many times, beginning with it, indeed, though our translation has it, "*Truly* my soul waits upon God"? You know how David there says, "My soul, wait you *only* upon God, for my expectation is from Him." If you built your hope on God, alone, and He was the one pillar of your confidence, what if God's providence knocked away all those useless buttresses of yours—it could make no difference to the real strength of your faith! If a man trusts in God *and* his friends, he has no secure trust. He is like one that has one foot upon the rock and another on the quicksand. Betwixt two stools, we know what comes, even though the two stools are good ones. To trust in God and to trust in friends is poor trusting! O beloved, if our faith was what it should be, it would lean only upon the Lord, so that if we had none left to comfort us, we would still be able to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." There is no reason to doubt God because friends fail us.

"Still I must say," adds another, "that *I was so tossed to and fro that I could not see my way*." Oh, that was the reason, was it? I heard it said, the other day, when I needed to know a man's character and asked whether I could trust him, "Yes, you can trust him as far as you can see him"—and I knew what was meant by that! But is that what you mean about your *God*—that you can trust Him only as far as you can see Him? Oh, shame! Shame! Shame! And yet I am afraid that the rebuke might come home to many of us. We need to see how He will deliver us before we rely upon Him. Now, of all the questions that ought to be banished from the lips of a reasonable man, that should be silenced the soonest when we have to deal with an Almighty God! What have I to do with *how* God will deliver? He will do it somehow and that is enough for me! He will do it in the best manner. He will do it in the wisest manner. He will do it in the manner that will bring the most glory to His name and, in the end, most profit to His people! Therefore, let us be content to know that it will be so and not ask, "How?" and begin to doubt the eternal God! "Why did you doubt?"

I will put it in this way, beloved. *Did any of you ever get any good through doubting?* Did you ever prosper because of it? Did doubt ever calm a sorrow? Did it ever allay a fear? Did that handkerchief ever wipe tears from your eyes? Did you ever find your distrust a staff to lean upon? Did your doubts improve your circumstances? When you have had suspicions of your God, have they ever filled your purse or put bread

upon your table? If the rain were about to spoil your crops, did your doubts and fears bring fine weather? If the skies were unpropitious and you needed rain, did your distrust ever make the clouds burst with showers? Oh, you cannot say that it was ever so!

I will put it another way—*did your doubts ever glorify God?* Did you ever influence a sinner in the right way by distrusting God? Did you ever bring to Jesus Christ the slightest honor by pouring suspicion on His love? Has it not been all the other way? Do you not think that you often grieve the Holy Spirit by doubting? Do you not think it very likely that Christ has taken it hard that His beloved should doubt Him? I do not know anything that would cut me to the quick more than to be suspected and not believed by those I love! We may go outside into the market and make a statement—and if strangers are suspicious, we are not surprised—but within the boundary of our own house, if our child or our wife should not be able to trust us, that would be the end to all the joys of the family!

Oh, how Christ's heart must be pierced when those He died for doubt Him! When those He has helped and succored, blessed and caressed, made to sit under His shadow and eat of His fruit, yet, in the day of trial look somewhere else for help—run to broken cisterns that hold no water, and will not come to Him, the fountain of living waters! This is what, in the Old Testament, He calls playing the harlot! And though the term is harsh, yet since it is so constantly used in Scripture, I cannot help referring to it. He calls this sin a lack of spiritual chastity to Himself. It is a departure into a mental adultery when the soul goes gadding abroad to this and that person or thing for comfort—instead of keeping to her Lord. Drink waters out of your own cistern and let your soul be always ravished with His love! Let Him be as the loving hind and as the pleasant roe to you! Do not go after other lovers, for if you do, they will be a mockery to you and drive you back one day with bitter taunts! You will be compelled, at length, to say, "I will go and return unto my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." Beloved, Jesus deserves our trust—let us give it to Him!

Our doubts and fears have often prevented Him showing us more of Himself. He has said, "I have told you of these earthly things that are in My kingdom and you believe Me not. How shall you believe Me if I tell you of heavenly things?" Our dear Lord has many things to say to us, but we cannot bear them yet because we are so unbelieving. But if we had more faith and rested like little children upon Him, He would tell us more and show us more! We might have been a long way further on the road if we had not been hindered by unbelief. Of how many places might it not be said, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief?" Unbelief seems to hamper Omnipotence, to tie the hands of the Almighty! We do not know what losers we have been by our unbelief.

God grant, then, that as we turn this question over, it may breed repentance in our spirits! And as we find how impossible it is to answer it, we may go and say, "Lord, we have no excuse to make. Only give us more of Your Spirit. We believe; help You our unbelief."

II. Now a few minutes may be spent in speaking, secondly, TO THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS, BUT FEEL THAT THEY CANNOT. To such, as I have already said, the question must be slightly altered. I will ask each one of them, "Why do you doubt?"

There once came into this place a young man who is now a minister of the gospel. And he has told us how he became converted to God. He sat over in the gallery yonder, in great distress of mind because he could not feel his sins enough. On that particular occasion I said, "There is over in the gallery yonder a young man who feels that he is too great a sinner to be saved, therefore he does not believe in Jesus." "Ah," my friend said, "I thought to myself, 'I wish I was like that young man, I would like to feel the greatness of my sin.'" But then in my sermon I went on to say, "There is another young man in that gallery who would give his eyes to feel as the other one feels. They are a pair of fools," I said—"the one for believing that he is too great a sinner for an omnipotent Savior to forgive—and the other for imagining that Christ needs his strength of feeling to fit him for salvation, as if Jesus could not save him just as he is."

If one is saying, "*I cannot be saved because of the greatness of my sins*," you call God a liar, for Jesus said, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And there is that grand text, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him," and He is able to save them now. There is no reason for your doubting, for every sin that it is possible for you to commit, it is possible for Christ to forgive!

But the other says, "My trouble is not that I feel I am a great sinner, but that *I do not feel that I am a great sinner*." The nation has been entertained by some that there is a certain amount of *feeling* required before we are fit for Christ, and a good deal of preaching has gone to show that the sinner is to fit himself for Christ. I have read descriptions of the sinner's fitness that really were true enough about those who were saved, but were most discouraging and ungospel like if they had reference to them who were not saved! Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are lost, He has come to save you! It is not merely those who *feel* that they are lost—there are special promises for them—but those who are so lost that they do not even feel it! He even comes to give a sense of being lost to those who have no sense of it. And mark you, if Jesus waited till sinners of themselves felt their need of Him, He would never save one! It is as much His work to make us *feel* our need as it is to *supply* our need! Hart has well put it—

"True belief and true repentance

Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

If you cannot come *with* a broken heart, come *for* a broken heart! If you are all bad and there is no good about you, not even a good feeling, yet still the Gospel says to you, and to every creature under heaven, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Still I must feel," says one. Yes, you *will* feel, and feel as you never felt before if you listen to this message. "Incline your ear, and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." Believe in the crucified Savior! Trust yourself with Him, for there is no salvation in any other! Salvation is not in *your feelings*, but in *His work!* Salvation is not in looking at the bites of the serpent, but in looking at the bronze serpent on the pole! Salvation is not in studying your leprosy, but in looking to the great High Priest who puts His hand on you and says, "I will, be you clean." Salvation is not in poring over your blindness, but in lifting up your face to Him who puts His finger on your sightless eyeballs and says, "See, for I have given you sight." Salvation is not in trying to untwist the grave clothes, but in obeying that glorious voice that says, "Lazarus, come forth," even to one who has already lain three days in his grave! It is not *you* that are to do the saving—it is Christ who is the Savior!

If you have any reason for doubting Christ, then doubt Him. But how can you doubt Him? Is He not able to save? He is the Son of God! Do you believe this? Did He not die, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"? Do you doubt the efficacy of His death? Can you stand at the foot of the cross and hear Him cry, "It is finished," and then say, "That is not enough for me"? Do you think that to be incomplete which He says is finished? And when He has entered into His Father's glory and sat down because He has forever completed the work of atonement, would you bother Him? Would you take Him away from His rest and say, "You have not finished the work—it is still incomplete"? Oh, say not so! If you should entertain such a thought, your unbelief would be reckless, indeed!

To me, (I speak it as in the Lord's sight), it seems this day as if I *must* trust Jesus and as if, racking my brain, *I cannot think of a reason for doubting the Son of God*. Yet was I once as plentiful in doubts and fears as you are, poor sinner! I quibbled with Him about this and I quibbled with Him about that! And all the answer He gave me was to show me Himself and to say, "Look unto Me, and be you saved all the ends of the earth." I needed some ceremony, or some dream, or some strange feeling, or some revelation—I knew not what I needed—but this I know, that I stood quibbling and quibbling, still, till I doubt not I should have quibbled myself into hell if at last I had not felt too wretched to continue in such a miserable business—and by His grace, I just allowed myself to faint away into the arms of the Savior and to wake up saved! I gave up

my quibbles. I gave up my good works, such as they were, wretched things! I gave up reliance upon feelings and reliance on prayer—and came to rely only upon Him. And now, at this day, if He cannot save a poor sinner who trusts in Him, alone, I shall be damned! And if there is anything needed to save a soul except the precious blood and perfect righteousness of Jesus, I must be lost! Sinner, you have as much to trust in as I have, for I have not anything! I have not the weight of a grain of dust of merit of my own! I have not a rag! I have not a thread left of anything I can rely upon, except that dear Lord whom God has set forth to be "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Why then do you doubt?

Are God's words, after all, false? Does He say, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," and does He mean to shut the door in your face when you do come? Does He say, "Whoever will, let Him take the water of life freely," and when you come, will He say to you, "I refuse you—I did not mean you"? Do you think that God's invitations are, after all, a hideous mockery at the woes of men? It cannot be! When He says, by the mouth of His servants, "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," is it true or not? When He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," is it true or not? When He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon," is it true or not? If it is true, Why do you doubt? Will you make God a liar? You will do so if you do not trust His promises!

Once more, O sinner, to what end and purpose did Jesus come into the world to bleed and die if, after all, there is no forgiveness for sinners, and if those that seek His face will be rejected? When men make a mockery of others, they do not often do it at vast expense. Do you think God has hung His Son upon the tree for mockery? That He has pierced Him with death smarts—and all to laugh at sinners? "Ah, but I am such a great sinner." And do you think that Christ came into the world to be a little Savior to little sinners? Is He a physician that can only heal cut fingers? Do you think that? He is the Son of God and sin seems to vanish in His august presence! When I look at the needs of this city of London and see how many people there are, I am ready to ask, "How shall they all be fed? Where shall there be flocks and herds to supply them?" But if I go to the great markets in the early morning and see the meat and other food there, I change my mind and enquire, "Wherever can there be people enough to eat all these provisions?" So, when I look at a sinner's sin, I say, "How can this ever be washed away?" But when I look at the Savior's blood, I seem to say, "Sin is readily enough put away in such a fountain as this!" I change my tone and whereas I thought sin too great

to be atoned for, I come to think the atonement almost too great for human sin, if such might be! I cannot conceive it possible that God will find any difficulty in forgiving sin after such atonement has been made! "Why do you doubt?"

Now I will give you two great reasons for doubting and then I have done.

The first time I can recommend any sinner to doubt the Savior is when he finds a fellow sinner who has been to Jesus, has rested in Him—and yet has perished. Now, set out upon this journey. Ask all God's people, one by one, and see if God has rejected them. Look at those you knew who were like yourself—perhaps they were drunks, perhaps they were swearers. Now that they have sought the Lord, see whether He has refused them. When you find that He has rejected one, then you will have reason to think that He will reject you! Then you may reasonably doubt.

The other reason is this. Try Him, yourself, and if He rejects you, then you shall have cause for doubting. Go and throw yourself at His door of mercy with this upon your heart, "I will perish here if I must perish." Go to His cross and look up, and say, "Savior, Redeemer, Son of God, bleeding and dying—a guilty soul comes here and trusts itself with You." See if He will spurn you! See if you are not saved! I challenge the whole earth! I challenge all hell to find a single soul of woman born that ever came and humbly rested on the blood and righteousness of Christ and yet was lost! Such a thing has never been and never shall be while the earth abides!

O poor soul, then come away—come away to the Savior! I will go with you, for I love to go again and again and again, and be a beggar again at my Lord's door! Come, let us say together, "Jesus, we have guilt. We have no merit. We have no claim upon You. We deserve to be cast into the lowest hell. But by Your blood, by Your righteousness, have mercy upon us and save us *now*. We desire to give up all our sins, to leave them behind us and to be obedient to all Your bidding. Save us, dear Savior, save us! Purge us with hyssop and we shall be clean! Wash us and we shall be whiter than snow."

If that prayer comes from any heart here, the Lord will answer it, indeed! May He bless you! Amen.

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GATHERING WITHOUT PLANTING
NO. 3248

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 26, 1879.

"You eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant."
Joshua 24:13 NKJV.

[Other "Olive" Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon are as follows—#1569, Volume 26—THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS; #3176, Volume 55—THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE; #3175, Volume 55—"PEACE! PERFECT PEACE!"; #3190, Volume 56—CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE; #3208, Volume 56—THE FAITHFUL TREE and #3226, Volume 56—FIGS AND OLIVES—Read/download all these sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE Israelites, when they came into Canaan, entered into possession of a country which was thoroughly prepared for their occupation. There were walled cities and houses exactly adapted for their use and in habitable repair. The vineyards were in full bearing and the hills terraced ready for cultivation. They were not like emigrants to the wild west who have to clear forests and turn over prairies! They had not even to take possession of ruined cities and to rebuild them! For the most part, everything stood waiting for them, "houses full of all good things," and even "the old corn of the land" stored up for their immediate use! Moses had promised them that it would be so and Joshua reminded them of the promise when it had become a fact.

As the Holy Spirit shall help us, *let us first learn from the text as it referred to Israel.* And then, taking the general principle here mentioned, *let us learn from their case to consider our own*, for we also enjoy that which we have neither produced nor earned.

I. First, then, LET US LEARN FROM THE TEXT AS IT REFERRED TO ISRAEL. They entered into possession of wells which they had not dug, cities which they had not built, olive trees and vineyards which they had not planted.

In the first place, *this was a fulfillment of the ancient covenant.* Although all the details of these blessings to Israel were not mentioned in the covenant made with Abraham, yet they were virtually included—and Moses mentioned them very particularly in the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy when he told the people to beware lest they should forget the Lord who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. So that every time an Israelite walked out into his olive garden and especially when he beat the tree to bring down its fruit, he could say to himself, "Here is the fulfillment of the promise made to our fathers." If he was a truly devout Jew, he would never gather the grapes from his

vineyard, nor drink of the milk, nor taste the honey which abounded in the land without recognizing that as the Lord had spoken, so the Lord had done! Jehovah had not fallen short of His promise in any respect—He had brought His people into just such a country as He had aforetime covenanted to bestow upon them!

Now, beloved, are not we also in very much the same position as Israel was with regard to many things around us? Why, even in temporals it is so! No good thing have we lacked, though we have sometimes feared that we would. As our days, our strength has been—and we can truly say that the Lord has been mindful of His covenant and that not one of His promises has failed. This is especially the case as we recollect the answers God has given to our prayers. He long ago gave the promise, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." And I, for one, have proved its truthfulness and desire to bear my testimony to the faithfulness of the covenant keeping God! Cannot you do the same, dear friends? Why, I think you can hardly go into any room in your house—you cannot go to your beds, you cannot sit down at the table, you cannot walk along the street and I know that many of you cannot come to your pews in this place without thinking—"Here are the tokens of my Lord's faithfulness, goodness and truth!" You who have lived to see 60 or 70 summers have witnessed great varieties of weather, but you can bear your testimony that according to God's covenant, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night have not ceased! The outside world is hung with testimonies to the faithfulness of God—

"His covenant with the earth He keeps!
My tongue, His goodness sing.
Summer and winter know their time,
His harvest crowns the spring."

But, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, when we come to think of what the Lord has done within us, can we look anywhere in our hearts, or to any faculty of our minds without perceiving evidences that the Lord is keeping His covenant? He said, "A new heart also will I give you"—has He not given it to us? What is that heart that sorrows over conscious imperfection—what is that heart that longs after fellowship with God—what is it but that new heart that He has given to us? The Lord also said, "A new spirit will I put within you"—and what is that spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"? What is that spirit which exults with delight in the presence of God but that new spirit which He has put within us? Has He not kept His promise? Has He not given to us a sense of pardon, a consciousness of justification through faith in His dear Son? All the work of the Holy Spirit within the heart, if I were to speak upon it in detail, would only be a testimony that the Lord keeps the covenant of His grace which He made with us in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son, even as He kept with Israel that ancient covenant which He made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob—

"Firm as the lasting hills,
This covenant shall endure,

Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure!
When ruin shakes all nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same."

But, secondly, *these blessings were to Israel pledges of all the rest of the words of God*. In that 6th chapter of Deuteronomy where Moses speaks of the people having houses full of all good things which they did not fill, and wells which they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees which they did not plant, he also commanded them to keep the words of the Lord in their hearts, to teach them to their children, to talk of them as they sat in the house or walked by the way, to bind them upon their hands and as frontlets between their eyes and to write them upon the posts and gates of their houses. Do you see what was the drift of the argument of Moses? Was it not just this—If God's words of promise have been so rich and so weighty that they have brought Israel into the possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, should not Israel now guard most jealously *all* the words of God? I know how the children of God learn to prize His promises. Their soul has lived by the month together upon a single promise, and it has been enough to feast their spirits. In another time of distress they have rested upon another promise and in this way, through their experience, the promises have become exceedingly precious to them!

This kind of experience should teach us the preciousness of the Word of God as a whole so that we would not part with a single letter of it and would not give up even the dot of an i or the cross of a t! I always deprecate the spirit which tries to tamper with the Word of God. I admire them who have sufficient knowledge of the ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures to tell us, as nearly as they can ascertain them, what were the original Hebrew and Greek words, but I dearly deplore that kind of spirit which, after the style of a destructive parrot, seeks to tear the Scriptures to pieces and to rob the children of God of their priceless possession! Why, even a solitary divine precept is so precious that if all the saints in the world were burnt at one stake for the defense of it—it would be well worth the holocaust! If the whole of us went to prison and to death for the preservation of a single sentence of Scripture, we would be fully justified in making such a sacrifice. If I were to ask some of the broad school of the present day whether there is any doctrine in the Bible that would justify a person in being a martyr for it, I believe they would be compelled to answer, "No. The whole thing is a mere matter of opinion to us." But it is not a matter of opinion to us! The Word of God is to us an infallible revelation of the eternal truth of God and that part of it which has already been proved to be true to us is the seal and pledge that the whole of it is true and precious! When the Israelite walked in the olive groves and vineyard that he had not, himself, planted—and when he ate the olives and grapes, he would see in them pledges that all the words of God would be fulfilled as surely as that one promise had been!

Thirdly, these people, in entering into possession of vineyards and olive groves which they had not planted, must naturally have regarded them as *reminders of God's judgments upon sin.*" "I sit under this olive tree," mused the devout Israelite, "and I eat of its fruit. I walk in this vineyard, gather the grapes and eat them. I did not plant these trees and vines, yet they are mine—how came I by them? Where are their original owners? They were slain by Joshua at the command of God because of the shameful abominations with which they filled the land." And the lesson that a gracious man would learn from this would be, "I must, therefore, cleave closely to the one living and true God and must not set up idols in His place. And I must diligently seek to know His will and to do it, so that I may not offend the great Jehovah whose wrath is so terrible against evil of every kind."

There is something, dear friends, in your position and mine, which is analogous to this. We live in a land of many privileges, yet we must not forget that other inhabitants were here before us—and that druidic and other abominations were swept away! And even since we have flourished as a nation, other nations have been destroyed. Let them be warnings to us and let us not continue to grieve the Most High by national sins which might well bring down upon us the righteous judgments of God! Especially do we need to be on our guard against the Popery that is seeking again to enslave and degrade this fair land of ours—and at all costs to defend that faith for which our forefathers suffered and died!

Then, next, these vineyards and olive groves, possessed by those who had not planted them, were *claims upon them for service*. They were commanded by Moses to love with all their heart, and soul, and might that God who had given them the land flowing with milk and honey and all the blessings that they found in it. All He asked of them was that they should worship Him, alone, dedicate to Him the tenth of all their substance and seek to make the whole land to be holiness unto the Lord. Because He had brought them up out of Egypt and settled them in Canaan, they were bound to be His faithful servants. And, beloved, how many voices are calling upon us who have been spiritually brought up out of Egypt into the place of covenant privileges to serve the living God! Let others serve whomever they will—we are bound to the Lord by the cords of a man and the bands of love! If you, my brother, forsook the service of the Most High, whose service could you enter? Where could you find a king or prince worthy of your homage and devotion? There are some of us here to whom it is our very life to serve our God! His love has won us and will hold us fast forever! If the Israelite, sitting under his olives and vines, felt that He was so deeply indebted to God that He must serve Him, much more should you and I, sitting under the Tree of Life which bears all manner of fruits, feel that we are not our own, but are bought with a price and that, therefore, we will henceforth serve Him who has given to us such priceless blessings! Do you not feel thus, beloved? I trust that the Holy Spirit will press this truth of God home upon your hearts that it may be worked out in your lives.

II. Now, having spoken thus concerning the children of Israel, and somewhat also concerning ourselves, I want to bring out THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE AND ITS LESSONS FOR OURSELVES.

First as the Israelites ate the fruit of the tree which they had not planted, *we have many similar blessings which impose corresponding obligations upon us*. It would be impossible for me to go over the full list of the things which we have which are like cities which we did not build, like houses which we did not furnish, like trees which we did not plant and garden plots which we did not till. The great hulk of the things that we have—and certainly all the best things—are pure gifts of God's grace bestowed upon us freely out of the goodness and love of His heart!

In the very forefront we must put the great blessings of the covenant. We had nothing to do with our own election unto eternal life. He who chose us, chose us according to His own good pleasure. He knows why He chose us, but that reason is not known to us and certainly cannot be found in ourselves! I never met with anybody who ever thought that he deserved to be chosen unto salvation—the very fact of the choice proves that it must have been all of grace. Then as to the blessed redemption which is in Christ Jesus, we have been washed in a fountain that we never filled and we are this day clothed in a righteousness that we did not weave! No, we did not even arrange one thread of that spotless robe! The blood and righteousness of Christ become ours purely by an act of His grace. It would be a most monstrous thing for anybody to say that he deserved that Christ should die for him—such a sacrifice as He offered on Calvary's cross must have been one of pure unmingled grace! It would be a mistake in language, a contradiction in thought even to *suggest* that there was some measure of deserving about any of those sinners for whom Christ died! Oh, no! This good olive tree is one that we did not plant! This vine is of the Lord's own right-hand planting—and the oil and the wine that flow from them are the gifts of God's grace! What I have said about election and redemption applies equally to adoption, sanctification and all the other blessings of the covenant. These are fruits from a tree that we did not plant—God has given them to us freely of His grace.

This general principle also applies very specially to *the record of these priceless gifts of grace*, that book of God which has been well called, "the God of books." Every leaf of that book is of more value than a banknote for millions of pounds! Every line is more precious than diamonds and every letter is worth more than the costliest gems. You know well enough, dear friends, that you and I never wrote even a single letter of that blessed record—it is as much as we can do to understand it—and even that is not possible without the teaching of the Holy Spirit! We can scarcely calculate how much we owe to those "holy men of old" who, under the Spirit's guidance, planted this vineyard from which we are continually gathering such rich clusters! Think, too, how much we are indebted, under God, to those who were the means of preserving this

record and handing it down to us, often at the cost of their own lives. Every page of this Bible is, as it were, splattered with the blood of the martyrs, yet we have not had to pay that price for it—we draw the life giving water out of wells that we did not dig and eat the fruit of the sacred tree that we did not plant!

Then, beloved, think of the ministry of the word by which the Scriptures are opened up to us. How is it that we have the gospel preached today in this land without let or hindrance? We owe it largely to the humble men and women, tailors, weavers and the like, yes, and to faithful ministers and even bishops who would not give up the truth of God in the dark days of our country's past history. That "candle" of which brave Hugh Latimer spoke to Bishop Ridley is still alight in England, but we did not light it, nor have we had to suffer as they and thousands of others did to keep it alight! We scarcely realize how much we owe to those true heroes of the faith of whom Foxe tells us in his martyrology, and to the many others whose names are unknown to us—and whose praises are unsung by men! When we talk of our open Bible, and of this free England of ours, and when we observe the ordinances of our holy religion as they were instituted by Christ, Himself, let us never forget that these are like the vineyards and olive groves of Canaan which the Israelites did not plant, but of which they enjoyed the fruit!

Think, also, how much we owe to those who struggled and suffered to obtain for us the civil and religious liberty which is our heritage today. There are some of our old sanctuaries still standing where our godly ancestors met to worship God five miles away from the nearest market town lest their minister should be fined or imprisoned for daring to speak publicly in God's name! Whenever I visit such places, the tears come into my eyes as I think of those good men still standing fast in poverty and disgrace—and proclaiming that gospel which they have handed down to us! In the gracious providence of God, we enjoy liberty which I fear we do not value half as much as we ought. So, tonight, as we sit in these olive groves and vineyards which we did not plant, and as we eat the comforting and refreshing fruit, let us bless the Lord for the happy lot which has been so graciously prepared for us!

I have thus mentioned a few of the many blessings that make up our goodly heritage. And you can, each one, apply the general principle to your own case. I need, in closing, to remind you *of the obligations imposed upon us by these blessings which have been provided for us.* I think that our first obligation is to humility. What have you there, worthy Israelite? "A good crop of olives." But how did you get those olive trees? You certainly did not plant them and you did not build that fine house, nor lay out the vines that are growing all round it. Oh, no! You drove out the old owner and God gave it to you for your own possession! You are living in a city that is enclosed by solid walls composed of massive stones, but you did not build it—you would not even know how to move the stones and set them so firmly one upon another. Ah, there were giants or giant like men in those old days who did all that for you—and

you are now virtually living in an almshouse which the great God of Canaan had allowed others to fit up for your reception!

And that is very much the condition of every one of us. As for myself, I am a gentleman commoner dependent upon the daily bounty of God—and I suspect that most of you who are now present are in a similar position. Whenever we begin to grow proud because we are getting on in the world, how foolish we are—and the proudest man is the biggest fool! We are all fools when we are proud at all—and as we increase in pride, we increase in folly. Have you, my friend, ten talents entrusted to you? What an anxiety it must be to you to use them aright for your Master! I am almost sorry for you that you have such a responsibility. Yet you are proud of it—then I am still more sorry for you. There is nothing to be proud of in being in debt—and you are in debt to your Lord for those ten talents, for He only lent them to you and He will expect to receive from you an account of how you have put them out to interest on His behalf! The more we have, the more we are indebted to God—so, in proportion as His mercy to us rises, let us sink in our own esteem and lie at His feet in adoring humility!

Our next obligation is to gratitude. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they brought very little with them. A miracle was continually being worked so that their clothes waxed not old during their long wandering in the wilderness. Their food dropped daily from heaven and water to quench their thirst poured out from the smitten rock—they were a company of paupers grandly sustained by their God! And when they entered into possession of the promised land, where were their title deeds? They could not trace their ownership through a long line of ancestors, but every conveyance contained just one sentence, "The Lord your God gave you this land." They owed everything to the goodness of God and, therefore, they were bound to be grateful to Him! And we who realize that every good thing that we have received has come to us by the free favor of our God, are bound to be grateful to Him. I hope we are in a measure grateful to Him, but when we contrast our gratitude with the blessings which God has given us, we thank Him for what we feel, but we mourn that there is so little of it. May He give us grace to feel far more grateful than we have ever yet been!—

"Oh let my house a temple be,
That I and mine may sing
Hosanna to God's majesty,
And praise our heavenly King!"

Our next obligation is to faithfulness. When a man receives an inheritance to which he has contributed nothing whatever, he is at least bound to keep up the estate. I have already reminded you that we have come into the possession of a Bible that we did not write, a gospel that we could never have invented and the ministration of the word has been maintained in this land by those who have gone before us, so that we have come into this glorious inheritance like the heirs to a family estate! Now, the very least thing that we can do is to keep up the estate. Others

died to preserve it intact for us, so let us not allow it to suffer as long as we have the care of it. If I had been one of the Israelites in Canaan, I think I would have said to myself, "I will keep this place with the utmost care, so that it shall not be injured while it is in my charge. I have only a life interest in it, so I will pass it on to my successor in as good a condition as when I entered into possession of it." So, beloved, let not the gospel suffer any loss by you. The church of God is put in trust with it, so let not future generations have to say concerning this period in which we are living, "There was a sad degeneration at that particular time. Christians were not steadfast, then—they trifled with the truth of God—they wanted something new. Worldlings called them fools and they began to think they were. They ran after this philosophy and that, and left the grand old gospel of the grace of God, or adulterated it with the so called wisdom of men, which is foolishness in the sight of God." I pray that this may not be the case, but that God will raise up a great host of those who will maintain the truth, unsullied, and hand it down to posterity uninjured. You did not plant the vines and olive trees, so do not cut them down! You did not dig the well from which you are drawing water, so do not let anybody fill it up. Be faithful to God at all times—contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—and let it never suffer at your hands.

There is also our obligation of service to coming generations. Who planted those vines and olive trees? Those who came before us. Then let us plant more for those who will come after us. Other people maintained the truth in years gone by and taught it to their children—and their children taught it to us—so let us teach it to our children that in due course they may also teach it to their children! We do not believe in oral tradition as an authority in the church of God, but we do believe in *oral instruction* as a most important agency in propagating the truth of God. Books are too often left unread—we need living men to speak the living word! Do not any of you imagine because your children can get good books, that you are exonerated from speaking to them personally about their souls! Mother, you are the best instructor that your child can have. Father, your loving, gracious talk with your boy will have more effect upon him than any book you can give him. Even the Bible itself he may leave unread when he leaves home—but if you have spoken earnestly and affectionately to him and prayed with him while he was under your roof, he will not be able to forget that! The teaching of the children is the very bulwark of Christianity and Protestantism—and the teaching should be given to them by their own parents if they are Christians, or in our Sunday schools and ragged schools if the parents are not themselves qualified to give it. Why, if we neglect the rising generation, surely our fathers' blessings upon us will curdle into curses! They taught us and prayed with us—and their parents taught them and prayed with them—and therefore there is a godly seed still in the land!

So shall we now neglect to train our own children, or shall our Sunday schools lack teachers, as is so often the case? I pray that it may not be so

with you, my brothers and sisters in Christ. In whatever part of London or anywhere else that you dwell, search out the schools where teachers are needed and offer your services. I speak especially to you who have ripe experience, for it is not right that this important service should be left to boys and girls. God bless the young people who are doing their part of the work so well—but why should not middle life with its vigor, and even old age with its sweetness and maturity, be found in the Sunday school? We have inherited from our ancestry what we are bound to pass on to our posterity! If I could, I would be a blessing to all succeeding ages as well as to the one in which I am living. So, brothers and sisters in Christ, do all the good you can while you live—and leave a gracious memory behind you when you are no longer here. Plant as many vines and olive trees as you can, for though you may not be spared to gather the fruit from them, somebody will reap the benefit when you have been called to higher service! I like that kind of benevolence which does not always ask to see those whom it blesses, but which finds satisfaction in doing good simply for the glory of God. Try to be disinterested—do not say, "I must see something for my money." Oh, no, no! Your wondrous inheritance of innumerable blessings, for which you never toiled, came to you from the unseen source of divine, eternal beneficence, so seek to catch something of that same spirit by building cities, digging wells, furnishing houses and planting vineyards and olive groves for those whom you will never see until, by grace, you meet them in the general assembly and church of the firstborn in your Father's house on high!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 PETER 1:9-21.

[This is concluded from Sermon #3245, Volume 57—OUR POSITION AND OUR PURPOSE—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

9. *But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.* He is shortsighted. He has some light, and some physical sight, but he cannot see at a distance. Spiritually, he is blind.

9. *And has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.* It is a great mercy not merely to see men as trees walking, but to have clear spiritual vision. There is a great deal of dust that gets into our eyes—and there is no way of clearing out that dust and becoming longsighted, getting a sight that can see to heaven—except by getting that spiritual life which manifests itself in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

10. *Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things you shall never fall.* This is the second time that Peter writes about giving diligence. We are told not to be slothful in business and this matter of which Peter write is the most important of all business! To prosper in this world may bring some advantages, but to

prosper in heavenly things is infinitely better! "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure"—that you may be sure of it and that others may be sure of it, too. Let it not continue a subject of question with you, "Am I the Lord's, or am I not? Am I called by grace, am I chosen by God, or am I not?" Make these things sure beyond all doubt!

11. *For so an entrance shall be supplied unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* [See Sermon #123, Volume 3—PARTICULAR ELECTION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You shall get far into the kingdom—you shall know the innermost joys of it! You shall get near the King and you shall became like the King—and when you come to die, you shall not be tugged into the harbor like a dismasted, waterlogged vessel, but you shall go in like a full rigged ship with all sails set! And so you shall have an abundant entrance into the fair haven of eternal happiness. May God grant us this unspeakable blessedness, so that we shall not "be saved, yet so as by fire" but that we shall find our heaven begun below—and go from heaven below to heaven above scarcely knowing any change at all! There have been saints who have found the stream of Christ's love running so strongly and carrying them down to the great ocean of eternal life, that they have scarcely known where the river and the ocean have met!

12. *Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things.* He who exhorts others to be diligent must not himself be negligent. And Peter most appropriately writes, "Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things."

12. *Though you know them, and are established in the present truth.* We need to preach the truth of God continually, for even those who know it need to be reminded of it again and again. Truth unpublished is like seed laid up in a florist's shop—it does not produce any result. We need to have the truth constantly sown in our hearts and watered by the Holy Spirit that it may grow and bring forth fruit.

13. *Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.* When people are as they should be, it is worthwhile to stir them up. You do not want to stir up dirty water, but you may stir that which is pure and sweet as much as you like. And a good fire sometimes becomes a better one by a little stirring up.

14. *Knowing that shortly I must put off this, my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.* The Lord had told Peter how he was to die. He had told him that he would die by crucifixion—"When you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you and carry you where you would not." He knew that the day of his martyrdom was approaching and so, being divinely warned, he was the more earnest to preach as a dying man to dying men! I have sometimes heard, as a criticism of that expression of Baxter's about a dying man preaching to dying men, the remark that it would be better as living men, to preach to living men. It is quite true that we must throw all our life into our preaching, but, as a rule, living men are never more truly alive

than when they are under a due sense that they are also dying men! When we realize that eternity is very near us and we are consciously drawing near to the great judgment seat of Christ, than all our faculties are fully awakened and our whole being is bent on doing the Master's work with the utmost vigor and earnestness!

15. *Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.* When we are gone from the earth, we want the truth of God that we have spoken to live on after us. We want, even from our graves, to continue to speak for Christ. Therefore it was that Peter kept on repeating the same truth over and over again. He hit this nail on the head many times and sought to clinch it—so that when he was gone, it would not move from its place, but would remain firmly fixed.

16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables.* He had no retractions to make as he came towards the close of his ministry. He did not have to say that, after all, he had been greatly mistaken—there had been an advance in theology since Jesus Christ had died and he was sorry to say that he had preached a good deal when he was young which he would like to unsay now that he was old. Oh, no! Peter held fast to what he had previously preached because he knew that it was the very truth of God! And the other apostles had done the same, so that Peter could write, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables"—

16. *When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.* Peter was one of the three who saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration—and he recalls this.

17, 18. *For He received from God the Father, honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mount.* Peter was not deceived about that matter! At the time, he and his fellow apostles had been overcome by the too transporting sight, but they all knew that it was no vision, or dream, or delusion, so Peter here speaks very positively concerning it. Why can we not receive the testimony of true witnesses such as Peter and the other apostles who sealed with their life's blood the witness which they bore to their Lord and His truth?

19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy.* Can anything be surer than that which an eyewitness sees? Well, Peter says that this prophetic book, in which Holy Scripture is stored up is better to us than if we had even seen Christ Himself! If any one thing is surer than another, it is this blessed book—the revelation of the Christ of God!

19, 20. *Whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts: knowing this first that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.* It is not to be kept by any man to himself. God spoke to Jacob at Bethel and we read concerning it, in Hosea 12:4, "there

He spoke with us." With regard to the children of Israel rejoicing at the Red Sea, we read, in the 66th Psalm, "There did *we* rejoice in Him." The promises God made to this believing man or that, He makes to all believing men! You remember that text, "He has said I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? That promise was first of all spoken to Joshua, yet Paul quoted it in writing the Epistle to the Hebrews, as if it was spoken to every believer—and so, indeed, it is! No apostle, no prophet could hedge up a promise and say, "This was mine and nobody else's." It is a common heritage of all the saints! Every promise is within the boundary of the covenant of grace, and all who are in that covenant are heirs of all the promises, to whomever they were made!

21. *For prophecy never came by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* This is the foundation of our faith—that this book is divinely inspired! Allow nobody to make you doubt concerning this matter, for you must give up Christianity, itself, if you give up the inspiration of this book! You have nothing else to fall back upon but this book—and your own personal verification of it by the work of the Holy Spirit in your own soul! To tamper with inspiration is to tamper with the heart of true religion! *The least doubt upon that matter is fatal.* I mean what I say and I know how desperately this mischief is working in these days in which we live. Men used to say, with the famous Chillingworth, "The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants." And so it once was. Yet now it seems to me that anything *but* the Bible is coming to be their religion but, as for us, we accept as authoritative nothing that contradicts these truths of God which are written in this book! We mean to stand fast by these truths, God helping us. We can do no other, come what may in this evil age. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

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UNDER THE APPLE TREE
NO. 3249

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I sat down under His shadow with great delight,
and His fruit was sweet to my taste."
Solomon's Song 2:3.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1120, Volume 19—
THE APPLE TREE IN THE WOODS
—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

CHRIST *known should be Christ used.* The spouse knew her Beloved to be like a fruit bearing tree and at once she sat down under His shadow and fed upon His fruit. It is a pity that we know so much about Christ and yet enjoy Him so little. May our experience keep pace with our knowledge and may that experience be composed of a practical using of our Lord. Jesus casts a shadow, let us sit under it. Jesus yields fruit, let us taste the sweetness of it. Depend upon it that the way to learn more is to use what you know and, moreover, the way to learn a truth of God thoroughly is to learn it *experimentally*. You know a doctrine beyond all fear of contradiction when you have proved it for yourself by personal test and trial. The bride in the Song as good as says, "I am certain that my beloved casts a shadow, for I have sat under it, and I am persuaded that He bears sweet fruit, for I have tasted of it." The best way of demonstrating the power of Christ to save is to trust in Him and be, yourself, saved by Him—and of all those who are sure of the divinity of our holy faith, there are none so certain as those who feel its divine power upon themselves! You may reason yourself into a belief of the gospel and you may, by further reasoning, keep yourself orthodox—but a personal trial and an inward knowing of the truth are incomparably the best evidences. If Jesus is as an apple tree among the trees of the woods, do not stay away from Him, but sit under His shadow and taste His fruit! He is a Savior—do not believe that fact and yet remain unsaved. As far as Christ is known to you, so far make use of Him! Is not this sound common sense?

We would further remark that *we are at liberty to make every possible use of Christ*. Shadow and fruit may both be enjoyed. Christ, in His infinite condescension exists for needy souls. Oh, let us say it over again! It is a bold word, but it is true—as Christ Jesus, our Lord exists for the benefit of His people! A Savior only exists to save. A physician lives to heal. The Good Shepherd lives, yes, dies for His sheep! Our Lord Jesus Christ has wrapped us about His heart—we are intimately interwoven with all His offices, with all His honors, with all His traits of character,

with all that He has done and with all that He has yet to do! The sinners' friend lives for sinners and sinners may have Him and use Him to the uttermost! He is as free to us as the air we breathe! What are fountains for but that the thirsty may drink? What is the harbor for but that storm tossed ships may there find refuge? What is Christ for, but that poor guilty ones like ourselves may come to Him and look and live—and afterwards may have all our needs supplied out of His fullness?

We have thus the door set open for us and we pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to enter in while we notice in the text two things which we pray that you may enjoy to the fullest. First, *the heart's rest in Christ*—"I sat down under His shadow with great delight." And secondly, *the heart's refreshment in Christ*—"His fruit was sweet to my taste."

I. To begin with, we have here THE HEART'S REST IN CHRIST. To set this forth, let us notice the character of the person who uttered this sentence. She who said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight," was *one who had known before what weary travel meant and, therefore, valued rest.* The man who has never labored knows nothing of the sweetness of repose. The loafer who has eaten bread he never earned, from whose brow there never oozed a drop of honest sweat does not deserve rest—and knows not what it is. It is to the laboring man that rest is sweet! And when at last we come, toil-worn with many miles of weary plodding, to a shaded place where we may comfortably "sit down"—then are we filled with delight!

The spouse had been seeking her beloved, and in looking for Him she had asked where she was likely to find Him. "Tell me," she says, "O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon." He told her to go and seek Him by the footsteps of the flock. She did go her way, but after a while she came to this resolve—"I will *sit down* under His shadow." Many of you have been sorely wearied with going your way to find peace. Some of you tried ceremonies and multiplied them, and the priest came to your help, but he mocked your hearts' distress. Others of you sought by various systems of *thought* to come to an anchorage. But tossed from billow to billow, you found no rest upon the seething sea of speculation. More of you tried by your good works to go in rest to your consciences. You multiplied your prayers, you poured out floods of tears. You hoped by almsgiving and by the like that some merit might accrue to you and that your heart might feel acceptance with God, and so have rest. You toiled and toiled, like the men that were in the vessel with Jonah when they rowed hard to bring their ship to land, but could not, for the sea worked and was tempestuous. There was no escape for you that way and so you were driven to another way—even to rest in Jesus! My heart looks back to the time when I was under a sense of sin and sought with all my soul to find peace, but could not discover it, high or low, in any place beneath the sky! Yet when—

"I saw one hanging on a tree"—

as the substitute for sin, then my heart sat down under His shadow with great delight! My heart reasoned thus with herself—Did Jesus suffer in *my* place? Then I shall not suffer! Did He bear my sin? Then I do not bear it! Did God accept His Son as my substitute? Then He will never smite *me!* Was Jesus acceptable with God as my sacrifice? Then what contents the Lord may well enough content me, so I will go no further, but "sit down under His shadow," and enjoy a delightful rest!

She who said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight," could appreciate shade, for she had been sunburned. This was her exclamation, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me." She knew what heat meant, what the burning sun meant and, therefore, shade was pleasant to her. You know nothing about the deliciousness of shade till you travel in a thoroughly hot country—then you are delighted with it! Did you ever feel the heat of divine wrath? Did the great sun—that sun without variableness or shadow of a turning—ever dart His hottest rays upon you—the rays of His holiness and justice? Did you cower down beneath the scorching beams of that great light of God and say, "We are consumed by Your anger"? If you have ever felt *that*, you have found it a very blessed thing to come under the shadow of Christ's atoning sacrifice! A shadow, you know, is cast by a body coming between us and the light and heat—and our Lord's most blessed body has come between us and the scorching sun of divine justice, so that we sit under the shadow of His mediation with great delight!

And now, if any other sun begins to scorch us, we fly to our Lord. If domestic troubles, or business cares, or Satanic temptations, or inward corruptions oppress us, we hasten to Jesus' shadow to hide under Him and there "sit down" in the cool refreshment with great delight! The interposition of our blessed Lord is the cause of our inward quiet. The sun cannot scorch *me*, for it scorched *Him*. My troubles need not trouble me, for He has taken my troubles and I have left them in His hands. "I sat down under His shadow."

Mark well these two things concerning the spouse. She knew what it was to be weary and she knew what it was to be sunburned—and just in proportion as you, also, know these two things, your valuation of Christ will rise! You who have never lingered under the wrath of God have never prized the Savior! Water is of small value in this land of brooks and rivers, and so you commonly sprinkle the roads with it. But I guarantee you that if you were making a day's march over burning sand; a cup of cold water would be worth a king's ransom! And so to thirsty souls Christ is precious, but to none beside!

Now, when the spouse was sitting down, restful and delighted, *she was overshadowed*. She says, "I sat down under His shadow." I do not know a more delightful state of mind than to feel quite overshadowed by our Beloved Lord. Here is my black sin, but there is His precious blood overshadowing my sin and hiding it forever! Here is my condition by nature, an enemy to God, but He who reconciled me to God by His blood

has overshadowed that, also, so that I forget that I was once an enemy in the joy of being now a friend! I am very weak, but He is strong and His strength overshadows my feebleness. I am very poor, but He has all riches and His riches overshadow my poverty. I am most unworthy, but He is so worthy that if I use His name, I shall receive as much as if I were worthy! His worthiness overshadows my unworthiness! It is very precious to put the truth the other way and say—If there is anything good in me, it is not good when I compare myself with Him, for His goodness quite eclipses and overshadows it! Can I say that I love Him? So I do, but I hardly dare call it love, for His love overshadows it. Did I suppose that I *served* Him? So I would, but my poor service is not worth mentioning in comparison with what He has done for me! Did I think I had any degree of holiness? I must not deny that His Spirit works in me—but when I think of His immaculate life and all His divine perfections, where am I? What am I? Have you not sometimes felt this? Have you not been so overshadowed and hidden under your Lord that you became as nothing? I know what it is to feel that if I die in a workhouse, is does not matter as long as my Lord is glorified. Mortals may cast out my name as evil, if they like, but what does it matter since His dear name shall one day be printed in stars across the sky? Let Him overshadow me—I delight that it should be so!

The spouse tells us that when she became quite overshadowed, then *she felt great delight*. Great "I" never has great delight, for it cannot bear to acknowledge a greater than itself, but the humble believer finds his delight in being overshadowed by His Lord! In the shade of Jesus we have more delight than in any fancied light of our own. The spouse had *great* delight. I trust that you Christian people have great delight. But if not, you ought to ask yourselves whether you really are the people of God. I like to see a cheerful countenance—yes, and to hear of raptures in the hearts of those who are God's saints. There are people who seem to think that religion and gloom are married and must never be divorced. Pull down the blinds on Sunday and darken the rooms! If you have a garden or a rose in bloom, try to forget that there are such beauties—are you not to serve God as dolorously as you can? Put your book under your arm and crawl to your place of worship in as mournful a manner as if you were being marched to the whipping post! Act thus if you will, but give me that religion which cheers my heart, fires my soul and fills me with enthusiasm and delight—for that is likely to be the religion of heaven—and it agrees with the experience of the inspired Song!

Although I trust that we know what delight means, I question if we have enough of it to describe ourselves as *sitting down* in the enjoyment of it. Do you give yourselves enough time to sit at Jesus' feet? *There* is the place of delight! Do you abide in it? Sit down under His shadow. "I have no leisure," cries one. Try and make a little. Steal it from your sleep if you cannot get it anywhere else. Grant leisure to your heart. It would be a great pity if a man never spent five minutes with his wife but was forced to be always hard at work. Why, that is slavery, is it not? Shall we

not, then, have time to commune with our best Beloved? Surely, somehow or other, we can squeeze out a little season in which we shall have nothing else to do but to sit down under His shadow with great delight! When I take my Bible and need to feed on it for myself, I generally get to thinking about preaching upon the text and what I should say to you from it. This will not do! I must get away from that and forget that there is a tabernacle that I may sit personally at Jesus' feet! And, oh, there is an intense delight in being overshadowed by Him! He is near you and you know it. His dear presence is as certainly with you as if you could see Him, for His influence surrounds you! Often have I felt as if Jesus leaned over me, as a friend might look over my shoulder. Although no cool shade comes over your brow, yet you may as much feel His shadow as if it did, for your heart grows calm—and if you have been wearied with the family, or troubled with the church, or vexed with yourself—you come down from the chamber where you have seen your Lord and you feel braced for the battle of life—ready for its troubles and its temptations because you have seen the Lord!

"I sat down," she said, "under His shadow with *great delight*." How great that delight was she could not tell, but she sat down as one overpowered with it, needing to sit still under the load of bliss! I do not like to talk much about the secret delights of Christians because there are always some around us who do not understand our meaning. But I will venture to say this much—if worldlings could but even *guess* what are the secret joys of believers, they would give their eyes to share them with us! We have troubles and we admit it. We expect to have them, but we have joys which are frequently excessive. We would not like that others should be witnesses of the delight which now and then tosses our soul into a very tempest of joy. You know what it means, do you not? When you have been quite alone with the heavenly bridegroom, you wanted to tell the angels of the sweet love of Christ to you, a poor unworthy one! You even wished to teach the golden harps fresh music, for seraphs know not the heights and depths of grace as you know them.

The spouse had great delight—and we know that she had for this one reason—*she did not forget it*. This verse and the whole Song is a remembrance of what she had enjoyed. She says, "I sat down under His shadow." It may have been a month, it may have been years ago, but she had not forgotten it! The joys of fellowship with God are written in marble. "Engraved as in eternal brass" are memories of communion with Christ Jesus! "Above fourteen years ago," says the apostle, "I knew a man."Ah, it was worth remembering all those years! He had not told his delight, but he had kept it stored up. He says, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows," so great had his delights been! When we look back, we forget birthdays, holidays and bonfire nights which we have spent after the manner of men, but we readily recall our times of fellowship with the well Beloved! We have known our Tabors, our times of transfiguration fellowship and, like Peter, we remember when we

were "with Him in the holy mount." Our head has leaned upon the Master's bosom and we can never forget the intense delight! Nor will we fail to put on record for the good of others the joys with which we have been indulged.

Now I leave this first part of the subject, only noticing how beautifully natural it is. There was a tree and she sat down under the shadow. There was nothing strained, nothing formal. So ought true piety always be consistent with common sense, with that which seems most fitting, most comely, most wise and most natural. There is Christ, we may enjoy Him—let us not despise the privilege!

II. The second part of our subject is THE HEART'S REFRESHMENT IN CHRIST. "His fruit was sweet to my taste." Here I will not enlarge, but give you thoughts in brief which you can beat out afterwards.

She did not feast upon the fruit of the tree till first she was under the shadow of it. There is no knowing the excellent things of Christ till you trust Him. Not a single sweet apple shall fall to the lot of those who are outside the shadow. Come and trust Christ—and then all that there is in Christ shall be enjoyed by you. O unbelievers, what blessings you miss! If you will but sit down under His shadow, you shall have all things. But if you will not, neither shall any good thing of Christ's be yours.

But as soon as she was under the shadow, then the fruit was all hers. "I sat down under His shadow," she says, and then, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." Do you believe in Jesus, friend? Then Jesus Christ Himself is yours! And if you own the tree, you may as well eat the fruit. Since He Himself becomes yours altogether, then His redemption and the pardon that comes of it, His living power, His mighty intercession, the glories of His second advent and all that belong to Him are made over to you for your personal and present use and enjoyment! All things are yours since Christ is yours! Only mind that you imitate the spouse—*when she found that the fruit was hers, she ate it.* Copy her closely in this. It is a great fault in many believers that they do not appropriate the promises and feed on them. Do not err as they do! Under the shadow, you have a right to eat the fruit. Deny not yourselves the sacred entertainment.

Now it would appear, as we read the text, that *she obtained this fruit without effort.* The proverb says, "He who would gain the fruit must climb the tree." But she did not climb, for she says, "I sat down under His shadow." I suppose the fruit dropped down to her. I know that it is so with us. We no longer spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labor for that which satisfies not—we sit under our Lord's shadow and we eat that which is good—and our soul delights itself in sweetness. Come, Christian, enter into the calm rest of faith by sitting down beneath the cross and you shall be fed even to the fullest!

The spouse rested while feasting—she sat and ate. So, O true believer, rest while you are feeding upon Christ. The spouse says, "I sat and I ate." Had she not told us, in the former chapter, that the king *sat* at His table? See how like the church is to her Lord and the believer to his Savior! We

also sit down and we eat, even as the King does. Right royally are we entertained. His joy is in us and His peace keeps our hearts and minds!

Further, notice that *as the spouse fed upon this fruit, she had a relish for it*. It is not every palate that likes every fruit. Never dispute with other people about tastes of any sort, for agreement is not possible. That dainty which to one person is the most delicious, is to another nauseous. And if there were a competition as to which fruit is preferable to all the rest, there would probably be almost as many opinions as there are fruits! But blessed is he who has a relish for Christ Jesus! Dear hearer, is He sweet to you? Then He is yours! There never was a heart that relished Christ but what Christ belonged to that heart! If you have been feeding on Him and He is sweet to you, go on feasting, for He who gave you a relish gives you Himself to satisfy your appetite!

What are the fruits which come from Christ? Are they not peace with God, renewal of heart, joy in the Holy Spirit, love to the brethren? Are they not regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption and all the blessings of the covenant of grace? And are they not each and all sweet to our taste? As we have fed upon them, have we not said, "Yes, these things are pleasant, indeed. There are none like them—let us live upon them forevermore." Now sit down, sit down and feed. It seems a strange thing that we should have to persuade people to do that, but in the spiritual world, things are very different from what they are in the natural. In the case of most men, if you put a roast before them and a knife and fork, they do not need many arguments to persuade them to fall to! But I will tell you when they will not do it, and that is when they are full! And I will also tell you when they *will* do it, and that is when they are hungry. Even so, if your soul is weary after Christ the Savior, you will feed on Him. But if not, it is useless for me to preach to you, or bid you come. However, you who are there, sitting under His shadow, may hear Him utter these words, "Eat, O friend. Drink, yes, drink abundantly." You cannot have too much of these good things—the more of Christ, the better the Christian!

We know that the spouse feasted herself right heartily with this food from the tree of life, for *in later days, she wanted more*. Will you kindly read on in the 4th verse? The verse which contains our text describes, as it were, her first love to her Lord, her country love, her rustic love. She went to the woods and she found Him there like an apple tree and she enjoyed Him as one relishes a ripe apple in the country. But she grew in grace—she learned more of her Lord and she found that her best Beloved was King. I should not wonder but what she learned the doctrine of the second advent, for then she began to sing, "He brought me to the banqueting house," as much as to say—He did not merely let me know Him out in the fields as the Christ in His humiliation, but He brought me into the royal palace and, since He is a King, He brought forth a banner with His own brave escutcheon and He waved it over me while I was sitting at the table—and the motto of that banner was LOVE.

She grew very full of this. It was such a grand thing to find a great Savior, a triumphant Savior, an exalted Savior—but it was too much for her and she became sick of soul with the excessive glory of what she had learned. And do you see what her heart craves for? She longs for her first simple joys, those countrified delights. "Comfort me with apples," she says. Nothing but the old joys will revive her! Did you ever feel like that? I have been satiated with delight in the love of Christ as a glorious, exalted Savior when I have seen Him riding on His white horse and going forth conquering and to conquer. I have been overwhelmed when I have beheld Him in the midst of the throne of God with all the brilliant assembly of angels and archangels adoring Him. And my thoughts have gone forward to the day when He shall descend with all the pomp of God—and make all kings and princes shrink into nothingness before the infinite majesty of His glory! Then I have felt as though I must fall at His feet as dead at the sight of Him and I have needed somebody to come and tell me over again the old, old story of how He died in order that I might be saved! His throne overpowers me! Let me gather fruit from His cross! Bring me apples from "the tree" again. I am awestruck while in the palace! Let me get away to the woods again. Give me an apple plucked from the tree, such as I have given out to boys and girls in His family, such an apple as this, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or this, "This man receives sinners." Give me a promise from the basket of the covenant! Give me the simplicity of Christ—let me be a child and feast on apples, again, if Jesus is the apple tree! I would gladly go back to Christ on the tree in my place, Christ overshadowing me, Christ feeding me. This is the happiest state to live in! Lord, give us these apples evermore!

You remember the old story we told years ago of Jack the huckster, who used to sing—

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

Those who knew him were astonished at his constant composure. They had a world of doubts and fears and so they asked him why he never doubted. "Well," he said, "I can't doubt but what I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, for I know that, and feel it every day. But why should I doubt that Jesus Christ is my all in all, for He says He is?" "Oh," said his questioner, "I have my ups and downs." "I don't," said Jack, "I can never go up, for I am a poor sinner and nothing at all. And I cannot go down, for Jesus Christ is my all in all." He wanted to join the church, and they said he must tell his experience. He said, "All my experience is that I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and Jesus Christ, is my all in all." "Well," they said, "when you come before the church meeting, the minister may ask you questions." "I can't help it," said Jack, "all I know I will tell you. And this is all I know—

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

He was admitted into the church and continued with the brethren, walking in holiness. But that was still all his experience and you could

not get him beyond it. "Why," said one brother, "I sometimes feel so full of grace, I feel so advanced in sanctification, that I begin to be very happy." "I never do," said Jack. "I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all." "But then," said the other, "I go down again and think I am not saved because I am not as sanctified as I used to be." "But I never doubt my salvation," said Jack, "because Jesus Christ is my all in all and He never alters." That simple story is grandly instructive, for it sets forth a plain man's faith in a plain salvation. It is the likeness of a soul under the apple tree resting in the shade and feasting on the fruit!

Now, at this time, I want you to think of Jesus, not as a Prince, but as an apple tree! And when you have done this, I pray you to *sit down under His shadow*. It is not much to do. Any child, when it is hot, can sit down in a shadow. I want you, next, to feed on Jesus. Any simpleton can eat apples when they are ripe upon the tree. Come and take Christ, then. You who never came before, come now! Come and welcome! You who have come often and have entered into the palace, and are reclining at the banqueting table—you lords and peers of Christianity—come to the common woods and to the common apple tree, where poor saints are shaded and fed. You had better come under the apple tree like poor sinners such as I am, and be once more shaded with branches and comforted with apples, or else you may faint beneath the palace glories! The best of saints are never better than when they eat their first fare and are comforted with the apples which were their first gospel feast!

The Lord Himself bring forth His own sweet fruit to you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 5.

Verse 1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* "You are not under the law, but under grace. Do not subject yourselves, therefore, to legal principles. Do not live as if you were working for wages and were earning your own salvation. Do not submit yourselves to the ritual and commandments of man which would rob you of your liberty in many ways. But having once become free men, never again wear the chain of a slave—'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.' Because you are the seed of Isaac, who was born according to the promise, you are not the children of the bondwoman—you are not Ishmaelites—therefore, as you were born free, as Christ has made you free by virtue of your new birth, stand fast in that glorious liberty."

2, 3. *Behold I Paul say unto you, that if you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.* If you begin being saved by the law, you must go through with it. You cannot take the principle of law and the principle of grace and blend those two together. They are like oil and water—they will never mix. If salvation is of works,

it is not of grace! And if it is of grace, it is not of works! You cannot go upon the two contrary principles of merit and of favor.

4. *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace.* You have turned aside from it. You are not standing with one foot upon grace, and one foot upon the law, but you have gone right away from grace. You must cleave to one or the other. If you take the law to be your hope, you must keep to it—and the end will be that you will die in despair.

5, 6. *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.* [See Sermon #1228, Volume 21—SALVATION BY FAITH AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love.* [See Sermons #1553, Volume 26—FAITH WORKING BY LOVE and #1750, Volume 29—THE LUTHER SERMON AT EXETER HALL—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is not any rite and it is not the neglect of any rite which can produce righteousness. It is as easy to trust in your nonobservance of a ceremony as to trust in the ceremony, itself, and it will be quite as delusive. It is faith in Christ that brings righteousness—the "faith which works by love."

7. *You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?* "You Galatians seemed to receive the gospel very readily and to be very earnest in obeying it. What has caused you to turn aside to the old legal righteousness? You are very changeable, very fickle. You seemed very energetic in running the Christian race—whatever has got in your way? 'Who did hinder you?' Somebody or other must have done so."

8. *This persuasion comes not from Him that calls you.* "It does not come from God. He called you to faith in His dear Son and to all those virtues and graces which naturally spring from the root of faith. Somebody else has called you aside, some false shepherd who is but a wolf in sheep's clothing—and who would destroy you if he could."

9. *A little leaven leavens the whole lump.* One false doctrine very soon sours all your belief—the whole lump is leavened with it. If you have a wrong ground of confidence, you are altogether wrong.

10. *I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubles you shall bear His judgment, whoever he is.* Depend upon it; every man who troubles a church with false doctrine is amenable to the high court above! And, sooner or later, he may expect even a temporal judgment here below.

11. *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased.* [See Sermon #2594, Volume 44—"THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "The offense of the cross" is that it sets up faith as the infinite merit of Christ's atonement and knocks down all confidence in outward ritual and ceremonies. Paul says that if he had preached the flesh pleasing doctrines of men, he would not have been persecuted—and the fact that he *was* persecuted was a proof that he was standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free!

12. *I would they were even cut themselves off which trouble you.* Excommunicated and put out of the church? No, it would be better if they were even dead rather than that they should live to spread such evil in a Christian church! Sometimes when we think of the interests of immortal souls, we are apt to grow indignant, and rightly so, towards willfully false teachers!

13. *For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only do not use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.* Do not let liberty become license. Do not say, "I may do this or that, and therefore I will do it because it pleases me." You are not to do anything because it pleases you, but you are to do everything because it pleases God! When a man is no longer a slave to sin, or self, or Satan, let him begin to serve his brethren—"By love serve one another."

14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* The legal spirit is all for expansion—it multiplies its commands and lays down its ritual for this and that, and the other. But the gospel spirit is all for condensation. It has condensed the whole law into a single word, that is, "love."

15. *But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another.* This man finds fault. The other must have his own way. A third is for something quite new. A fourth is for nothing but what is antique. And so they fall to squabbling and quarrelling.

16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* Be obedient to that great principle of the Spirit which goes with the doctrine of grace and salvation by faith, and then you will not be obedient to that lusting of the flesh which is in you by nature.

17. *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would.* You are pulled about by two contrary forces—you are dragged downward by the flesh—and you are drawn upward by the Spirit.

18. *But if you are led of the Spirit you are not under the law.* The Spirit never brings the soul into bondage! The terrors and the fears which come of legal slavery are not the work of the Spirit of God. Where He works, holiness is delight and the service of God is a continual joy. Oh, that we may be thus led of the Spirit!

19. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest.* They are clear, plain, self-condemned.

19-21. *Which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envying, murder, drunkenness, reveling and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Observe that the gospel gives no toleration to sin. Some people tell us that the doctrine of faith is not practical, but they know better although they say that. They have only to observe those who are actuated by the principle of faith and they will find them abounding in good works—while the men

who are swayed by the principle of law talk a great deal about works, but have little enough of them in practice! The gospel denounces sin, yes, and kills it! It gives us the force with which we fight against it and overcome it.

22, 23. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,* [See Sermons #1582, Volume 27—FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—JOY and #1782, Volume 30—THE FIRST FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.* Either human or divine—everybody is agreed that these things are all good.

24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts.* Condemned it to die, nailed it up to the cross and kept it in a dying, mortifying posture.

25. *If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit.* If our spiritual life is the result of a divine work, let our actions be in harmony with it—"If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit."

26. *Let us not be desirous of vainglory.* We call it glory, but it is vainglory. It is marred by vanity if it arises from anything done by us. Glory for you or for me because of anything that we can do is too absurd an idea to be entertained for a moment! "Let us not be desirous of vainglory"—

26. *Provoking one another.* For whenever a man is proud, and blustering, and vainglorious, he is sure to provoke somebody or other—and then they who are so provoked fall into another sin—the sin of—

26. *Envying one another.* O brothers and sisters let us try to get over all this and reach out to that blessed state of love which will bring us peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!

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THE GROWTH OF FAITH
NO. 3250

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 24, 1864.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly."
2 Thessalonians 1:3.

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on the same verse are #205, Volume 4— A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH and #1857, Volume 31— THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH—read/download both sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

BEWARE of imagining that you have reached finality in religion. Just as some politicians have said, "We have gone as far in reform as we ever mean to go, so here we shall stop," certain religious professors say, "We have gone as far in religion as there is any need to go. We are converted, we are saved, so here we shall remain." Beware, I say, of such a spirit as that, but rather imitate the example of the Apostle Paul who wrote, "Forgetting these 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." We are not content with merely being alive! We wish to be in health as well as in life, and we ought not to be satisfied with being saved—we should desire to have our faith in full strength and to have all our graces at the highest degree of development! The men of this world are not usually content with just bread to eat and raiment to put on, they are like those daughters of the horseleech that cry, "Give, give!" But when spiritual things are concerned, these insatiable cravings are not so manifest. Many are content to be wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked when they might buy of Christ all spiritual blessings without money and without price! Even those who have fled for refuge to, lay hold upon the hope set before them are often quite content to lie down just inside the city of refuge as if they had been sent into this world simply with the selfish end of being saved! They act as if there were nothing for them to do in the way of serving God and reflecting before other men that glory of God which, in His grace, has been made to shine upon them! So again I say, beware of that spirit of finality which would permit you to rest content with your present attainments, for if you are, I shall not be able to thank God that your faith grows exceedingly, and you will miss the joy that comes to the believer who is growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I am going to speak to you, first, upon *how Christians grow in faith.* Secondly, *upon the signs of that growth.* And then, thirdly, I hope to give you *some reasons why we should not be satisfied without this growth in faith.*

I. First, then, let us consider HOW CHRISTIANS GROW IN FAITH.

There are many ways in which the Lord causes faith to grow. One is from *the force of life, itself.* It is natural for life to grow until it has reached its maturity. Here is a living seed. If it is put into the earth under proper circumstances, nothing can prevent it from bursting its shell. In due time the green bade must be seen. You may command that green blade to remain at the same length as at present, but if you pass that way in another month, you will find that it has disobeyed your command—because it lives, it must grow! And if you should continue to visit it until it bends its head in the ripeness of autumn, you would see that it, must, by the very law of its nature, still keep on growing. It is the same with us—the anatomist will tell you that every part of the infant's body is so prepared that it can grow—there is provision for the growth of every organ and every limb so that, slowly and without difficulty, the whole shall be developed into a full grown man. It is life that grows. Put a bar of iron into the best soil that you can find—water it, and fertilize it, and let the genial sun shine upon it—but never a leaf or a rootlet will you find upon it, for it is dead! It is not so with the Christian. Because of the life that is in him, he must grow. You who are the living branches in the living vine prove it by your growth. You who are the children of God should increase in wisdom and stature, and go on from strength to strength until you appear in Zion before God. If your faith is as feeble, now, as it was 20 years ago. If you have not made any spiritual advance during the last 10 years, you ought very gravely to question whether you have any spiritual life at all! You may not be able to see the growth, but there must be growth if there is life. There are some plants in which the unseen growth is more valuable than that which is visible—the gardener prizes the potatoes that are underground more than the tops that everyone can see. But with the Christian, there must be both the visible growth in zeal and good works—the hidden growth is in his deep humility and communion with his Lord in secret. So the force of life within produces growth.

There are certain circumstances under which believers especially grow, and *they grow in faith by the exercise of faith.* See the blacksmith's boy when he first tries to swing his father's big hammer—how soon he gets tired! But ask the smith whether *his* arms ache—"Oh, no!" he says, "I have made too many horseshoes for that." Exercise has developed his muscles and strengthened his sinews to such an extent that the bringing down of that big hammer with a merry ring is but child's play to him. So the young Christian, when he begins to exercise faith, can perhaps only imitate him who said, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief." But speak to him some years later, when his faith has been much exercised, and then you will find that he has grown more like Abraham who "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith,

giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able, also, to perform." You know that if you let your arm lie unused, in time you will be unable to use it, like the Indian fakir who holds up his hand in the air until he has lost all power of moving it. So a man may keep his faith unused until it can scarcely be called faith at all—therefore mind that your faith is kept in full exercise for so only will it grow!

Christians also *grow in faith by holy walking*. Living with Jesus—and to live with Him we must be consistent in holiness—we get to know Him better and to trust Him more. It is said of some men that "the better they are known, the less they are trusted," but it is not so with the Lord Jesus Christ. Two cannot walk together except they are agreed, but if there is an agreement between our life and the character of Christ and we are, by grace, enabled to walk scrupulously in the path of integrity, our faith will grow stronger and stronger as we get to know more of Christ. Sinning is most injurious to faith. I think it is Brookes who said that "either sinning will kill our assurance or our assurance will kill our sinning." Sin indulged will prevent the full assurance of faith—and even a little sin will do this. Have you ever had a small stone in your boot? If so, and you have tried to walk, you have found it very uncomfortable traveling. If you have a tiny splinter of wood beneath your nail, you know how painful it is—you get it extracted as soon as you can, lest you should lose your finger, or even your hand. Beware of little sins, beloved, for they will keep all comfort out of your life and effectually hinder the growth of your faith.

Another way of helping faith to grow is *by a diligent use of gospel ordinances*. There are some of you who are very lax in this respect. Some who come to the Tabernacle twice on the Lord's Day do not come at all during the week. Your bodies would not grow strong if you only fed them once a week—and it is the same with your souls. Prayer meetings are most soul fattening ordinances! Many of us can testify that at such gatherings, we have often been able to say, "This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven!" I do not expect to see you all at the prayer meetings, for some of you have home and business duties requiring your attention and these must not be neglected. Still, there are many more of you who might come if you would. And while I am speaking of ordinances, I must not forget that very precious one of the Lord's Supper, nor its companion, believers' baptism. Both of these are exceedingly helpful to the Christian. All the means of grace help the growth of faith and every other virtue. Of course I include the private as well as the public means of grace. Private prayer is like a conservatory in which God's plants grow very rapidly. Christians need a temperature higher than this world can give them—they are rare exotics, plants of heavenly birth—and they need divine warmth before they can bloom and bring forth fruit unto perfection. And this can only be obtained by private prayer, secret fellowship with Christ and devout meditation upon the Scriptures!

I will only further say, upon this point that *a Christian may expect to grow in faith the more troubles he has*. If you have ever been at sea in a storm and noticed how unconcerned about it the weather-beaten sailors have been, you must have realized that it was because they had been hardened in many a tempest that they could so calmly go on with their duties while you and other landsmen were in dread of sinking, or longing for the end of the voyage! Storms help to make the sailors sturdy—and trials help to make Christians strong in faith and in every other divine grace. Damascus blades have to be annealed and those who are to be like a sharp sword in the Lord's hand will have to pass through the fire. The more the wind blows, the firmer will the oak's roots grip the soil—

"March winds and April showers
Bring forth May flowers"—

and you as Christians, must have your stormy times and your rainy days if you are to bring forth the flowers of grace and the fruit of the Spirit! You will probably grow more in the cloudy and dark day of adversity than you will while the sun of prosperity is shining brightly upon you. So be of good courage, beloved, under the most adverse circumstances, for they are working for your lasting good!

II. I will not say more about how Christians grow in faith. But, in the second place, I will try to point out SOME OF THE MARKS AND EVIDENCES OF THAT GROWTH.

First, however, let me say that *swelling is not necessarily growing*. We know some people who seem to fancy that they have grown in grace because they have such big notions as to their own attainments. They evidently imagine that they are *the* people and that wisdom will die with them. We never like to see a child with too big a head, for we fear it is only an indication of disease, and not a sign of health. And we fear that many professors of religion are suffering in a similar fashion. They know too much, for they are wise above what is written and are not content to be teachable and sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, the great teacher.

But there is such a thing as true growing and this can be seen in various ways. First, if you are growing in faith, *Christ becomes increasingly precious to you.* Perhaps you walked by a park one day and you said to yourself, "That is a very pretty place." Possibly the next time you went that way, somebody said to you, "I should not wonder if that estate should belong to you, some day," and that made you take a much more personal interest in it. By and by, the owner died and you learned that he had left the estate to you! How greatly your interest in it increased, then, and how much more you valued the mansion, the park, the gardens and everything belonging to the estate! In like manner, Christ was precious to me when I first began to hope that He might one day be mine. He was more precious to me when I first realized that He really was mine—and the more fully I am assured of my interest in Him—the more precious does He become to me! This is the best test I can give you, beloved—the most accurate thermometer by which you can ascertain the rise or fall of your spiritual temperature—is Christ Jesus

more precious to you than He ever was before? If so, then I am bound to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, because your faith grows exceedingly!

Further, if you are growing in faith, you desire to be more like Christ and you are more and more dissatisfied with yourself because you are so little like He. You are longing to be so completely conformed to His image that all the virtues of His character shall be reflected and reproduced in you. It is a sure proof of genuine faith in Christ that it produces likeness to Him—and growth in faith is good evidence of growth in likeness to Him. Are you more like Christ than you were years ago, or do you desire above everything else to be more and more like He? If so, my brother or sister, I feel confident that you are growing in faith, and I thank God that it is so—

"Lord, if You, Your grace impart,
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,
I shall as my Master be,
Rooted in humility!"

Another evidence of growing in faith is that *the promises become more consolatory to us* and our heart and mind are kept more restful under their gracious influence. On board ship, though the vessel may rock and reel and turn whichever way the helmsman may guide, the faithful needle always points to the pole! And it is the same with the true Christian—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall"—

His faith still points to heaven! His trust is fixed on Jesus! Whatever else may move, he remains firm and steadfast, and he cries as David did when he was hunted by Saul as a partridge upon the mountains, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed! I will sing and give praise." I do not know whether your experience is similar to mine, but I find myself, on the whole, more equable in spiritual things than I used to be. When one has known the Lord for 14 years, one can look back over a considerable period and, taking such a survey as that, I can discover certain times when I had great bursts of exhilaration, great heights of holy joy, followed by deep sinking of spirit and utter prostration of soul! I still have both those experiences at times, but not often, either of them, now. On the whole, I find my soul calmly and quietly resting upon the promises of God—neither unduly delighted at the prospect of the joys of heaven nor too much depressed by the cares of the world, the responsibilities of my ministry, or the sin that still troubles me—simply resting upon the rock, Christ Jesus, having few doubts and fears, and comforting assurance of salvation, but not so much of the ecstatic rapture that was one of the characteristics of my early faith. I suppose that this is the condition of many Christians and I am inclined to regard it as one of the evidences of growth in grace when we become more equable in our spiritual temperament. Children are very much excited over matters which a full grown man scarcely notices. And the spiritual child is swayed here and there by many winds which have little or no

effect upon one who has come to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

Love to the saints is another choice and clear proof of the growth of faith. In the verse from which our text is taken, Paul thanks God, "as it is meet," for the two graces which he perceives in the church of the Thessalonians—"because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity (or love) of every one of you all toward each other abounds." So love to the saints is thus linked with the growth of faith. We need far more true Christian love toward one another, though probably we have less cause for complaint in that respect than most other communities have, for we have learned the blessedness of dwelling together in unity. In some of our churches there is still far too much caste feeling, too much bowing down before rank and fashion. I met the other day with a pretty story concerning Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, the commentator. He wanted to marry the daughter of a gentleman who was one of his hearers. The father of the young lady said to her, "I have no personal objection to Mr. Henry. He is a good man, a Christian gentleman, but I do not know where he came from, so I cannot consent to your marriage with him." "Well, Father," said the young lady, "though we don't know where he came from, we do know where he is going, and I would like to go there with him." When I meet a genuine Christian, I may not know where he came from. He may have sprung, as men say, from the dunghill. His parents may have been the poorest of the poor, but what does that matter? I know where he is going and that is a much more important consideration! He is going to the upper house where there are many mansions! He is going to the palace of the great King eternal, immortal, invisible, where the princes of the blood royal are forever to bask in the sunshine of the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords! And I would like to go with him that I may form one of the blessed company. Never mind the corduroy or the fustian that the man may wear, or the cotton or calico of the poor woman—I love them as brothers and sisters in Christ and I want to go to the heaven where they are bound! The real test of a man's nobility is not, "From where did he come?" but, "where is he going?" If he is going where the people of God are going; if God is his Father and Jesus Christ is his Savior—and the Holy Spirit is his Guide and Counselor—if heaven is the haven where he is bound, it will be one of the proofs that your faith is growing if you feel an intense love for him and wish to share with him all the blessings of the covenant of grace in time and throughout eternity!

Another sign of the growth of faith is *the growth of zeal*. I cannot see a man's faith, but I can see the evidences that it is growing when I perceive how zealous he is in all good works for his Lord. When a train travels at a very rapid rate, the axles grow hot—and the greater the speed, the greater is the heat that is generated by the friction. And in like manner, the more rapidly a man travels in the path of a divine life by faith, the greater is the earnestness which he displays in the service of Christ. Do you care but little for the souls of those around you? Are you not doing all that you can to bring glory to God by the extension of the kingdom of

Christ among the sons of men? Then we *cannot* thank God that your faith is growing exceedingly! Indeed, there is grave cause to fear whether you possess the faith of God's elect if this evidence is lacking! Remember that question of the Apostle James, "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says he has faith, and has not works?" And his very emphatic answer—"Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." I find it well to often adopt those lines of Dr. Watts, and would advise you to do the same—

"Awake my zeal, awake my love,
To serve my Savior here below!
In works which perfect saints above,
And holy angels cannot do!
Awake my charity, to feed
The hungry soul, and clothe the poor—
In heaven are found no sons of need,
There all these duties are no more."

And the more faith you have *the more liberality will you display*. I do not wonder that some people give so little to the cause of God—they give only as much or as little as they believe! It is said that Dean Swift, preaching from that text, "He that has pity upon the poor lends unto You, Lord, and that which he has given will He pay him again," made this characteristic commencement to his sermon—"If you like the security, down with the dust!" It seems as if there are many people, nowadays, who do not like the security, for they keep their "sordid dust" to themselves, hoarding it up for those who come after them to scatter as they please! But the more a man believes in the security of godliness, the more will he give to the poor, to the cause of Christ, and to every worthy cause that he can help. After all, the great stimulant to Christian liberality is that which Paul used when he wrote to the Corinthians, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that you, through His poverty, might be rich." Or that which the Master, Himself, used with His disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give."

If I were to try to tell you all the good which growth in faith will do to us, I would need to keep you here all night. I was much struck with a remark that I read the other day, to the effect that faith may be compared to the gastric juices in the stomach. When that solvent is in a healthy state, all the food that is eaten is properly dissolved and digested—and then the entire man becomes healthy from head to foot. But if anything should be amiss with this necessary fluid, then everything will go wrong. So, a growing faith is essential to a healthy spiritual life. Let faith be in increasingly vigorous exercise, then the whole life will benefit. But let faith become feeble and inactive, then the whole of your spiritual being will be weakened and injured! I will even dare to say that faith affects heaven, earth and hell. If you have but little faith, you cannot tread the world beneath your feet, nor laugh at its troubles, nor smile at its cares. If you have but little faith, you cannot open the windows of Heaven, you cannot bring down a blessing from God. Even hell itself feels the influence of your faith! Satan trembles

when he knows that your faith is firm and strong. But if it is tottering and trembling, then he sounds the note of triumph and seeks to lead his hosts on to make a full end of you because you are beginning to relax your grip of your shield! It was not without good reason that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And to the Hebrews, "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." The Lord grant that we may always have cause to thank Him because your faith grows exceedingly!

III. I intended, before closing my discourse, to give you SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITHOUT THIS GROWTH IN FAITH, but my time has almost gone and I hope I have already said enough to prove to you the urgent need of an ever growing faith. For your own soul's sake, for your own happiness and usefulness, for Christ's sake, for sinners' sake, for the Church's sake, if you would adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things, if you would be a blessing to your day and generation, if you would bring into the fold of the Good Shepherd the lost sheep and lambs that are wandering away from Him, cry continually to Him, "Lord, increase our faith!"

I have only time for just a word or two with you who have no faith at all. Sad must be the reflections of those of you here who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. What can you mean by such sinful folly? The Son of God has come from heaven to earth seeking the lost—and yet you do not believe in Him though you are among the lost! A proclamation of liberty is made to you who are slaves to sin and Satan—yet you will not accept the emancipation which would be so great a blessing to you! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and you have been told, over and over again, that if you will but trust Him, you shall be saved even though you are among the chief of sinners! Yet you will not believe in Him! O soul, why will you not trust in Jesus? Is He not worthy of your confidence? Where will you find anyone else in the entire world who, so richly deserves to be trusted? No happy or miserable feelings are needed to fit you for believing in Him—no meritorious deeds, no gifts of alms are required as a preparation for faith in Him! Jesus Christ can save you just as you are if you will but trust Him—so trust Him now with your whole heart and you shall be saved! Trust to Him as completely as the drowning man trusts to the lifeboat or the life buoy—if he tried to swim to land, he would be lost—his only hope of being saved is in trusting to a power greater than his own.

It is just so with you, sinner! You are powerless to save yourself, but all power in heaven and in earth has been committed to Christ—He is mighty to save! Therefore trust Him to save you! Rest wholly upon what He is as the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed Savior—and upon what He has done upon Calvary's cross to save all who believe in Him—and you shall be saved this very hour! Trust Jesus here and now and you shall be saved here and now—and to God shall be all the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 22:1-19.

Verse 1. *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt*—[See Sermon #2223, Volume 37—ABRAHAM'S TRIAL—A LESSON FOR BELIEVERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is, "God did test or try"—

1, 2. *Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And He said, Take now your son.* "But, Lord, I have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac."

2. *Your only son.* "But, Lord, both Ishmael and Isaac are my sons and each of them is the only son of his mother."

2. *Isaac, whom you love.* See how definitely God points out to Abraham the son who is to be the means of the great trial of his father's faith—"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love."—

2. *And get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you.* It was usually the way, in God's commands to Abraham, to make him sail under sealed orders. When he was first bidden to leave his country and his kindred, and his father's house, he had to go to a land that God would show him. They have true faith that can go forth at God's command, not knowing where they are going! So Abraham did, and now the Lord says to him, "Take Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you."

3. *And Abraham rose up early in the morning*—Obedience should be prompt. We should show our willingness to obey the Lord's command by not delaying. "Abraham rose up early in the morning"—

3. *And saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.* All the details are mentioned, for true obedience is very careful of detail. They who would serve God aright must serve Him faithfully in little things as well as in great ones. There must be a saddling of the donkey, a calling of the two young men as well as Isaac, and a splitting of the wood for the burnt offering. We must do everything that is included in the bounds of the divine command—and do it all with scrupulous exactness and care. Indifferent obedience to God's command is practically disobedience! Careless obedience is dead obedience; the heart is gone out of it. Let us learn from Abraham how to obey.

4. *Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.* His was deliberate obedience! He could bear suspense, thinking over the whole matter for three days, and setting his face like a flint to obey his Lord's command.

5. *And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide you here with the donkey; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* Abraham did not deceive the young men. He believed that he and Isaac would come to them again. He believed that though he might be compelled to slay his son, "God was able to raise him up, even from the

dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Abraham bade the young men stay where they were. They must not see all that he was to do before the Lord. Oftentimes, our highest obedience must be a solitary one—friends cannot help us in such emergencies—and it is better for them and better for us that they should not be with us.

6. *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife.* That knife was cutting into his heart all the while, yet he took it. Unbelief would have left the knife at home, but genuine faith takes it.

6-8. *And they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, My Father: and he said, Here am I, my Son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.* Abraham here spoke like a prophet. In fact, throughout this whole incident, he never opened his mouth without a prophetic utterance! And I believe that when men walk with God, and live near to God, they will possibly even without being aware of it, speak very weighty words which will have much more in them than they, themselves, apprehend. Is it not written, concerning the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, "his leaf also shall not wither"? Not only shall his fruit be abundant, but his casual word, "his leaf also shall not wither." So was it with it Abraham. He spoke like a prophet of God when he was really speaking to his son in the anguish of his spirit—and in his prophetic utterance we find the sum and substance of the gospel—"My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." He is the great provider and He provides the offering, not only for us, but for Himself, for the sacrifice was necessary to God as well as to man. And it is a burnt offering, not only a sin offering but an offering of a sweet savor unto Himself. "So they went both of them together." Twice we are told this, for this incident is a type of the Father going with the Son and the Son going with the Father up to the great sacrifice on Calvary. It was not Christ alone who willingly died, or the Father alone who gave His Son, but they went both of them together"—even as Abraham and Isaac did here.

9. *And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there.* See him pulling out the large, rough, unhewn stones that lay round about the place, and then fling them up into an altar!

9, 10. *And laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.* So that, in intent and purpose, he had consummated the sacrifice and, therefore, we read in Hebrew 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son." He had virtually done so in the esteem of God though no trace of a wound could be found upon Isaac! How often God takes the will for the deed with His people! When He finds them willing to make the sacrifice that He demands, He often does not require it at their hands. If you are willing to suffer for Christ's sake, it may be that you shall not be caused to suffer—and if

you are willing to be a martyr for the truth of God, you may be permitted to wear the martyr's crown even though you are never called to stand at the stake, the scaffold or the block!

11. *And the Angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.* Abraham always gives the same answer to the Lord's call, "Here am I."

12. *And He said, Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him: for now I know that you fear God seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.* The necessary test had been applied and Abraham's faith had endured the trial! God knows all things by His divine omniscience, but now He knew by this severe test and trial which He had applied, that Abraham really loved Him best of all.

Notice that the Angel says, "Now I know that you fear God." I do not think that the gracious use of godly fear has ever been sufficiently estimated by the most of us. Here, the stress is not laid upon the faith, but upon the filial fear of Abraham. That holy awe, that sacred reverence of God is the very essence of our acceptance with Him. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him." This is a very different thing from slavish fear—it is a right sort of fear, the kind of fear that love does not cast out, but which love lives within happy fellowship!

13. *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.* Here is another type of our Savior's great sacrifice on Calvary—the ram offered in the place of Jesus. How often do you and I have our great substitute very near to us, yet we do not see Him because we do not lift up our eyes and look. "Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." So, if you lift up your eyes, and look the right way, you will see the great sacrifice close by you, held fast for you, even as this ram was caught to die instead of Isaac. Oh, that you may have grace to turn your head in the right direction and look to Christ and live!

14. *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.* [See Sermon #1803, Volume 30—JEHOVAH-JIREH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God will foresee. "God will—as we usually say—"provide," which is being interpreted, "foresee." He will have everything ready against the time when it will be needed. He who provided the ram for a burnt offering in the place of Isaac will provide everything else that is required! And you may depend upon it that He who, in the greatest emergency that could ever happen, provided His only begotten and well beloved Son to die as the substitute for sinners, will have foreseen every other emergency that can occur and will have fore provided all that is necessary to meet it. Blessed be the name of Jehovah-Jireh!

15, 16. *And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, says the LORD.* "Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself."

16-18. *Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice.* There stands the old covenant, the covenant of grace made with Abraham concerning his seed. Paul writes to the Galatians, "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." It is in Christ that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. If there is a nation that has not yet heard the gospel, it must hear it, for so the promise stands, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." We may look for a glorious future from the preaching of Christ throughout every land, for so the covenant was made with Abraham because he had obeyed God's voice! God had been good to Abraham before that time, for he was His beloved friend, but now He lifts him up to a higher platform altogether and makes him a greater blessing than ever! It may be that God is about to test and try some of you in order that He may afterwards make you to be greater and more useful than you have ever been before.

19. *So Abraham returned unto his young men.* As he said that he would!

19. *And they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.* So the Lord bore His servant through this great trial, and blessed him more than He had ever blessed him before.

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CHRIST THE TREE OF LIFE
NO. 3251

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 25, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."
Revelation 22:2.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1233, Volume 31—
HEALING LEAVES—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

YOU will remember that in the first paradise, there was a tree of life in the midst of the garden. When Adam had offended and was driven out, God said, "Lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat, and live forever, therefore the Lord God drove out the man." It has been supposed, by some, that this tree of life in the Garden of Eden was intended to be the means of continuing man in immortality—that his feeding upon it would have supported him in the vigor of unfailing youth, preserved him from exposure to decay and imparted, by a spiritual regeneration, the seal of perpetuity to his constitution. I do not know about that. If it were so, I can understand the reason why God would not have the first man, Adam, become immortal in the lapsed state he was then in, but ordained that the old nature should die, and that the immortality would be given to a new nature which would be formed under another leadership and quickened by another Spirit.

The text tells us that in the center of the new paradise, the perfect paradise of God, from which the saints shall never be driven, seeing it is to be our perpetual heritage, there is also a tree of life. But here we translate the metaphor—we do not understand that tree to be literal. We believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be none other than that tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations! We can scarcely conceive of any other interpretation, as this seems to us to be so full of meaning and to afford us such unspeakable satisfaction!

At any rate, beloved, if this is not the absolute purpose of the sublime vision that John saw, it is most certainly true that our Lord Jesus Christ is life from the dead, and life to His own living people. He is all in all to them. And by Him and by Him alone, must their spiritual life be maintained. We are right enough, then, in saying that Jesus Christ is a tree of life and we shall so speak of Him in the hope that some may come and pluck of the fruit and eat and live forever! Our desire shall be so to

use the sacred allegory that some poor dying soul may be encouraged to lay hold on eternal life by laying hold on Jesus Christ!

First, *we shall take the tree of life in the winter with no fruit on it.* Secondly, *we shall try to show you the tree of life budding and blossoming.* And, thirdly, *we shall endeavor to show you the way to partake of its fruits.*

I. And first, my brothers and sisters, I have to speak to you of JESUS CHRIST, THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE WINTER.

You will at once anticipate that I mean, by this figure, to describe *Jesus in His sufferings*, in His dark winter days when He did hang upon the cross and bleed and die. When He had no honor from men and no respect from anyone—when even God the Father hid His face from Him for a season and He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. My dear friends, you will never see the tree of life aright unless you first look at the cross. It was there that this tree gathered strength to bring forth its later fruit. It was there, we say, that Jesus Christ, by His glorious merits and His wondrous work achieved upon the cross, obtained power to become the Redeemer of our souls and the captain of our salvation!

Come with me, then, by faith, to the foot of the little mound of Calvary, and let us look up and see this thing that came to pass. Let us turn aside as Moses did when the bush burned and see this great sight! It is the greatest marvel that ever earth, or hell, or heaven beheld—and we may well spend a few minutes in beholding it.

Our Lord Jesus, the ever living, the immortal, the eternal, became man and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and died the death of the cross. That death was not on His own account. His humanity had no need to die. He might have lived on and have seen no death if so He had willed. He had committed no offense, no sin and, therefore, no punishment could fall upon Him—

"For sins not His own
He died to atone."

Every pang upon the cross was substitutionary! And for you, you sons of men, the Prince of glory bled, the just for the unjust, that He might bring you to God! There was no smart for Himself, for His Father loved Him with an ineffable love. He deserved no blows from His Father's hand, but His smarts were for the sins of His enemies—for *your* sins and *mine*—that by His stripes we might be healed and that through His wounds, reconciliation might be made with God!

Think, then, of the Savior's death upon the cross. Mark you well that *it was an accursed death.* There were many ways by which men might die, but there was only one death which God pronounced to be accursed. He did not say, "Cursed is he that dies by stoning, or by the sword, or by a millstone being fastened about his neck, or by being eaten of worms." But it *was* written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." By no other death than that one, which God did single out as the death of the

accursed, could Jesus Christ die! Admire it, believer, that Jesus Christ should be made a curse for us! Admire and love—let your faith and your gratitude blend together.

It was a death *of the most ignominious kind*. The Roman law subjected only felons to it and I believe not even felons unless they were slaves. A freed Roman must not so die, nor a subject of any of the kingdoms that Rome had conquered—only the slave who was bought and sold in the market could be put to this death. The Jews counted Jesus worthy to be sold as a slave and then they put Him to a slave's death for *you*.

Besides, they added to the natural scorn of the death *their own ridicule*. Some passed by and wagged their heads. Some stood still and thrust out their tongues at Him. Others sat down and watched Him there and satisfied their malice and their scorn. He was made the center of all sorts of ridicule and shame. He was the drunkard's song and even they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. And all this He suffered for us! Our sin was shameful and He was made to be a shame for us. We had disgraced ourselves and dishonored God and, therefore, Jesus was joined with the wicked in His death—and made as vile as they.

Besides, *the death was exceedingly painful*. We must not forget the pangs of the Savior's body, for I believe, when we begin to depreciate the corporeal sufferings, we very soon begin to drag down the spiritual sufferings, too. It must be a fearful death by which to die, when the tender hands and feet are pierced—and when the bones are dislocated by the jar of erecting the cross. And when the fever sets in and the mouth becomes hot as an oven, and the tongue is swollen in the mouth, and the only moisture given is vinegar mingled with gall. Ah, beloved! The pangs that Jesus knew, none of us can guess. We believe that Hart has well described it when he said that He bore—

"All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

You cannot tell the price of griefs, groans, sighs, heartbreaking, soul tearing and rending of the spirit which Jesus had to pay that He might redeem us from our iniquities!

It was a lingering death. However painful a death may be, it is always satisfactory to think that it is soon over. When a man is hanged, after our English custom, or the head is taken from the body, the pain may be great for the instant, but it is soon over and gone. But in crucifixion a man lives so long that when Pilate heard that the Savior was dead, he marveled that He was already dead! I remember hearing a missionary say that he saw a man in Burma crucified, and that he was alive two days after having been nailed to the cross. And I believe there are authenticated stories of persons who have been taken down from the cross after having hung for 48 hours and after all that have had their wounds healed and have lived for years. It was a lingering death that the Savior had to die.

O my brothers and sisters, if you put these items together, they make up a ghastly total which ought to press upon our hearts—if we are believers, in the form of grateful affection—or if we are unbelievers, provoking us to shame that we do not love Him who loved the sons of men so much!

And *the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for us*, we must also add, *was penal*. He died this death of the condemned. Perhaps most men would feel this to be the worst feature, for if a man shall die by ever so painful a death, if it is accidental, it misses the sting which must come into it if it is caused by law—and especially if it is brought by sin and after sentence has been passed in due form. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was condemned by the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals of the country to die. And what was more, "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief." Jesus Christ died without any sin of His own, yet He died a penal death because our sins were counted as His! He took upon Him our iniquities as though they were His own and then, being found in the sinner's place, He suffered the wrath that was due for sin as if He had been a sinner!

Beloved, I wish it were in my power to set forth Christ crucified—Christ visibly crucified among you! Oh, that I could so paint Him that the eyes of your heart could see Him! I wish that I could make you feel the sorrow of His griefs, and sip that bitter cup which He had to drain to the dregs. But if I cannot do this, it shall suffice me to say that *that death is the only hope for sinners*. Those wounds of His are the gate to heaven! The smarts and sufferings of Immanuel are the only expiatory sacrifice for human guilt! O you who would be saved, turn your eyes here! Look unto Him and be you saved, all the ends of the earth. There is life in a look at Him, but there is life nowhere else! Despise Him and you perish. Accept Him and you shall never perish, neither shall all the powers of Hell prevail against you! Come, guilty souls! Jesus wants not your tears or your blood—His tears can cleanse you—His blood can purify you! If your heart is not as broken as you would have it, it is His broken heart, not yours, that shall merit heaven for you! If you cannot be what you could, He was for you what God would have Him to be! God is contented with Him, so be you also contented with Him and come and trust Him! Oh, now may delays be over and difficulties all be solved—and just as you are, without one plea, but that the Savior bled—come to your heavenly Father and you shall be "accepted in the Beloved."

Thus, then, Jesus Christ hanging on the cross is the tree of life in its winter time.

II. And now let me show you, as I may be enabled, THAT SAME TREE OF LIFE WHEN IT HAS BLOSSOMED AND BROUGHT FORTH FRUIT.

There He stands—Jesus—still the same Jesus—and yet how changed! The same Jesus, but clothed with honor instead of shame, able now to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. My text says of

this tree that it bears "twelve fruits." I suppose that is intended to signify that a perfect and complete assortment of all supplies for human necessities is to be found in Christ—all sorts of mercies for all sorts of sinners—all kinds of blessings to suit all kinds of necessities. We read of the palm tree, that every bit of it is useful, from its root to its fruit. So is it with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing in Him that we could afford to do without. There is nothing about Jesus that is extraneous or superfluous. You can put Him to use in every part, in every office, in every relationship!

A tree of life is for food. Some trees yield rich fruit. Adam in the garden lived only on the fruit of the garden. *Jesus Christ is the food of His people*—and what dainties they have! What satisfying food, what plenteous food, what sweet food, what food precisely suitable to all the needs of their souls is Jesus! As for manna, it was angels' food, but what shall I say of Christ? He is more than that, for—

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love."

Oh, how richly you are fed! The flesh of God's own Son is the spiritual meat of every heir of heaven. Hungry souls come to Jesus if you would be fed!

Jesus also gives His people drink. There are some tropical trees which, as soon as they are tapped, yield liquids as sweet and rich as milk, and many drink and are refreshed by them. Jesus Christ's heart blood is the wine of His people. The atonement which He has perfected by His sufferings is the golden cup out of which they drink and drink again, till their mourning souls are made glad and their fainting hearts are strengthened and refreshed. Jesus gives us the water of life, the wines on the lees well refined, the wine and milk, without money and without price. What a tree of life to yield us both meat and drink!

Jesus is a tree of life yielding clothing, too. Adam went to the fig tree for his garments and the fig leaves yielded him such covering as they could. But we come to Christ and we find not fig leaves, but a robe of righteousness that is matchless for its beauty, comely in its proportions, one which will never wear out, which exactly suits to cover our nakedness from head to foot and when we put it on makes us fair to look upon, even as Christ Himself! O you who would be dressed till you shall be fit to stand among the courtiers of the skies, come to Jesus and find garments such as you need upon this tree of life!

This tree also yields medicine. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Lay a plaster upon any wound and if it is but the plaster of King Jesus, it will heal it! But one promise from His lips, but one leaf from this tree, but one word from His Spirit, but one drop of His blood and this is heaven's court plaster indeed. It is true that there was no balm in Gilead, there was no physician there and, therefore, the hurt of the daughter of Israel's people was not healed. But there *is* balm in

Jesus, there *is* a physician at Calvary—and the hurt of the daughter of God's people shall be healed if she will but fly to Jesus Christ for healing!

And what more shall I say? Is there anything else your spirits can need? O children of God, Christ is all! O you ungodly ones who have been roaming through the world to find the tree that should supply your needs, stop here! This "apple tree [See Sermon #1120, Volume 19—THE APPLE TREE IN THE WOODS and #3249, Volume 57—UNDER THE APPLE TREE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] among the trees of the woods" is the tree which your souls require! Stay here and you shall have all that you need. For, listen—*this tree yields a shelter from the storm.* Other trees are dangerous when the tempest howls, but he that shelters beneath the tree of the Lord Jesus shall find that all the thunderbolts of God shall fly by him and do him no injury. He cannot be hurt who clings to Jesus! Heaven and earth should sooner pass away than a soul be lost that hides beneath the boughs of this tree. And oh, you who have hidden there to shelter from the wrath of God let me remind you that in every other kind of danger it will also yield you shelter! And if you are not in danger, yet still in the hot days of care you shall find the shade of it to be cool and genial. The spouse in Solomon's Song said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Get Christ and you have got comfort, joy, peace and liberty—and when the trouble comes, you shall find shelter and deliverance by coming near to Him.

He is the tree of life, then, yielding twelve fruits, those fruits being always ripe and always ready, for they ripen every month, all being free to all who desire them, for the leaves are not for the healing of some, but "for the healing of the nations." What a large word! Then there are enough of these leaves for the healing of all the nations that shall ever come into the world. Oh, may our God grant that none of you may die from spiritual sickness when these leaves can heal you! And may none of you be filling yourselves with the sour grapes of this world, the poisonous grapes of sin, while the sweet fruit of Christ's love are waiting which would refresh you and satisfy you.

III. And now I have to show you HOW TO GET AT THE FRUIT OF THIS TREE OF LIFE.

That is the main matter. Little does it matter to tell that there is fruit unless we can tell how it can be obtained; I wish that all here really wanted to know the way, but I am afraid many of you care very little about it. Dr. Payson had once been out to tea with one of his people who had been particularly hospitable to him, and when he was leaving, the doctor said, "Well, now, madam, you have treated me exceedingly well, but how do you treat my Master?" That is a question I should like to put to some of you. How do you treat my Master? Why, you treat Him as if He were not Christ! As if you did not need Him! But you *do* need Him. May you find Him soon, for when you come to die, you will need Him then, and perhaps then you may not find Him.

Well, *the way to get the fruit from this tree is by faith.* That is the hand that plucks the golden apples! Can you believe? That is the thing. Can you believe that Jesus is the Son of God that He died upon the cross? "Yes," you say, "I believe that." Can you believe that in consequence of His sufferings, He is able to save? "Yes," say you. Can you believe that He will save you? Will you trust Him to save you? If so, you are saved! If your soul comes to Jesus, and says, "My Lord, I believe in You, that You are able to save to the uttermost, and now I throw myself upon You." That is faith!

When Mr. Andrew Fuller was going to preach before an association, he rode to the meeting on his horse. There had been a good deal of rain and the rivers were very much swollen. He got to one river which he had to cross. He looked at it and he was half afraid of the strong current, as he did not know the depth. A farmer who happened to be standing by, said, "It is all right, Mr. Fuller, you will get through it all right, sir. The horse will keep its feet." Mr. Fuller went in and the water got up to the girth, and then up to the saddle—and he began to get uncomfortably wet. Mr. Fuller thought he had better turn round and he was going to do so when the same farmer shouted, "Go on, Mr. Fuller! Go on! I know it is all right!" And Mr. Fuller said, "Then I will go on. I will go by faith." Now, sinner, it is very like that with you. You think that your sins are so deep that Christ will never be able to carry you over them! But I say to you—"It is all right, sinner. Trust Jesus and He will carry you through hell, itself, if that is necessary! If you had all the sins of all the men that have ever lived, and they were all yours—if you could trust Him, Jesus Christ would carry you through the current of all that sin! It is all right, man! Only trust Christ. The river may be deep, but Christ's love is deeper. It is all right, man! Do not let the devil make you doubt my Lord and Master! He is a liar from the beginning and the father of lies, but my Master is faithful and true! Rest on Him and all will be well. The waves may roll, the river may seem to be deeper than you thought it to be—and rest assured it *is* much deeper than you know it to be—but the almighty arm of Jesus—that strong arm that can shake the heavens and the earth and move the pillars thereof as Samson moved the pillars of Gaza's gates—that strong arm can hold you up and bear you safely through if you do but cling to it, and rest on it. O soul, rest in Jesus and you are saved!"

Once again. *if at the first you do not seem to get the fruit from this tree, shake it by prayer.* "Oh," you say, "I have been praying." Yes, but a tree does not always drop its fruit at the first shake you give it. Shake it again, man! Give it another shake! And sometimes, when the tree is loaded and is pretty firm in the earth, you have to shake it to and fro and, at last, you plant your feet and get a hold of it, and shake it with might and main till you strain every muscle and sinew to get the fruit down! And that is this way to pray. Shake the tree of life until the mercy drops into your lap! Christ loves for men to beg persistently of Him. You

cannot be too importunate! That which might be disagreeable to your fellow creatures when you beg of them, will be agreeable to Christ! Oh, get to your chambers! Get to your chambers, you that have not found Christ! Get to your bedsides, to your little closets and "seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near!"

May the Spirit of God compel you to pray; may He compel you to continue in prayer! Jesus must hear you. The gate of heaven is open to the sturdy knocker that will not take a denial. The Lord enable you so to plead that at the last, you will be able to say, "You have heard my voice and my supplication. You have inclined Your ear unto me. Therefore will I pray unto You as long as I live."

May God add His blessing to these rambling thoughts, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 2:1-17; REVELATION 22.

Genesis 2:1-8. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.* Everything was ready for man's use. Every fruit bearing tree for his nourishment, every creature to do his bidding, for it was the will of God that he should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." God did not place the man formed in His image, after His likeness, in an unfurnished house or an empty world and leave him to provide for himself all that he required, but He prepared everything that man could possibly need, and completed the whole plan by planting "a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed."

9. *And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.* That tree of life in the midst of the earthly paradise was to be symbolic of another tree of life

in the paradise above, from which the children of God shall never be driven as Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden.

10-14. *And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasses the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasses the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goes toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.* That river in Eden also reminds us of the "pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," of which we read almost at the end of the Revelation that was given to John in Patmos. Thus the beginning and the end of the Bible call our attention to the tree of life and the river of life in the paradise below and the better paradise above.

15. *And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.* There was to be occupation for man even in paradise, just as they who are before the throne of God in glory "serve Him day and night in His temple." Idleness gives no joy, but holy employment will add to the bliss of heaven.

16, 17. *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 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.* Apparently Adam was not forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, though, after his fall, he was cast out of Eden, as God said, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever." He might freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except one—"of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it." It was a slight prohibition, yet the test was more than man, even in a state of innocence, was able to endure and, alas, his failure involved all his descendants, for he was the federal head of the human race, and "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men." Happily, there is another federal head and, therefore, we read, "For if through the offense of one, many are dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many."

Revelation 22:1. *And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.* Rivers partake of the character of the source from which they come. That which proceeds "out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb "may well be "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal." What but good and perfect gifts can come down from the throne of God? What but pure streams of mercy can flow from the throne of the Lamb?

2. *In the middle of its street*—For heaven is a place of sacred and hallowed communion—"In the middle of its street"—

2. *And on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits.* Every variety of joy and blessedness!

2. *And yielded her fruit every month.* For the felicities of heaven are always fresh and always new, we shall never be satiated or wearied with that heavenly fruit!

2. *And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* Everything in heaven is the very best of the best. The leaves of the trees in earthly gardens are blown about by the wind and we take but little note of them. But the leaves of the tree of life are "for the healing of the nations." O happy place, where even the leaves on the tree have such virtue in them!

3. *And there shall be no more curse.* No more thorns or thistles, no more pangs of childbearing, no more sickness, or sorrow, or death.

3. *But the throne of God and of the Lamb* [See Sermon #1576, Volume 27—THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him!* They shall have nothing else to do, and it shall be their supreme delight to serve Him perfectly and unceasingly.

4. *And they shall see His face.* [See Sermon #824, Volume 14—THE HEAVEN OF HEAVEN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Not through a glass darkly, but face to face shall they behold their God! Surely that will be the very heaven of heaven!

4. *And His name shall be on their foreheads.* Aaron was to wear upon his forehead a plate of pure gold, with HOLINESS TO THE LORD engraved upon it, that the children of Israel might be accepted before the Lord. But the saints in glory are to have the name of their God "on their foreheads." In the very forefront of their glorified personalities there shall be the marks to declare that they are the children of God!

5. *And there shall be no night there.* The saints in glory will have no need of sleep, so "there shall be no night there," but one perpetual day of holy, unwearying service. There shall be no night of ignorance, of sorrow, of sin, of death—there shall be no powers of darkness there, and no darkness in which they might work their evil deeds.

5. *And they shall need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light.* Directly and distinctly, without using any means, by His own immediate presence, "the Lord God gives them light"—

5. *And they shall reign forever and ever.* Earthly kings die, or their empires on earth are taken from them. But as for us whom God has chosen, by His grace, our kingdom is like that of our Lord and Savior—it is an everlasting kingdom!

"They shall reign forever and ever." I wonder that some wise man does not try to prove that this means that the saints shall reign only for a short time! They have whittled "everlasting punishment" down to next to nothing—why do they not try to reduce the duration of heavenly bliss in the same way? The same words are used concerning the one as

concerning the other, so we shall always hold to the eternity both of the one and the other, the bliss and the woe are equally "forever and ever."

6, 7. *And He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* You have the witness of God. You have the witness of the angel of God, you have the witness of Christ you have the witness of John, and all of them agree that "these sayings are faithful and true," and that they relate to facts that shall in due course be established.

8. *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.* And, according to the Church of Rome, he was quite right. But according to the Word of God, he was quite wrong!

9. *Then said he unto me, See you do it not: for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.* Worship none but God! Take care not to break the first two of the Ten Commandments either by worshiping another God or by worshiping the true God under any form of similitude whatever!

10. *And he said unto me, seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.* "There is no need to roll it up, and set a seal to it, as it is so soon to be fulfilled, leave it open."

11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* The Lord's messenger speaks as if "the time" were so nearly come that there was no opportunity left for any charge to be made. And this is what will happen, sooner or later, to all men. When they die, their characters will be fixed forever. The wax will cool, and the impression that it bears will be retained eternally.

12, 13. *And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.* [See Sermon #546, Volume 9—ALPHA AND OMEGA—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] These must be the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! No mere messenger, however high his rank, would have dared to say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

14, 16. *Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.* We thank God that they are shut out of heaven, for, albeit that we wish all men could be there, yet we would wish none to be there whose characters are of such a kind as this, unless they were washed and cleansed. Heaven

would not be heaven if such men could be admitted there! They shall not be. They must, by infallible justice, be excluded from the realms of bliss.

16. *I Jesus have sent My angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.* So glory is dawning, for Christ, the bright and morning star has risen,

17. *And 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.* [See Sermons #279, Volume 5—COME AND WELCOME; #1331, Volume 22—THE TWO "COMES"; #1608, Volume 27—THE DOUBLE "COME" and #2685, Volume 46—THE OFT-REPEATED INVITATION—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Here we have the last invitations in the Word of God—may all who have not yet accepted them do so now, lest they should never again be uttered in their hearing!

18-21. *For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* So the blessed book closes appropriately with grace, for 'tis grace that—

"All the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

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"BY WATER AND BLOOD"
NO. 3252

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 7, 1864.

"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ—not by water only, but by water and blood."
1 John 5:6.

BY the terms "water" and "blood" we understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ's work for His people. He came to purify them from the power of sin that they might no longer live in it. This is indicated by the declaration that He "came by water." He also came to put away the guilt of their sin, that they might not be condemned for it. This is set forth by the intimation that He also came "by blood." We might say that all the Lord's prophets who came before Christ, in a certain sense, "came by water." That is to say, they all sought the purification of the Lord's people. Whether it was Isaiah, whose lips had been touched with the live coal from the altar; or Jeremiah, whose eyes were fountains of tears as he wept over sinners; or Amos, who spoke as a herdsman; or Ezekiel, whose message was one of grandeur and sublimity, the objective of every one of them was to purge the people from their sins. It was against sin that they all lifted up their voices, yet none of them could pardon sin and no one of them ever professed to be able to do so! Of the whole of them it must be said that they came by water only, and not by blood.

But Jesus Christ does what the prophets could not do. It is true that He does seek to make His people holy, but it is by His blood that all their sins are forever put away. John the Baptist was the last and the greatest of all the prophets who came before Christ yet he had to say, "He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." John never spoke of his own blood having any power to take away sin, but he pointed to Christ and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." So far as our Lord's first disciples were concerned, He certainly "came by water," for contact with His unique personality must have tended to purify their lives. Yet He also came "by blood" as well as by water, for it was by virtue of His atoning sacrifice that their sins were blotted out and that they became "accepted in the Beloved."

The two ordinances of our holy religion were intended, I take it, to sum up the teaching of Christ. The one is baptism, which represents the cleansing of the conscience as the body is washed with water, the death

of the soul to the old carnal life, its burial with Christ and its resurrection to a life of holiness. Then comes the ordinance of the Lord's Supper which sets forth, in the broken bread and the poured out wine, the great truth of Christ's atonement—the fact that He has, by His death, perfected forever all those who have been set apart unto Him.

It is very important that we should always carry in our minds the remembrance of these two truths of God—first, *that Jesus Christ "came by water,"* that is, it was His divine purpose to purify His people and make them holy. And, secondly, *that Jesus Christ "came by blood,"* that is, it was His grand aim and objective to deliver His people from the guilt of sin. These are the two topics upon which I am going to speak to you as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

I. So, first, JESUS CHRIST "CAME BY WATER"—it was His divine purpose to purify His people.

It is manifest that *there was an urgent necessity for this purification,* for all of us had become as an unclean thing in the sight of God. Even our righteousnesses were as filthy rags. We could not cleanse ourselves, neither could we obtain cleansing through the works of the law. Yet it was imperatively necessary that we should be made holy—otherwise, where God is and where His holy angels dwell, we could never be—and, therefore, what we ourselves could not do, and what the law could not do, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" has perfectly accomplished!

If any of you ask me how Christ makes His people holy, I would remind you that when the Spirit of God reveals Jesus Christ to our heart, we then begin to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. What? Did sin stab my Savior to the heart? Did sin nail my best Beloved to the cross? Then I hate sin with a perfect hatred and will be revenged upon it! The atonement of Christ gives such an exhibition of the guilt of sin as is not to be seen anywhere else—no, not even in the flames of hell! And when a soul sees Christ despised, rejected, wounded, bleeding and dying because of sin, it realizes how foul and vile a thing sin is and so is moved to hate it, not only because of its foulness and blackness, but also out of gratitude to Christ who has put it away. Did my Savior love me so much as to bear the dread penalty of my sin? Then I will give sin no quarter, but seek to utterly destroy it—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol is"—

shall be cast down from the throne which it has usurped that I may worship my gracious God, and Him alone!

This gratitude to Christ begets a more and more intense love to Christ and the more we love Him, the more we become like He—and becoming like He is, sin is cast out and virtue is nourished. Ask any Christian whether he has not found that the best weapon with which to smite his sins has been a nail from Christ's cross or the spear that pierced His side! Men have tried to overcome sin by the reasoning of philosophy or by arguments fetched from common sense—but those blunt wooden swords

have been powerless to destroy it! It is only the sharp two edged sword of the Spirit—the grand doctrine of the love and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that can pierce our sin to the heart and lay it in the dust! You have, beloved, but to meditate upon His passion to receive the virtue of the water which flowed from His side, and that shall enable you to trample upon your lusts and to consecrate all your powers and passions to His service.

I appeal to the experience of every Christian here to confirm what I have said—my brother or sister in Christ, was there not great need for Christ to come "by water" to you? For, first, what was your nature? No, what *is* it? If you were left to yourself, what might you not become? If circumstances put temptation in your way and God's grace did not restrain you, what sin might you not commit? Have you not, sometimes, when your feet have almost gone and your steps have well near slipped, looked down into the depths of the horrible pit of human corruption and shuddered with alarm at the discovery of possibilities of evil which you had scarcely suspected? Well, then, if you have such a nature as this, you do indeed need the purifying streams from the heart of Christ to make it clean, and you may well pray to Him, with Toplady—

"Let the water and the blood,
From Your split side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

Then, next, what about our thoughts? As I walked to this house of prayer tonight and tried to concentrate my meditations upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I could not help feeling how mysterious it is that the more we try to guide our thoughts into right channels, the more determined they seem to be to run towards evil. Have you not sometimes found that even in your most hallowed moments, some unchaste and vile thought which you abhor as you hate the very fiend, himself, will suddenly come into your mind? Does not blasphemy at times intrude into your prayers? Does it not occasionally happen that the hymn you are singing suggests something the very reverse of praise to God and that the text of the sermon, or some part of the discourse, itself, becomes a peg upon which the devil hangs a temptation to sin? Alas, alas, our thoughts, if left to themselves, are as a cage of unclean birds or a den of wild beasts! And as Hercules needed to turn a stream of water to clean the Augean stable, our Lord Jesus Christ needed to pour rivers of water out of His own heart to cleanse the foul stable of our corrupt thoughts!

Then think of our words. I am not now speaking of carnal man—I am talking of professing Christians!. Would any of us like to have all our words printed for a single week? If any of you would, I can honestly say that I would not. One does earnestly try to keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking guile, but oh, how many idle words, how many frivolous words, how many sharp, angry, hot, unkind words fly from our lips almost before we are aware of it! God forgive us for the sins of the

tongue! If we had nothing else for which to praise Christ, we ought to bless Him to all eternity that He came "by water" to cleanse that tongue which is naturally so foul!

Then look at our actions. John writes truly, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"—that is to say, he does not sin willfully, he does not continue sinning, yet he does sin. Need I try to prove that he does? O beloved, look at your lives since you have known the Lord, and see what sin there has been in them! Can you set even one week's action in the light of God's countenance and say, "O Lord, my life this week has been perfectly pure"? You know that you cannot! Well then, if with the utmost possible guard upon your own conduct, with the most diligent check upon your conversation, with the greatest watchfulness concerning your thoughts, you are still made to feel that there is a corrupt nature within you and that the flesh still lusts against the Spirit, how thankful you ought to be that Jesus Christ "came by water" that He might purge your nature and make it clean!

Thus have I shown you the necessity for this purification. Now let me try to set before you *the power of this "water" which makes the Christian clean*. It is not a matter of speculation as to whether Christ makes sinners into saints—He is constantly performing this blessed work, which no power but that which is divine could ever accomplish! Think for a minute or two of the forces which it has to overcome. There is the old nature of which I have been speaking, and that is not an enemy that can be easily overthrown. Have you ever tried to bind it fast with fetters and to keep it in chains? That "old Adam" is very strong—and even in aged Christians who sometimes seem to fancy that their corruptions have grown as aged and as feeble as they are, it has been, alas, only too sadly proved that the "old Adam" does not become weak as easily as the old man does! The opposition of our carnal nature to the grace and work of Christ is so strong that nothing but omnipotence, itself, can overcome it, yet Jesus Christ so gloriously "came by water" that He completely conquers the flesh!

Then there is the enmity of the world, which is always in antagonism to Christ and to His people, too. Worldlings are always ready to turn us aside to sin, and they will never help us to walk the narrow way that leads unto life. The way of the world is always towards evil—the habits and customs of the world are evil, only evil, and that continually! As the Apostle John says, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." All these evils continually beset us and powerful, indeed, must be that stream which can counteract and overcome them! Yet Jesus Christ does this through coming "by water" as well as by blood!

There is also the devil to be overthrown and we must never think lightly of his powers. He has overcome many mighty men and he would easily overpower us if we were left to contend with him in our own unaided strength. Bunyan's pilgrim found it to be no child's play to fight

with Apollyon, nor shall we! "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." But, blessed be God, we go not to this warfare at our own charges! And greater is He who is with us than all that can be against us!

Yes, that awful trinity of evil—the world, the flesh and the devil—shall not be able to overcome even one believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! Think of this, beloved, and let your eyes sparkle with the delight of anticipation—you shall one day have no tendencies to sin—you shall then be as pure in nature as the holy angels! You shall then be fit to consort with cherubim and seraphim and the glorified spirits that day without night circle the throne of God! And even the Lord God, Himself, the infinitely pure and Holy One, shall not disdain to dwell among you, for then you shall be perfectly free from sin, "without fault before the throne of God." Not even the all piercing eyes of God shall be able to discover in you any thought of wrong, any word of evil, any act of sin, any corruption of nature, any sloth, or pride, or lust, or temper, or anything contrary to His holy will! Free from all sin forever are all those who shall stand "before the throne and before the Lord, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." And I shall be there and you shall be there, if here we are trusting in Him who "came by water" to "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Have no doubt concerning it, my brother or sister in Jesus! Strong are your foes, but far stronger is your glorious helper! Many and mighty are your enemies, but the Almighty is your friend! Stern is the conflict that has to be faced, but sure is the victory that shall, in due time, be won! So press on bravely day by day, and moment by moment, resisting even unto blood, striving against sin!

How many of us have already proved the purifying power of this "water" by which Christ came? Of course, I need hardly point out to you that there is no support here for the unscriptural doctrine of baptismal regeneration! The water that flowed from Christ's side is typical of the cleansing work of the truth that He has revealed, even as He said to His disciples, "You are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Have you, beloved, felt the cleansing power of the truth as it is in Jesus? If not, God grant that you may realize it now—and to Him shall be the praise forever!

II. Now, secondly, I have to remind you that JESUS CHRIST CAME BY BLOOD AS WELL AS BY WATER. Not by water only, but by water and blood—that is to say, it was His grand aim and objective, by His atoning sacrifice, to deliver His people from the *guilt of sin!*

There are some who are continually trying to get the doctrine of the atonement out of the Bible. Certain philosophical divines, who have just a smattering of theological knowledge, and who seem to forget the couplet—

"A little learning is a dangerous thing
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring"—

try to hold up Christ for our admiration as a great teacher, as a mighty prophet, and as our perfect exemplar—but as to the idea of Christ shedding His blood to wash away sin, they cry, "Away with it! Away with it!" And yet, my dear friends, Christ cannot be of the slightest service to any of us if He did not come "by blood" to put away the guilt of our sin as well as "by water" to purify us from its defilement! For, supposing you and I could, by some mysterious influence, become from this time forth perfectly holy—what would be the good of that to us? I do not know that it would be any benefit to us at all if there were no atonement! I think that it would be a curse rather than a blessing, for we would still be under condemnation on account of the sins which we have already committed! We are even now in the position of condemned criminals—and if there is no atoning sacrifice of Christ to put away the guilt of our many transgressions—and we have to pay the penalty which is the inevitable consequence of our past sins, how intense and, indeed, *intensified* must be our anguish as after being made holy, we have to suffer for the iniquities which we committed before that great change was worked upon us! I have only to state the matter thus for you to see that such a condition of things is utterly impossible. Oh, no! If I must be lost, I will remain as I am! If there is no pardon for my past transgressions, it is of no use for me to have purity for the future! If I could become perfectly holy for a time, but would, after all, be cast away from God's presence, I do not want a temporary holiness of that sort, for I do not see how it could be of the slightest possible use to me! And my very nature recoils against even a good thing which would only increase my misery to an intolerable degree.

But, beloved, I have only been supposing for the sake of argument, what is not true, *for Jesus Christ did come "by blood" as well as "by water."* Paul truly wrote to the Hebrews, "Once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." And He has forever put away all the sin of everyone who believes in Him. That great sacrifice was once and for all completed on Calvary—and it is made efficacious to each one of the innumerable host for whom Christ died as soon as, by faith, he appropriates the blessing to himself! As Joseph Hart sings—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."

It was by virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice that Paul was able to say at Antioch what we can truthfully repeat in your hearing today, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and 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." The precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin all those who put their trust in Him! It is no sooner applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart and conscience than every sin that a man

has ever committed ceases to be! And the virtue in Christ's blood is so great that it covers all the sin that the man will ever commit, as John Kent sings—

"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!"

A believer in Jesus has no record against him in God's book of remembrance. The Lord says to him as He said to Israel of old, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." They are as completely obliterated, annihilated and destroyed as if they had never been committed! It is this glorious truth of God which sets Christ apart from all the prophets that came before Him—and all His servants who have or will come after Him—they all "came by water," seeking to make their message the means of purification to the Lord's people. But Christ came "not by water, only, but by water and blood," for He came both to purify His people and to put away the guilt of their transgression!

Those who deny the atonement of Christ must have very low views of what God is and of what is due to His offended Majesty. According to them, God is to be insulted, His throne is to be attacked, His crown is to be assailed and His honor is to be impugned—and yet no adequate recompense is to be made to Him! Such persons must also have very low views of sin. They make it out to be a mere trifle which God is to forgive without exacting any penalty for it. They seem to think that in His mercy, He can put away sin without any reparation to His broken law and without any satisfaction being rendered to His offended justice! But he who reads his Bible aright knows that all such notions are altogether erroneous! He has learned from the Scriptures that God is inflexibly stern in His justice although He is supremely gracious in His love. God hates sin so much that He had to turn away His face even from His well-beloved Son when He was, by imputation, bearing the sins of His people upon Calvary! And it was that desertion by His Father that wrung from Christ that saddest of all the cries from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But now that Christ has endured the full penalty for His people's sin, God can "be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." God's love can be displayed to the utmost without in any way infringing the rightful claims of His justice. And all His attributes remain absolutely unsullied after the vindication they have received through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

All this has been accomplished because Jesus Christ came "not by water only, but by water and blood." Oh, the power of the precious blood of Jesus! Did you ever feel it, dear friends? If so, you will never doubt the truth of the atonement, for it will be very real to you. Never can I forget the day when I first felt in my soul the power of the blood of Jesus! Christ's blood has the power to put away sin from the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah, but it also has the power, so far as man is concerned, to

give peace to the troubled conscience, rest to the weary heart, joy to the miserable life! No one could ever have been more wretched and sad than I was, when under a sense of sin, life had become almost unbearable though I was but a lad. But oh, what a leap my soul gave from the very depths of despair up to the heights of overflowing joy when I realized that Christ had come to me—"not by water only, but by water and blood"—and that He had put away my sins as far as the East is from the West, so that they should be remembered against me no more forever!—

"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

Remember, my dear hearer that *Jesus Christ must come to you "by blood" or else He will never come to you "by water."* Christ never gives a man holiness of life unless that man accepts Him as the great propitiation for sin. Do you ask, "How can Christ come to me by water and by blood?" The only way that I know is the one that I have pointed out to you over and over again. It is this—you are a sinner, lost and undone. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. To do this, He had to take the sinner's place—to bear the sinner's guilt and to suffer the penalty that the sinner deserved to suffer. "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." Have you faith enough to appropriate His work? Perhaps you question whether you may do so. Well, rest assured of this—there never was a sinner who trusted Christ and then was told that he had no right to trust Him. Oh, no! He, Himself, said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out," and He will not cast you out if you come to Him! Can you believe that His blood was shed for you? Dare you rest your soul's salvation upon the great work of which He said, "It is finished," before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost? Will you now trust Christ as your Substitute and Savior? You know the verses that we often sing—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God, I come.
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."

Is this the language of your heart? Then I venture to say that Christ has come to you, "not by water only but by water and blood," that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures and that God will never punish you for your transgressions as Christ has borne the full penalty for them all! Then if you have received Christ, thus, as coming to you by blood, I feel sure that you will also believe that He has come to you by water, to purify you from all defilement and, therefore, you will not any longer knowingly and willfully continue in sin! The gratitude which you must feel in your heart for all that Christ has done for you will constrain you to

walk before Him in holiness and humility, and to seek to obey His will at all times!

Now, many of us are coming to the table of our Lord to commune with Him and with one another—and there we must especially think of how He came to us, "not by water only, but by water and blood." The broken bread will remind us of His body broken for us, and the wine in the cup will bring to our remembrance His precious blood of the New Covenant shed for us for the remission of our sins. Oh, what a wonder it is that we, who once were as the prodigal son in the far country, wasting our substance in riotous living, or perhaps even herding among the swine—are now welcomed at our Father's board among His happy forgiven children! A few years ago, no, even a few months ago, some of us would not have been spending the Sabbath evening among the Lord's people in a house of prayer—and it would never have entered into our thoughts that we should be found sitting as honored guests at His table! Our ideas of enjoyment, then, were very different from what they are now. The laughter of fools was then in our mouth and perhaps the song of the drunkard issued from our lips. But now, by God's grace, a blessed change has been worked in us, for we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God! So, as we come to this table of communion, let us come humbly remembering what we once were, thankfully recollecting what Christ has done for us and earnestly entreating Him to continue and complete His good work in us by purifying us with water even as He has already put away our guilt by His blood! And to Him shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
I JOHN 5.

Verse 1. *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.* [See Sermon #979, Volume 17—FAITH AND REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Take comfort, believer, from that declaration! You have accepted Jesus as the Christ, the anointed of God, so the apostle affirms that you are "born of God." It may be only lately that you have been born-again. You may be only a babe in grace, but if you have a true faith in Christ as God's anointed, you are "born of God."

1. *And everyone that loves Him who begot, loves him also that is begotten of Him.* If you truly love God, you also love His well-beloved and only-begotten Son—and you also love all His children! There cannot be a true love to the Father and a hatred to His family, that is impossible. Judge, therefore, by this test whether you love God or not.

2, 3. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous.* Love is a practical thing. Love without obedience is a mere pretense. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved. May God the Holy

Spirit work in us perfect obedience to the commands of God, that we may prove that we really do love Him!

4. *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* [See Sermons #14, Volume 1—THE VICTORY OF FAITH and #2757, Volume 47—VICTORIOUS FAITH—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is the conquering weapon! He who truly believes in Jesus cannot be overthrown by the combined forces of the world, the flesh and the devil! Remember the lesson that Haman learned when he contended in vain against Mordecai because Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews—and learn that they who belong to Christ shall, like Christ, be more than conquerors!

5. *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* Let that truth of God be firmly fixed in your mind and nerve you in your conflict with the world. The old cry, *Athanasius contra mundum*, "Athanasius against the world," may be uttered by every believer in Jesus into *Christianus contra mundum*. "Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

6, 7. *This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.* Thus all the persons in the blessed Trinity confirm the faith of the Christian—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bear united witness to the faith which God, Himself, gives us.

8. *And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* [See Sermon #1187, Volume 20—THE THREE WITNESSES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Three candles in the room, but the light is one. Three witnesses to our heart, but the witness is the same. If we have the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, we know that we have received the truth of God!

9, 10. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.* [See Sermons #1250, Volume 21—THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH and #1428, Volume 24—THE TRUE POSITION OF THE WITNESS WITHIN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What better witness than this, could he have?

10. *He that believes not God has made Him a liar*—[See Sermon #1207, Volume 20—A SOLEMN IMPEACHMENT OF UNBELIEVERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He need not actually say that God is a liar—the fact that he does not believe Him has practically made out that God is a liar. How many of us are there to whom this passage applies? "He that believes not God has made Him a liar"—

10. *Because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.* Is this true concerning anyone here? If so, perhaps you have not been aware of the extent of your guilt. You have remained unbelievers out of sheer carelessness, out of neglect of the word. I pray you, rest not in such a state of mind and heart now that you are informed by the Spirit of God

that by your unbelief, you are making God a liar! Who would willfully commit that great sin? Let us shudder at the thought of the bare possibility of such guilt as this!

11. *And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* Our only hope lies in Christ! But there is life for us in Christ and life eternal, if we do but believe in Him!

12. *He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life.* You exist, and you always will exist, but true life is not yours if you have not Christ as your Savior**.** Life is something infinitely superior to mere existence! "He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life."

13-15. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.* A very wonderful thing is prayer, yet it is not every man's prayer that is heard. But he that has the life of God within him shall have his petitions granted because the Holy Spirit will move him to ask in accordance with the will of God!

16-18. *If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whatever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one touches him not.* He who has committed the sin which is unto death has no desire for forgiveness. He will never repent, he will never seek faith in Christ, but he will continue hardened and unbelieving. He will henceforth never be the subject of holy influences, for he has crossed over into that dark region of despair where hope and mercy never come!

Perhaps some of you think that you have committed that unpardonable sin and are at this moment grieving over it. If so, it is clear that you cannot have committed that sin, or else you could not grieve over it! If you have any fear concerning it, you have not committed that sin which is unto death, for even *fear* is a sign of life! Whoever repents of sin and trusts in Jesus Christ is freely and fully forgiven, therefore it is clear that he has not committed a sin which will not be forgiven. There is much in this passage to make us prayerful and watchful, but there is nothing here to make a single troubled heart feel anything like despair. He that is born-again, born from above, can never commit this unpardonable sin. He is kept from it—"the wicked one" cannot even touch him, for he is preserved by sovereign grace against this dreadful damage to his soul!

You need not be curious to enquire what this unpardonable sin is. I will give you an old illustration of mine concerning it. You may

sometimes have seen a notice put up on certain estates in the country, "man traps and spring guns set here," but if so, did you ever go round to the front door of the mansion and say, "If you please, will you tell me where the man traps are, and whereabouts the spring guns are set?" If you had asked that question, the answer would have been, "It is the very purpose of this warning not to tell you where they are, for you have no business to trespass there at all." So, "all unrighteousness is sin," and you are warned to keep clear of it. "There is a sin unto death," but you are not told what that sin is on purpose that you may, by the grace of God, keep clear of sin altogether!

19-21. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* After the reformation in England, there was a certain part of the church called the rood loft, where the crucifix used to be, and it was ordered by the reformers, when "the holy rood" was taken away, that these words should be printed in capital letters in its place—

"LITTLE CHILDREN KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS." This was an admirable arrangement and this text might very profitably be put up in a good many ritualistic churches now, instead of the *Agnus Dei* and the crucifix—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Might we not also say to many a mother and many a father concerning their children, and to many a lover of money and hunger after gold, "Keep yourselves from idols"? Idolatry will intrude itself in one form or another. Some idolize *themselves*— they look in the mirror and there see the face of their god! O beware of all idolatry! "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." We may very well say, "Amen," to that!

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FAITH HAND IN HAND WITH FEAR
NO. 3253

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in You."
Psalm 56:3.

IT must be a very difficult thing to be the first traveler through as unknown country, but it is a much more simple matter to travel where others have preceded us. However difficult may be the road, we discover our path by certain marks which they have left for us, and as we turn to the record of their journey, we say, "Yes, they said that here they came to a forest, and here is the forest. Here they spoke of a broad river and here they forded it. Here is exactly the spot which is marked—we are on the right road, for we are following in the tracks of those who have gone before." Now God in His providence has placed us in "the ends of the world" as to time—a long caravan of pilgrims has preceded us, and they have left us marks on the way and records of their journey.

A notable one among the pilgrims to the skies was David, for his pilgrimage was so singularly varied. Some travel to heaven amid sunshine almost all the way there. And some, on the other hand, seem to have storms from beginning to end. But David's case differed from these, for he had both the storms and the sunshine! No man had fairer weather than the king of Jerusalem, yet no man ever plowed his way through soil that was more deep with mire, nor through an atmosphere more loaded with tempest than did this man of many tribulations! He has been a kind of pioneer for us. I remember seeing, some years ago, the French army going through Paris and noticing some of the big, tall fellows—old men who had been in the wars of the first Napoleon. These went in front and they seemed to be worth all the rest that were behind. They were the pioneers that cleared the way for the others. Now David, and such as he, of whom we read in the Scriptures, are the grand old soldiers that bear the standard and lead the way—and we are the raw recruits that follow on behind them! Let us be thankful that we have some veterans to lead the vanguard!

Our text is rather an extraordinary one, yet it represents the experience of many of us, and we are comforted by the thought that our feelings and David's have very much agreed—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in You."

You notice in the text, first, *a complex condition*—here is a man afraid and yet he is trusting. Then we will look at *the natural side of this condition*—"I am afraid." And then we will look at *the gracious side*—"I will trust in You."

I. Notice, first, then, that here is David in A COMPLEX CONDITION. He says, "I am afraid," yet with the same breath he says, "I will trust in You." Is not this a contradiction? It looks like a paradox. Paradox it may be, but contradiction it is not! What strange creatures we are! I suppose every man is a trinity, certainly every Christian is—spirit, soul and body—and we may be in three states at once. And we may not know which of the three is our real state! The whole three may be so mixed up that we become a puzzle to ourselves. Though certain mental philosophers would say that I flagrantly err in asserting that such a thing can be, yet nevertheless I am quite certain that it is a very common experience of the child of God!

It is even quite possible for us to find two minds and two wills—two sets of facilities within ourselves clashing and jarring and warring and contending with one another. In a record of some very notable experiences of doctors who attend upon the insane, there is a very singular case described of a man who was always sane regularly one day, as clear in the intellect and intelligent in judgment as any man—but the next day he was always insane. On the day on which he was sane, he used to talk about how the doctor ought to treat him on the morrow, and to express his surprise that he entered into such a state, reasoning in the most practical manner. He seemed to be two men! There is a record of another case, even more remarkable, of a man who would act and speak and think as an intelligent full grown person, but after sleeping two or three days he would wake up a child, to learn like a child, to walk like a child, to speak like a child, and to all intents and purposes, to lead the life of a child. Then he would fall asleep, again, and wake up as an adult person. To us it seems a most marvelous thing that this should happen—but perhaps it is even more marvelous to find ourselves perfectly sane, with no mental malady upon us, and yet at the same moment the subject of two opposite sets of feelings—afraid, and yet trusting!

I am sure that every Christian here will follow me while, for a moment, I speak upon this singular duplex condition of *Christian experience*. You remember how the women returned from the sepulcher. They had seen a vision of angels—they had also seen the Lord—and it is said they departed quickly "with fear and great joy"—very fearful, trembling at what they had seen, but very joyful—never so fearful and yet never so joyful before! And you remember that the disciples, when the Lord Jesus stood in their midst, "believed not for joy." Extraordinary thing! They did believe, or they could not have had the joy! And yet the joy seemed, when

it grew out of the belief, to cut away its own roots and "they believed not for joy"—strange, marvelous state of mind, yet common to the Christian!

The same thing is true as to *our attitude to sin.* Have you not found yourself, beloved believer in Jesus Christ, drawn towards an evil thing for a moment, fascinated by it, finding a tendency in the carnal corruption of your nature to go after evil and yet, at the very same time, you hated yourself that you should give way even for a moment to a *thought* so vile? You have felt the desire to go after sin, but yet another self, as it were, struggled with greater force not to go after it. One faculty seems to say, "How sweet that sin would be," yet you have said, "It is gall and bitterness itself." The flesh has loved it, but the spirit has said, "I abominate it, I loathe it," and has cried out to God to prevent the possibility of our being allowed to indulge ourselves in it! Thus warring and contending with us, the prince of the power of the air, uniting with our own evil nature, has endeavored to drag us down, while the Holy Spirit, co-working with the incorruptible seed which He has imparted in us, has sought to draw us upwards towards holiness, purity and perfection! It is a wondrous warfare which only the elect of God can understand.

So, too, you have been the subject of another phase of the same phenomenon *in reference to faith.* You have seen a precious promise or a glorious doctrine and you have believed it because you have found it in God's word. You have believed it so as to grasp it and feel it to be your own, yet, perhaps, almost at the same time certain rationalistic thoughts have come into your mind and you have been vexed with doubts as to whether the promise is true. You remember, perhaps, the insinuations of others, or something rises up out of your own carnal reason that renders it difficult for you to believe, while at the same time you are believing! You battle with yourself—one self seems to say, "Is it so?" and yet your inner self seems to say, "I could die for it, I know it is so!" You are tormented because you cannot answer arguments against it, but yet at the same time you feel that you have answered them, and that they are no arguments at all! Your heart repels all attacks upon the truth of God, and yet, somehow or other, for a while, you are staggered by the assault which Satan has made upon you!

I might go on to mention many other ways in which these two states of mind will come. I have found it frequently so *in prayer* when I have sought to draw near to God. An idle worldly spirit will bring ten thousand distracting thoughts to bear upon the soul and the heart will seem to say, "I cannot pray just now, I have other things to do. I must think of *them.*" What is worse, the mind will persist in thinking of these things and they will come crowding in—some work that you have to do, perhaps some friend that you have to call upon, something you have forgotten—those things will come pouring in upon you as if in your own heart you

said, "I do not want to pray." Yet at that very same time you have felt a holy craving, an insatiable longing to draw near to God in prayer and you have said, "I must pray, I cannot live without it. I must now have a period of fellowship with God, cost me what it may." These two things will be here—the praying and the not praying, the faithless and the believing struggling, one with another, and your poor spirit will be like ground that is trampled upon by two armies that are fiercely contending as to which shall get the mastery! You see that in David's case, when in the text he says, "I am afraid," yet adds, "I will trust in You."

II. Now, secondly, let us look at THE NATURAL SIDE OF THIS CONDITION.

David says, "I am afraid." Admire his honesty in making this confession. Some men would never have admitted that they were afraid. They would have blustered and said they cared for nothing! Generally there is no greater coward in this world than the man who never will acknowledge that he is afraid. But this hero of a thousand conflicts, this brave scion of the sons of men, honestly says, "I am afraid." Why was he afraid?

First, *because he was but a man*, and we men cannot rule the elements, we cannot overcome those who are mightier than ourselves. "They are many that fight against me, O Most High," he cries! And then he adds, "I am afraid." We cannot expect, therefore, that we should be free of fear when powers greater than our own are set in array against us. We are afraid because at the very best, we are but weak and feeble men!

He was afraid, again, *because he was a sinful man*. It is *this* that makes cowards of us more than anything else. We know that we deserve the rod of our Father and though, by faith, we feel assured that He will never use the sword of justice against us, yet we are often afraid that the correcting rod will be brought out and that we shall be sorely chastened. Well, then, while we are men, and sinful men, it is no wonder that we should be afraid!

Besides, David was something more than that—he was afraid *because he was an intelligent man*. He knew his position and could rightly estimate its risks. Now, with some persons, bravery arises from utter ignorance. They do not know the danger to which they are exposed and, therefore, do not fear it. The unsaved sinner, if he did but know in what peril he is, would not be as quiet as he is. Unconverted men and women, if they did but know who and what and where they are—if they did but remember that "God is angry with the wicked every day"—would be very ill at ease! They would be full of alarm and terror. But the Christian knows his position. He is not blind, his eyes have been opened, he has been brought to the light of God, he does not shut his eyes to the strength of his spiritual adversaries, nor to his own internal weakness,

nor to the awful guilt of sin. He sees all these and, therefore, it is not to be wondered at, that with so much intelligence, a Christian should have some misgivings. "I am afraid," says he.

And then he is afraid, again, *because he is no stoic*. The heathen tried as far as they could to turn their flesh into iron and harden their hearts into steel, but such is never the process through which the Christian passes. The Christian, when his sinews are most braced and he is most heroic for his Master, is still as tender and as sensitive as a little child. The grace of God does not take away from us feminine tenderness, though it gives to us masculine courage. In fact, it blends the two in a perfect man, putting strength and sympathy together, and making us like Christ who, with all the force of the majesty of holy determination and courage, had all the tenderness and gentleness that the fondest love could bring. Therefore we are afraid because we do not boast of insensibility, but we still strive to be gentle and tenderhearted—the grace of God keeps us so.

But when is it that the saint should expect to be most afraid? Is it not when enemies around him are many? The psalmist, therefore, is afraid *because he is compassed by foes*. The Christian does not like having enemies. If he could help it, he would not have a single one. He never willingly makes an enemy and if he could destroy his enemies by turning them into friends, he would be delighted to achieve so great a victory. When, therefore, he sees that he has many enemies and they are very cruel and very determined—he is afraid.

We are afraid, sometimes, when we think of the old enemy, our spiritual enemy, for we know his cunning. He has been so long tempting the saints that he knows his business well. We know what poor, foolish birds we are when he is the fowler—how soon we are taken in his net and, therefore, at the prospect of being tempted again by him, we bow our knee to our great Father and we cry—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." We are afraid at the thought of having to fight Satan! Who has read John Bunyan's description of Christian fighting Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation but will not be fearful at the prospect of such a fight as that?

The man of God may be afraid, too, *because he sees need surrounding him*. The Christian must eat and drink, and though he is not to make this the great question of his life, yet he cannot look upon his little ones and think that he will not have sufficient bread to fill their mouths without being somewhat afraid. The natural side of the question must come up. He is not so hardened that he does not feel it—and when he sees need staring him in the face, for his own sake and for the sake of those about him, he is afraid.

If, in addition to all this, there comes upon him the remembrance of past sin, and with especial vividness some transgression into which he

has lately fallen, he is afraid *because of the memory of the past*. Though he may look to Jesus—and he will do so. Though he may see his sin laid on Christ, yet, even while he is looking, he will often be amazed with a sore amazement and an agony of soul will come over him—not so much the fear of being finally cast away if, indeed, he is a child of God, but a fear lest, after all, he should turn out not to be what he hoped he was! If you are never afraid about the condition of your soul, I am afraid for you! If you never had a fear about your state, I think I may remind you of Cowper's lines—

"He has no hope who never had a fear
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

Under a sense of sin, it is but natural, no, I will add, it is but *right* that a trembling should come over the soul and that we should fall down in the presence of God humbled before Him!

The same is the case, too, with the man who is afraid *because of the thought of approaching death*. We have seen some, when they have actually come to die, rejoicing with unspeakable joy and it has strengthened our faith when we have heard their bold declarations as they have felt the Master's presence in their final hour. But if, as a rule, you and I can think of death without any kind of fear, if no tremor ever crosses our minds, well then, we must have marvelously strong faith, and I can only pray we may be retained in that strength of faith! For the most part there is such a thing as terror in prospect of death—the fear is often greater in prospect than in reality! In fact, it is always so in the case of the Christian. But yet, when we give ourselves up to fear for a time, we are grievously afraid.

This, then, is the natural side of the question. A man may be a true believer, he may be a very David—and yet be afraid.

III. Now take THE GRACIOUS SIDE OF IT—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in You."

"I will trust in You." How glorious is this confession of faith! It is not the expression of nature—*it is a sign of divine grace*. No man trusts in God unless there has first been a divine work upon his soul! At least no man who is afraid can trust in God unless the Lord has taught his timorous spirit to fly like a dove to the sure dovecot cleft by divine grace in the Rock of Ages. Happy soul that has been taught the sacred art and mystery of believing in Jesus! It is the highest and noblest of all the practical sciences! God grant us grace, what time we are afraid, to exercise ourselves in it!

It is a sure sign of grace when a man can trust in his God, for the natural man, when afraid, falls back on some human trust, or he thinks that he will be able to laugh at the occasion of fear. He gives himself up to jollity and forgetfulness, or perhaps he braces himself up with a natural resolution—

"To take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them."

He goes anywhere but to his God. Only the gracious spirit—only the soul renewed by the Holy Spirit, will saw, "'What time I am afraid,' my one and only resort shall be this, 'I will trust in You.'" The thoughtless, as I have said, try to laugh off their fear. The naturally thoughtful try to invent some scheme by which they may pass through the difficulty, but he who is truly believing leaves schemes and frivolities, and applies to his God with the burden of his care—and finds from Him an instantaneous and effectual relief!

And, after all, *is it not the most reasonable thing in the world* that a soul that is afraid should trust in God? Where can there be a firmer ground of reliance than in Him whose power never can be defeated, whose wisdom is never at a nonplus? If I have God's promise that He will help me, to whom or where should I go, but unto the God who has so promised? If, in addition, He has given me His oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie," I might have strong consolation, where shall my timid spirit go but to the shadow of the wings of the God of the covenant who, by promise and by oath, has guaranteed my safety? What are my circumstances? Has He not given me a promise suitable to them, a special promise for each special time? So I need never be afraid because of my circumstances. Has He not, indeed, given me one text which covers them all with its broad expanse? "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." With a God who is almighty and eternally faithful. With a God who promises and seals the promise with His oath—that He will help me when I call upon Him—what can be more reasonable than that when I am afraid, I should come and put my trust in Him?

Ah, my brothers and sisters, and as it is reasonable, *it certainly proves itself to be most effectual,* for he who trembles from head to foot does but begin to trust in God and, behold, he grows calm at once! Have we not seen minds so distracted as to be almost bereft of reason grow quiet and peaceful when they have learned to do the work they could do and then left the rest to God? Oh, it is sweet waiting at the posts of Jehovah's door! It is well to tarry till His promise becomes ripe and then in all its sweetness drops into our hands. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," so has He declared. My soul, lay hold upon that, and the next time you are afraid, seek a safe shelter beneath that promise! "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." When I am afraid lest I should be in need, I will come and go beneath that promise. If it is a good thing, God has bound Himself by His word to give it to me. "Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My

righteousness." My God, when at another time I am full of alarm and dismay, I will come to You, for You are bound to strengthen and help and uphold Your servants who place their confidence in You!

Dear brothers and sisters, let me exhort you—and may God's Holy Spirit back up the exhortation—to the exercise of a holy trust in God, not only when you are happy but when you are afraid! *Faith in God is a seasonable thing* as well as a reasonable thing. Fruit is always best in its season, and the time for faith is the time of trial. Faith is never so full flavored as when it is produced beneath cloudy skies. Other fruits need the sun to ripen them, but this is one of the precious fruits put forth by the moon. You shall, when your experience is most trying, honor God the most if you can then trust Him! Surely it needs little faith to believe in providence when the purse is full. What sort of faith is it that believes in the merits of the precious blood of Jesus when it feels its own sanctification to be complete, if such can ever be the case? What kind of faith is that which leans on the beloved when it can stand alone? But that is true faith which, when it cannot stand by itself, which sees death written upon all its own power, which sees almost all its hopes withered and blasted with the east wind, yet cries, "My God, it is enough! My soul waits only upon You. My expectation is from You." This is, indeed, the way to honor God!

Observe the graduation there often is in Christian experience. You will sometimes find believers in so low a state that their heart is full of fear. By and by they are enabled to exercise the faith that God has given them, but it is mingled fear and trust. But they do not stop there, they get a little further—as David did in this Psalm, as you can see if you will read a word or two further on—there it gets to be trust and no fear. "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." May you climb the steps of that gracious ladder! May you, if you have fear, also have faith with your fear, and then afterwards have your faith without any fear! When faith gets strong enough, fears are expelled!

Let me, however, return to my point that when you are afraid, then is the time to trust the Lord. When you are very poor, then is the time to believe the doctrine of divine providence. When you feel the guilt of your sins, then is the time to lay hold on Jesus Christ and to wash in the fountain filled with His blood. Who cares to wash when he is clean? The time to wash is when the filth is felt! Then fly to the all cleansing blood. You say, "I feel so dead and cold, I have not the spiritual vivacity and warmth and life that I used to possess. I used to come up to the tabernacle and feel such joy and rejoicing in worshiping on God's holy day, but now I feel flat and dull." Oh, but do not be tempted to get away from Christ because of this! Who runs away from the fire because he is cold? Who, in summer, runs away from the cooling brook because he is hot? Should not my deadness be the reason why I should *come* to Jesus

Christ? Now is the time for Him to show His power! Now my Master, if indeed You are a friend that sticks closer than a brother and, blessed be Your name, You are such a friend, behold, here is one of Your friends! Prove that You can forgive and still stick to him—cause him to trust in You and let him find You better than all his fears!

I have done when I have made an application of my text to those of you who have not believed in Jesus and yet desire to do so. I know your fears, your doubts, your trembling. Let me whisper in your ear this word—"Now that you are afraid, put your trust in Jesus. Christ came to save sinners such as you are with all your fear. Now, while your fears toss you to and fro, go to Jesus—

"While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high."

Hang all your weight upon the lover of souls now! Do not wait till you get rid of your fears and then go to Him—go now!

A lady was once walking in a field and a bird flew right into her bosom. She wondered why the little lark came nestling there, but looking up, she saw a hawk in the air. It had pursued the little bird, which, though it would have been quite afraid at any other time to find a shelter where it did find it, had by the greater fear of its enemy been driven out of the lesser fear. She to whom it fled for refuge cared for it, cherished it and set it free. So be it with you. Let your great fears of hell overcome that fear that you have sometimes had that perhaps Jesus may reject you. Fly into His bosom. "Oh, but I fear that He will reject me." Well, then, I trust that your other fears will get so great as to overcome this fear. John Bunyan says that his fear of hell at last became so terrible that if Jesus Christ had stood with a naked sword in His hand, or if He had held a pike to him, he would have run on the point of the pike and would always rather go to an angry Christ then be cast into hell! But, believe me, Christ is not angry. He holds no pike and no sword in His hand. This is His word of promise, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."Aged sinner, you who have been a great transgressor, whoever you may be, if you come and simply cast yourself upon the blessed Savior who on the cross offered up Himself for human guilt, you shall be saved!

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in You." I dare to say these ancient words tonight from the depths of my soul! I am afraid of my sins! I am afraid of my unworthiness! I never live a day but what I see reason to be afraid! If I had to stand all by myself, I would be afraid to stand before God! If I had never done anything in my life but preach this one sermon, there have been so many imperfections and faults in it that I am afraid to place any reliance upon it! But my Lord Jesus, *You* are my soul's only hope. I trust entirely in You!

Beloved, have this same faith. May God work it in you and then your fear shall only drive you closer to your Lord! And so the fear and the faith shall go on hand in hand together for a while, till at last perfect love shall come in and take the place of fear—and then faith and love shall go hand in hand to heaven!

May the Lord bless every one of you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:1-21.

Verses 1, 2. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased.* Many of them curiosity-mongers wanting to see more wonders worked. Others of them sick, themselves, and anxious to be healed. Wherever Jesus went, a throng went with Him.

3. *And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.* That was His frequent posture when His disciples were gathered around Him. He sat at His ease and talked to His hearers. He was not very demonstrative in His oratory, but spoke calmly and quietly, and left the truths of God to find its own way into the minds and hearts of men.

4, 5. *And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?* They were in a lonely place out in the wilderness where the people had no means of obtaining food. And Jesus knew that they would soon be faint with hunger, so He consulted with Philip as to what was to be done. It is great kindness and condescension on our Lord's part to consult with His followers. He often did it, not that He needed their advice or help, but because they needed to be taught how to think and how to act for the good of others.

6. *And this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.* Observe the complex character of Christ—as man, He consulted with Philip—as God, He knew beforehand what He would do.

7. *Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them, may take a little.* Two hundred pennyworth must have seemed an enormous amount to poor Philip, for all Christ's disciples had made themselves poor by following Him. The bag that Judas carried probably scarcely ever had as much as that in it. If it were all spent, it would not go far towards feeding five thousand men, beside the women and children!

8, 9. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes:*

but what are they among so many? These small fishes were commonly cured and dried by that lake—little fish very much resembling sardines or anchovies—and they were eaten dry as a relish with bread. This lad had five barley cakes and a couple of these little fish, that was all.

10. *And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down*—Jesus would have everything done decently and in order. The people obeyed Christ's command and sat down. We are told by Mark, "in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties." "There was much grass in the place." Our Lord has a carpet in His banqueting hall, such a carpet as Solomon in all his glory could not have made! "There was much grass in the place. So the men sat down"—

10, 11. *In number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks*—[See Sermon #2216, Volume 37—THE LAD'S LOAVES IN THE LORD'S HANDS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Among the Jews, it is always the master of the house who gives thanks. They do not call upon a child to say grace, but the father of the family, like a priest in his own house, stands up and pronounces a blessing upon the food. It is a beautiful thought that Christ thus made Himself, as it were, the Father of that large family, the head and provider for those many thousands of people!

11. *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.* "As much as they would." That is Christ's measure for those who gather at His table—it is only your own will that limits the amount of divine grace that you may have.

12, 13. *When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.* I am sorry to say that it is a mark of very poor people that they are often very wasteful people. These beggars who had come only to be fed, were not satisfied to eat till they were satisfied, but they threw down pieces of bread just as I frequently see, in the streets of London, great pieces of bread thrown away. It should not be so, for bread is the staff of life. Among the Egyptians, they are always peculiarly careful that never a portion of bread should be wasted, nor should it ever be as in a city like this where there are so many persons who are starving for lack of bread. But while I see the carelessness and wastefulness of the crowd, I also notice the carefulness and economy of Christ. He who could make food enough to feed the thousands at His will, yet would not waste a crust! I think a large-hearted liberality should always be consistent with a strict economy. I have heard of one who called at a rich man's door to ask for a subscription and he heard him scolding the servant for wasting a match. "Ah," He thought, "I shall get nothing out of him!" Yet he received from

that very man a larger subscription than from anybody else upon whom he called during that day! Christ would give anything but He wasted nothing—let us imitate His example!

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.* But the faith that comes by the way of the stomach is not worth much. If people are converted by loaves and fishes, bigger loaves and bigger fishes will make them go the other way—converts made thus are of small worth!

15-17. *When Jesus, therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain alone. And when evening was now come, His disciples went down to the sea, and entered a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them.* [See Sermon #2945, Volume 51—NIGHT—AND JESUS NOT THERE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Then it was very dark. Ah, my dear friends, perhaps you know what it is to be in trouble and to mourn an absent Lord! This is a direful description of an especially dark night for the disciples—"It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them."

18, 19. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near unto the ship: and they were afraid.* Do you wonder that they were filled with fear? It seemed so strange a sight—a man walking on the waves of the sea!

20. *But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid.* Then they must have felt at ease at once as soon as they knew that it was Jesus who was walking towards them upon the water. Lord, if it is You, fear would be foolish on our part! We are only too glad to have Your company.

21. *Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they were going.* No sooner was Jesus with them than they were where they wanted to be! The presence of Christ works wonders for us. We are soon at our haven when the Lord of heaven comes to us!

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THE CURSE REMOVED
NO. 3254

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 1911.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO.

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree."
Galatians 3:13.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #873, Volume 15—
CHRIST MADE A CURSE FOR US—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE law of God is a divine law, holy, heavenly, perfect. Those who find fault with the law or in the least degree depreciate it, do not understand its design and have no right idea of the law itself. Paul says, "We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." In all that we ever say concerning justification by faith, we never intend to lower the opinion which our hearers have of the law, for the law is one of the most sublime of God's works. There is not a commandment too many—there is not one too few! The law of the Lord is so incomparable that its perfection is a proof of its divinity. No human lawgiver could have given forth such a law as this which we find in the Decalogue. It is a perfect law, for all human laws that are right are to be found in that brief compendium and epitome of all that is good and excellent toward God, or between man and man.

But while the law is glorious, it is never more misapplied than when anyone attempts to use it as a means of salvation! God never intended men to be saved by the law. When He proclaimed it on Sinai, it was with thunder, lightning, clouds, fire and smoke, as if He would say, "O man, hear My law, but tremble while you hear it! It is proclaimed with the blast of the trumpet exceedingly loud, even as the great day of destruction will also be of which it is the herald, if you offend against it and find none to bear your doom for you." It was written on stone, as if to teach us that it was a hard, cold, stony law—one which would have no mercy upon us, but which, if we go against it, would fall upon us and grind us to powder! O you who are trusting in the law for your salvation, you have erred from the faith—you do not understand God's designs—you are ignorant of the truths of God that He has revealed to us by His Holy Spirit! In the chapter from which our text is taken, the apostle says, "If there had been a law given which could have given life; verily righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has

concluded all under sin that the promise, by faith, of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe." The law was intended, by its terrors, to crush every hope of self-righteousness and, by its lightning, to scathe and demolish every tower of our own works—that we might be brought humbly to accept a finished salvation through the one Almighty Mediator who has magnified the law and made it honorable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness wherein we stand complete in Christ if, indeed, we are in Him by a living faith. So you perceive that all that the law does is to curse—it cannot bless. In all the pages of revelation, you will find no blessings that the law ever gave to one who had offended it. There were blessings for those who kept it completely—though none ever did—but no blessing is ever written for one offender. Blessings we find in the gospel, curses we find in the law.

This afternoon we shall briefly consider, first, *the curse of the law.* Secondly, *the curse removed.* Thirdly, *the great Substitute who removed it* by "being made a curse for us." And then, lastly, we shall solemnly ask one another whether we are included among the innumerable multitude for whom Christ was "made a curse."

I. First, then, let us consider "THE CURSE OF THE LAW." All who sin against the law are cursed by the law—all who disobey its commands are cursed, cursed instantly, cursed terribly.

We shall regard that curse, first, as being *a universal curse* resting upon every one of the seed of Adam. Perhaps some here will be inclined to say, "Of course, the law of God will curse all those who are loose in their lives or profane in their conversation. We can all of us imagine that the swearer is a cursed man, cursed by God. We can suppose that the wrath of God rests upon the head of the man who is filthy in his life, the man who is degraded and under the ban of society." But, my friends, the real truth is that the curse of God rests upon every one of us as by nature we stand before Him! You may be the most moral man in the world, yet the curse of God is upon you! You may be lovely in your life, modest in your carriage, upright in your behavior, almost Christ like in your conduct, yet if you have not been born-again—if you have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit—the curse of God still rests upon your head! If you have committed but one sin in your life, God's justice is so inexorable that it condemns you for that one solitary offense! And though your life should henceforth be one continued career of holiness, if you have sinned but once, unless you have a saving interest in the blood of Christ, the thunders of Sinai are meant to terrify you and the lightning of divine vengeance flash all around you!

Ah, my hearers, how humbling is this truth to our pride—that the curse of God is upon everyone who is of the seed of Adam, that every child born into this world is born under the curse since it is born under the law! Then, in addition to the curse that rests upon us because we are children of Adam, there is the further curse that comes through our own

transgression. The first moment that I sin, though I sin but once, I come beneath the curse quoted in the 10th verse of this chapter, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"—cursed without hope of mercy apart from that blessed Savior who "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." It is a dreadful thought that the trail of the serpent is over the whole earth, that the poison of sin is in the fountain of every human heart, that the blood in all our veins is corrupt, that we are all condemned already, that each one of us, without a single exception, whether he is a philanthropist, senator, philosopher, divine, prince, or monarch, is under the curse unless he has been redeemed from it by Christ!

The curse, too, while it is universal, *is also just*. There are many persons who think that the curse of God upon those who are undeniably wicked is, of course, right, but that the curse of God upon those who, for the most part, appear to be excellent, and who may have sinned but once, is an act of injustice! But when God pronounces the curse, He does it justly. He is a God of justice and just and right are all His ways. And mark you, man, if you are condemned, it shall be by the strictest justice. Even if you have sinned but once, the curse is a righteous one when it lights upon your head! Do you ask me how this is? I answer—You say that your sin is little. Then, if it is but little, how little trouble it might have taken you to have avoided it! If your transgression is but small, at how small an expense you might have refrained from it! Some have said, "Surely the sin of Adam was but a little one—he did but take an apple and eat it." Yes, but in its littleness was its greatness! If it was but a little thing to take the forbidden fruit, with how little trouble might the sin have been avoided! And because it was so small an act, there was couched within it the greater malignity of guilt. So, too, you may never have blasphemed your God, you may never have desecrated His Sabbath, yet insomuch as you have committed a little sin, you are justly condemned, for a little sin has in it the essence of all sin—and I know not but that what we call little sins may be greater in God's sight than those which the world universally condemns and against which the hiss of the curse of humanity continually rises! I say that God is just even though He should pronounce a curse upon all His creatures! So tremble, O sinners, and "kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

So the curse is universal and it is just.

But, next, the curse of the law is also *fearful*. There are some who seem to think that it is a little matter to be under the curse of God, but, oh, if they knew the fearful consequences of that crime, they would realize that it is indeed a terrible one! It were enough to make our knees knock together, to chill our blood and to cause every hair of our head to

stand on end if we did but know what it is to be under the curse of God! What does that curse include? It involves the death of the body and that is by no means an insignificant portion of its sentence. It also includes spiritual death—the death of that inner life which Adam had—the life of the spirit which can only be restored by the Holy Spirit who quickens whom He will. And it includes, last of all and worst of all, eternal death—that second death which can only be described by that awful—I had almost said, unutterable word, "hell." This is the curse which rests upon every man by nature. We make no exception for rank or degree, for God has made none. We offer no hope of exception for character or reputation, for God has made none. The whole of us are shut up to this, that as far as the law is concerned, we must die—die here, and die in the next world the death which never dies, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched," even by a flood of tears of penitence if they could be shed! There we must be forever lost! Could we estimate all the consequences of that curse, we might well afford to ridicule all the torments that tyrants could inflict upon us—we might well despise any injuries that this body might sustain—when we compare them with that awful avalanche of threats which rushes down with resistless force from the mountain of God's truth!

We hasten from this point, beloved, for it is fearful work to speak upon it. Yet we must not depart from it entirely until we have hinted at one more thought, and that is that the curse of God which comes upon sinful men is *a present curse*. O my dear hearers, could I lay hold of your hands, if you are not converted, I would labor with tears and groans, to get you to grasp this thought! It is not merely damnation in the future that you have to dread—it is condemnation NOW that is your portion! Yes, my hearer, sitting where you are, if you are out of Christ, you are already condemned! Your death warrant has been sealed with the great seal of the Majesty on High, and the angel's sword of vengeance is already unsheathed over your head this afternoon! Whoever you may be, if you are out of Christ there hangs a sword over you, suspended by a single hair which death shall cut, and then that sword shall descend, dividing your soul from your body, and dooming both to eternal pains! You might well start up from your seats in terror if you did but realize your true condition in God's sight! You are reputable, you are respectable, you are honorable—perhaps right honorable—yet you are condemned men, condemned women! On the walls of heaven your names are written up there among the deicides who have slain the Savior, among the rebels against God's government who have committed high treason against Him! And perhaps even now the dark winged angel of death is spreading his pinions upon the blast, hastening to hurry you down to destruction! Say not, O sinner, that I frighten you! Say rather that I would bring you to the Savior , for whether you believe this or not, you cannot alter the truth thereof—that you are now, if you have not

given yourself to Christ— "condemned already." Wherever you sit, you are but in the condemned cell, for to the unconverted, the unrenewed, the unrepentant, this whole world is but one huge prison wherein the condemned one does drag along a chain of condemnation till death takes him to the scaffold where the fearful execution of terrific woe must take place upon him! This, then, is "the curse of the law."

II. But now I must speak, in the second place, of THE REMOVAL OF THAT CURSE. This is a sweet and pleasant duty. Some of you, my dear friends, will be able to follow me in your experience while I remind you how it was that in your salivation, Christ removed the curse from you.

First, you will agree with me when I say that the removal of the curse from us is done in a moment. *It is an instantaneous thing.* I may stand here one moment under the curse and then, if the Spirit shall quicken me, and I breathe a prayer to heaven—if by faith I cast myself on Jesus—in one solitary second, before the clock has ticked, my sins shall be all forgiven! Hart sang truly—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."

You will remember in Christ's life that most of the cures He worked—yes, I believe all—were instantaneous cures. Look! There lies a man stretched upon his couch from which he has not risen for years. "Take up your bed and walk," said Christ in majesty—and then, without the intervention of weeks of convalescence, "immediately he rose up before them and took up that where he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God." There is another man! He is deaf and practically dumb. Christ said to him, "*Ephphatha*, that is, be opened, and immediately his ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly." Yes, and even in the case where Christ healed death, itself, he did it instantaneously. When that beautiful young creature lay asleep in death upon the bed, Jesus went to her and though her dark ringlets covered up her eyes, which were glazed in death, Jesus did but take her clay cold hand in His and say to her, "*Talitha cumi*; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise," then, "straightway the damsel arose and walked."

It is true that in conversion, Christ commences a work which is to be carried on through life in sanctification, but the justification of the sinner, the taking away of the curse, is done in a single moment. "Unwrite the curse," says God, and it is done! The acquittal is signed and sealed—it takes not long. I may stand here at this moment and I may have believed in Christ but five minutes ago—still, even if I have believed in Christ for only that short time, I am as fully justified, in God's sight, as I would be should I live until these hairs are whitened by the sunlight of heaven, or as I shall be when I walk among the garden lamps of the

city of palaces! God justifies His people at once! The curse is removed in a single moment. Sinner, hear that! You may be now under condemnation, but before you can say, "now," again, you may be able to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus."

Mark, beloved, in the next place, that this removal of the curse from us, when it does take place, is *an entire removal*. It is not merely a part of the curse which is taken away. Christ does not stand at the foot of Sinai and say, "Thunders diminish your force!" He does not catch the lightning, now and then, and bind its wings. But when He comes, He blows away all the smoke! He puts aside all the thunder, He quenches all the lightning—He removes it all! When Christ pardons sin, He pardons all sin! You may be old and gray headed, and hitherto unpardoned, but though your sins exceed in number the stars of the sky, one moment suffices to take them all away! Mark that—*all!* That sin of midnight, that black sin which, like a ghost, has haunted you all your life! That hideous crime! That unknown act of blackness which has darkened your character; that awful stain upon your conscience—they shall all be taken away in a moment! And though you have a stain upon your hands which you have often sought in vain to wash out with the mixtures which Moses can give you, you shall find when you are bathed in Jesus' blood, that you shall be able to say, "All clean my Lord! All clean! Not a spot, all is gone! I am completely washed from head to foot, the stains are all removed." It is the glory of this removal of the curse that it is all taken away! There is not a single atom off it left! Hushed now is the law's loud thunder—the sentence is completely reversed and there is no fear of it left!

We must also say upon this point, that when Christ removes the curse, *it is an irreversible removal*. Once let me be acquitted by God and who is he that can condemn me? There are some, in these days, who teach that God justifies, and yet, after that, condemns the same person whom He has justified! We have heard it asserted pretty boldly that a man may be a child of God today—hear it, you heavens, and be astonished—and be a child of the devil tomorrow! We have heard it said, but we know it is untrue, for we find nothing in Scripture to warrant it! We have often asked ourselves—can men really believe that after having been begotten again by God unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—that new birth can fail and die? We have asked ourselves, Can men imagine that after God has once broken our chains, and set us free, He will call us back and bind us once again, like Prometheus, to the great rocks of despair? Will He once blot out the handwriting that is against us and then record the charge again? Once pardoned, then condemned? We know that if Paul had met with such teachers, he would have said, "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 make intercession for us." There is no condemnation now to us who are "in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is a sweet thought to me that even Satan himself can never rob me of my pardon. I may lose my copy of it, and lose my comfort from it, but the original pardon is filed in heaven! It may be that gloomy doubts may arise, and I may fear that I am not forgiven, yet I can say—

"O my distrustful heart,
How small your faith appears!
But greater, Lord, You are
Than all my doubts and fears!
Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is forever mine!"

I love, at times, to go back in thought to that hallowed hour when I first realized that my sins were all forgiven for Christ's sake. There is much comfort in recalling that blessed hour when first we knew the Lord—

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

Perhaps you do. Perhaps you can look back to the very place where Jesus whispered to you that you were His. Can you do so? Oh, what comfort it will give you! For remember, once acquitted, you are acquitted forever! So says God's word. Once pardoned, you are clear forever! Once set at liberty, you shall never be a slave again! Once Sinai's wrath has been appeased, it shall never thunder against you again! Blessed be God's name, we have been brought to Calvary and we shall be brought to Zion, too! At last we shall stand before God and even there we shall be able by grace to say—

"Great God, we are clean!
Through Jesus' blood we are clean."

III. Now we are brought, in the third place, to observe THE GREAT SUBSTITUTE by whom the curse is removed.

"The curse of the law" was not easily taken away. In fact, there was but one way whereby it could be removed. The lightning was in God's hand—it must be launched—He said it must. The sword was unsheathed. Divine justice must be satisfied, God vowed that it must. Vengeance was ready. Vengeance must fall! God had said that it must. How, then, was the sinner to be saved? The only answer was this. The Son of God appears and He says, "Father, launch Your thunderbolts at Me! Here is My breast, plunge the sword of justice in here! Here are My shoulders, let the lash of vengeance fall on them!" Thus Christ, our substitute, came forth and stood for us, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." It is our delight to preach the doctrine of substitution because we are fully persuaded that no gospel is preached where substitution is omitted. Unless sinners are plainly and positively told that Christ stood in their place to bear their guilt and carry their

sorrows, they never can see how God can "be just and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus."

We have heard some preach a gospel something after this order—that, though God is angry with sinners, yet, out of His great mercy, for the sake of something that Christ has done, He does not punish them, but remits the penalty. Now we hold that this is not God's gospel, for it is neither just to God nor safe for man! We believe that God never remitted the penalty, that He did not forgive the sin without punishing it, but that He exacted the full penalty without the abatement of a solitary jot or tittle—that Jesus Christ, our Savior, did drink the veritable cup of our redemption to its very dregs—that He did suffer beneath the crushing wheels of divine vengeance, the same pains and sufferings which we ought to have endured! Oh, the glorious doctrine of substitution! When it is preached fully and rightly, what a charm and what a power it has! Oh, how sweet is the work to be able to tell sinners that although God has said, "The soul that sins, it shall die," their Maker has Himself bowed His head to death in their place, and thus God is righteously able to pardon all believers in Jesus because He has met all the claims of divine justice on their account!

Should there be one here who does not yet understand the doctrine of substitution, let me repeat what I have said; sinner, the only way in which you can be saved is this. God *must* punish sin. If He did not, He would undeify Himself. But if He has punished sin in the person of Christ for you, you are fully absolved, you are quite clear! Christ has suffered what you ought to have suffered, and you may well rejoice in that. "Well," you say, "I ought to have died." But Christ has died! "I ought to have been sent to hell." But Christ has suffered that which is a full equivalent, and which completely satisfies God's demands. The cup which His Father gave Him, He drank to its dregs—

"At one tremendous draft of love
He drank damnation dry"—

for all who believe in Him! All the punishment, all the curse was laid upon Him—now it is all gone forever. Yet it had not gone without having been taken away by the Savior**.** The thunder has not been reserved, the lightning has been launched at Him! Divine justice is satisfied because Christ has endured the full penalty of all His people's guilt.

IV. Now we come to answer that last question, HOW MANY OF US CAN SAY THAT CHRIST HAS REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW, HAVING BEEN MADE A CURSE FOR US?

The first part of our discourse has been entirely doctrinal; some of you have not cared for it because you did not feel that you were interested in it. It was natural that it should be so. At the reading of a will, does the servant stay to listen? No, for there is nothing for her. But if a man is a son of the testator, how eagerly does he open his ears to catch every sound, that he may know whether the estate has been left to him or not? However badly the lawyer may read the will, he is anxious to hear every

word that he may learn if he is to have a portion among the children. Now, beloved, let us read the will again to see if you are among those for whom Christ was the Substitute. The usual way with most of our congregations is this—they write themselves down as Christ's long before they know whether God has done so or not. You make a profession of religion, you wear a Christian's cloak, you behave like a Christian, you take a seat in a church or a chapel, and you think you are Christianized at once. Yet many in our congregation who fancy that they are Christian, have made a great mistake! Let me beg you not to suppose that you are believers in Christ because your parents were, or because you belong to an orthodox church. Religion is a thing which we must have for ourselves, and it is a question which we all ought to ask—whether we are savingly interested in the atonement of Christ and have a portion in the merit of His agonies?

Come, then, my friend, let me put a question or two to you. And first let me ask you this—*Were you ever condemned by the law in your own conscience?* "No," you say, "I know not what you mean." Of course you do not, and you have therefore no true hope that you are saved. But I will ask you yet again—have you ever been condemned by the Law in your conscience? Have you ever heard the Law of God saying in your soul, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"? And have you felt that you were thus cursed? Did you ever stand before God's bar, like a poor condemned criminal before his judge, ready for execution? Have you, as John Bunyan would have put it, ever had the rope around your neck? Have you ever seen the black cap placed upon the head of your judge? Have you even *thought* yourself about to be turned to the gallows? Have you ever walked the earth as if, at every step, it would open beneath your feet and swallow you up? Have you ever felt yourself to be a worthless, ruined, sin condemned, law condemned, conscience condemned sinner? Have you ever fallen down before God and said, "Lord, You are just. Though You slay me, I will say that You are just, for I am sinful and deserve Your wrath"? As the Lord lives, if you have never felt and spoken like that, you are still a stranger to His grace, for the man who acquits himself, God condemns! And if the law condemns you, God will acquit you! So long as you have felt yourself condemned, you may know that Christ died for condemned ones and shed His blood for sinners. But if you fold your arms in self security, if you say, "I am good, I am righteous, I am honorable," be you warned of this—your armor is the weaving of a spider and it shall be broken in pieces! The garments of your righteousness are light as feathers and shall be blown away by the breath of the eternal in that day when He shall un-spin all that nature has ever woven! Yes, I bid you now take heed of this—if you have never been condemned by the law, you have never been acquitted by divine grace!

Now I will ask you another question—*have you ever felt yourself to be acquitted by grace?* "No," says one, "I have never expected to feel that. I thought that we might perhaps know it when we came to die, or that a few eminent Christians might possibly then know themselves to be forgiven, but I think, sir, you are very enthusiastic to ask *me* whether I have ever felt myself forgiven." My dear friend, you make a great mistake. If a man had been a galley slave, chained to an oar for many a year, and if he were once set free, do you think that he would not know whether he were free or not? Do you think that a slave who had been toiling in bondage for years, when once he trod the land of freedom, if you should say to him, "Do you know that you are emancipated?" do you think that he would not know it? Or if a man who has been dead in his grave were to be awakened to life, do you think he would not know it? He will know himself to be alive as the emancipated slave will know that he is a free man! If you have never felt your chains fall off you, then your chains are still on you, for when God breaks our chains off us, we know ourselves to be free! The most of us, when God set us free from our prison camp, leaped for very joy! And we remember that the mountains and the hills did break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field did clap their hands! We shall never forget that gladsome moment! It is indelibly impressed upon our memory—we shall remember it to life's last hour! I ask you again—Did you ever feel yourself to be forgiven? And if you say, "No," then you have no reason to think that you *are* forgiven! If the Lord has never whispered in your ear, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions"—you have no right to think yourself pardoned! Oh, I beseech you, examine yourself and know whether you have been condemned by the Law, and whether you have been acquitted by grace!

And, lastly, my dear friends, I may have, and doubtless do have, many here present who have simply come to spend an hour, but who have no care, no interest, no concern about their souls, who are perhaps, utterly careless as to whether they are condemned or not. If I could speak to you as I could wish, I would speak—

"As though I never might speak again,
And as a dying man to dying men."

When I remember that, likely enough, I shall never see the faces of many of you again, I feel that there is a deep and an awful responsibility lying upon me to speak to such of you as are careless. There are some of you who are putting off the evil day, or you are saying, "If I am condemned, I care not for it." Ah, my friend! If I saw you asleep upon your bed when the flames were raging in your chamber, I would shout in your ear, or I would drag you from your couch of slumber. If I knew that while you had a fatal disease within you, you would not take the medicine which alone could cure you, I would, upon my knees implore you to take that medicine! But, alas, here you are, many of you, in danger of eternal destruction—and you have a disease within your souls that must soon destroy them forever! Yet what careless, hardened, thoughtless creatures

you are, just caring for the body and not seeing Christ to be the Savior of your souls! As the angels laid hold upon Lot, and said to him, "Escape for your life! Look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed," so would I do to you. I would come to each one of you and say, "My brother, carelessness may be of use to you now, but carelessness will not stop the voice of death when *he* speaks! Indifference may silence *my* voice in your conscience now, but when that grim skeleton tyrant comes to address you, indifference will not do then! You may laugh now, you may dance now, you may be merry now, your cup may be full to the brim now—but what will you do in that day when the heavens are clothed with glory, when the books are opened, when the great white throne is set, and when you come before your Maker to be acquitted or condemned? I beseech you, prepare for that day! I beg of you, for Christ's sake, to picture yourself before your judge—conceive of Him there in yonder heavens seated upon His throne—imagine that you are now looking upon Him. O my hearer, what will you do? You are before the judgment seat without Christ as your Savior**!** "Rocks, hide me, for I am naked!" But you are dragged out, sinner, naked before your judge! What will you do now? I see you bend your knees. I hear you cry, "O Jesus, clothe me now!" "No," says Jesus, "that robe can never be worn by you now." "Savior, have mercy upon me even now." "No," says He, "I called, but you refused. I stretched out My hand, but no man regarded; you set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproach, so now I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes."

Am I talking realities or mere fictions? Why, realities, and yet, if I were reading a novel to you, you would be lost in tears! But when I tell you God's truth that soon His throne shall be set and we shall all appear before Him, you sit unmoved and remain careless concerning that great event! But be it known to every careless sinner that death and judgment are not the unimportant things that they may have fancied! Everlasting wrath and eternal severance from God are not such light things to endure as they may have conceived. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Have I one here who is saying, "What must I do to be saved, for I feel myself condemned?" Hear Christ's own words—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Do you ask me what it is to believe? Hear, then, the answer. To believe is to look to Jesus! That little word, "look," beautifully expresses what a sinner is to do. There is little in its appearance, but there is much in its meaning. Believing is letting the hands lie still and turning the eyes to Christ. We cannot be saved by our hands—but we are saved when we look to Jesus by faith. Sinner, it is no use for you to try to save yourself! To believe in Christ is the only way of salvation—and that is throwing self behind your back and putting Christ right before you! I can never find a

better description than that of the Negro—"to believe is to fall flat down upon the promise, and to lie there." To believe is to do as one might do in a stream. It is said that if we were to fold our arms and lie motionless upon the water, we would not sink. To believe is to float upon the stream of grace. I grant you that there will be much that you will *do* afterwards, but you must *live* before you can do! The gospel is the reverse of the law. The law says, "Do, and live." The gospel says, "Live first, then do." The thing for you to say, poor sinner, is just this, "Lord Jesus, here I am. I give myself to You."

I never had a better idea of believing in Jesus then I once had from a poor countryman. I may have mentioned this before, but it struck me very forcibly at the time and I cannot help repeating it. Speaking about faith, he said, "The old enemy has been troubling me very much lately, but I told him that he must not say anything to me about my sins—he must go to my Master, for I had transferred the whole concern to Him—bad debts and all." That is believing in Jesus! Believing is giving up all we have to Christ and taking all that Christ has to ourselves! It is changing houses with Christ, changing clothes with Christ, changing our unrighteousness for His righteousness, changing our sins for His merits. Execute the transfer, sinner, or rather, may God's grace execute it and give you faith in it! And then the law will no longer be your condemnation, but it shall acquit you! May Christ add His blessing! May the Holy Spirit rest upon us and may we all at last meet in heaven! Then will we sing "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

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

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THE PEARL OF PATIENCE
NO. 3255

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY AFTERNOON IN JANUARY, 1880.

"You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy."
James 5:11.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole verse is #1845, Volume 31—
THE PITY OF THE LORD—THE COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

WE need to be reminded of what we have *heard*, for we are far too ready to forget. We are also so slow to consider and meditate upon what we have heard that is profitable to have our memories refreshed. At this time we are called upon to recollect that we have heard of the patience of Job. We have, however, I trust, gone beyond mere hearing, for we have also *seen* in the story of Job that which it was intended to set vividly before our mind's eye. "You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." The Romish priest professes to make men hear the voice of the gospel by *seeing*, but the Scriptural way is to make men see the truth of God by *hearing*. Faith, which is the soul's sight, comes by hearing. The design of the preaching of the gospel to the ear is "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Inward sight is the result of all fruitful hearing!

Now, that which is to be *seen* in the Scriptures is somewhat deeper and calls for more thought than that which is merely heard. "You have heard of the patience of Job"—an interesting history which a child may understand, but it needs, divine teaching to see to the bottom of that narrative, to discover the pearl which lies in the depths of it! It can only be said of enlightened disciples, "You have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy." At the same time, that which is seen is also more precious to the heart and more bountifully enriches the soul than anything which is only heard. I count it no small enrichment of our mind to have heard of the patience of Job—it comforts and strengthens us in our endurance, but it is as infinitely better thing to have seen the end of the Lord, and to have perceived the undeviating tenderness and pity which are displayed even in His sorest chastisements. This is, indeed, a choice vein of silver, as he that has dug in it is far richer than the more superficial person who has only heard of the patience of Job, and so has only gathered surface truth. "The

patience of Job," as we hear of it is like the shell of some rare nut from the Spice Islands—full of fragrance. But "the end of the Lord," when we come to see it, is as the kernel which is rich beyond expression with fullness of aromatic essence!

Note well the reason why the text reminds us of what we have heard and seen. When we are called to the exercise of any great virtue, we need to call in all the helps which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon us. All our wealth of hearing and seeing we shall need to spend in our heavenly warfare. We shall be forced full often to gird up the loins of our mind by the recollection of examples of which we have heard, such as that of Job, and then to buckle up that belt and brace it fast with what we have. The patience of Job shall gird us and that "end of the Lord" which we have seen shall be the fastening of the band. We shall need all before our work is done. In the present case, the virtue we are called to exercise is that of *patience* and, therefore, to help us to do it, we are reminded of the things that we have heard and seen, because it is a grace as difficult as it is necessary, and as hard to come at as it is precious when it is gained!

The text is preceded by a triple exhortation to patience. In the 7th verse we read, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." And again, "Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. Be you also patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near." Further on, in the 10th verse, we read, "Take my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction and patience." Are we thrice exhorted to patience? Is it not clear that we have even now much need of it? We are, most of us, deficient in this excellent grace and because of it we have missed most privileges and have wasted many opportunities in which we might have honored God, might have commended religion and might have been exceedingly profited in our own souls. Affliction has been the fire which would have removed our dross, but impatience has robbed the mental metal of the flux of submission which would have secured its proper purification. It is unprofitable, dishonorable, weakening—it has never brought us gain—and never will.

I suppose we are three times exhorted to patience because we shall need it much in the future. Between here and heaven we have no guarantee that the road will be easy, or that the sea will be glassy. We have no promise that we shall be kept like flowers in a conservatory, from the breath of frost, or that, like fair queens, we shall be veiled from the heat of the sun.

The voice of wisdom says, "Be patient, be patient, be patient. You may need a threefold measure of it. Be ready for the trial." I suppose, also, that we are over and over again exhorted to be patient because it is so high an attainment. It is no child's play to be dumb as the sheep before her shearers and to lie still while the shears are taking away all that warmed and comforted us. The mute Christian under the afflicting rod is no everyday personage. We kick out like oxen which feel the goad for the

first time! We are, most of us, for years as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. "Be patient, be patient, be patient," is the lesson to be repeated to our hearts many times, even as we have to teach children over and over again the same words till they know them by heart. It is the Holy Spirit, ever patient under our provocations, who calls us to be "patient." It is Jesus, the unmurmuring sacrifice, who charges us to, "be patient." It is the long-suffering Father who bids us "be patient." O you who are soon to be in heaven, be patient for yet a little while and your reward shall be revealed!

Upon these two things we will indulge a brief meditation. First, we are bidden to be patient and *it is not an unheard of virtue.* "You have heard of the patience of Job." And, secondly, we are bidden to be patient and *it is not an unreasonable virtue*, for you "have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy."

I. IT IS NOT AN UNHEARD OF VIRTUE TO BE PATIENT—"You have heard of the patience of Job."

Observe well that the patience of Job was the patience of *a man like ourselves*, imperfect and full of infirmity, for as one has well remarked, we have heard of the *impatience* of Job as well as of his patience! I am glad the divine biographer was so impartial, for had not Job been somewhat impatient, we might have thought his patience to be altogether inimitable and above the reach of ordinary men. The traces of imperfection which we see in Job prove all the more powerfully that divine grace can make grand examples out of common constitutions and that keen feelings of indignation under injustice need not prevent a man's becoming a model of patience. I am thankful that I know that Job did speak somewhat bitterly and proved himself a man, for now I know that it was a man like myself who said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was a man of flesh and blood such as mine, who said, "Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Yes, it was a man of like passions with myself who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

You have heard of the patience of your Lord and Master, and tried to copy it, and half despaired! But now you have heard of the patience of His servant, Job, and knowing as Job did that your Redeemer lives, you should be encouraged to emulate him in obedient submission to the will of the Lord! "You have heard of the patience of Job," that is, the patience of *a greatly tried man*. That is a very trite, yet necessary remark—Job could not have exhibited patience if he had not endured trial. And he could not have displayed a patience whose fame rings down the ages till we have heard of it, if he had not known extraordinary affliction! Reflect then, that it was the patience of a man who was *tried in his estate*. All his wealth was taken! Two or three servants were left—left only to bring him evil tidings—each one saying, "I only am escaped alone to tell you." His flocks and his herds were gone. The house in which his children had met was a wreck and the princely man of Uz sat upon a dunghill—and there

were none so mean as to do him reverence. You have heard of the patience of Job in loss and poverty—have you not seen that if all estates should fail, God is still your portion?

Job was caused to suffer sharp *relative troubles*. All his children were snatched away without a warning, dying at a festival where, without being culpably wrong, men are usually unguarded and, in a sense, unready, for the spirit is in disarray. His children died suddenly and there was a grievous mystery about it, for a strange wind from the wilderness smote the four corners of the house and overthrew it in an instant! And such an occurrence must have connected itself in Job's mind either with the judgment of God or with Satanic influence—a connection full of the most painful thoughts and surmises! The death of his dear ones was not a common or a desirable one, and yet all had so been taken. Not a son or daughter was left him. All gone! All gone! He sits among the ashes a childless man. "You have heard of the patience of Job." Oh, to have patience under bereavements, patience even when the insatiate archer multiplies His arrows!

Then, and I here speak most to myself, "You have heard of the patience of Job" under *personal affliction*. It is well said by one who knew mankind cruelly well, that, "we bear the afflictions of other people very easily," but when it touches our bone and our flesh, trial assumes an earnest form and we have need of unusual patience. Such bitter pain as Job must have suffered; we have probably, none of us, known anything to the same degree. And yet we have had weary nights and dreary days. Each limb has claimed a prominence in anguish and each nerve has become a road for armies of pains to march over! We know what it is to feel thankful tears in our eyes merely for having been turned over in bed. Job, however, far excels us. "You have heard of the patience of Job," and you know how he sinned not when from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet he was covered with irritating boils!

In addition to all this, Job bore what is perhaps the worst form of trial, namely, *mental distress*. The conduct of his wife must have much grieved him when she tempted him to "curse God and die." However she meant it, or however her words may be translated, she evidently spoke like a foolish woman when her husband needed wise consolation. And then those "miserable comforters"—how they crowned the edifice of his misery! Cold-blooded mortals sneer at sentimental grievances, but I speak from my heart when I affirm that griefs which break no bones and take not a coin from our store may yet be among the sharpest whips of sorrow! When the iron enters into the soul, we know the very soul of suffering! See how Job's friends fretted him with arguments and worried him with accusations. They rubbed salt into his wounds! They cast dust into his eyes. Their tender mercies were cruel, though well intentioned. Woe to the man who in his midnight hour is hooted at by such owls! Yet the hero of patience sinned not. "You have heard of the patience of Job."

Job's was in all respects a most real trouble; he was no mere gloomy person, no hysterical inventor of imaginary evil. His were not fancied

losses or minor calamities. He had not lost one child out of a numerous family, nor a few thousands out of a vast fortune, but he was brought to sad bereavement, abject poverty and terrible torment of body and mind! But despite it all, "You have heard of the patience of Job," and heard more of his patience than of his afflictions! What a mercy to have heard of such a man and to know that one of our own race passed through the seven-times heated furnace and yet was not consumed!

The patience of Job was the patience of *a man who endured up to the very end.* No breakdown occurred. At every stage he triumphed and to the utmost point he was victorious! Traces of weakness are manifest, but they are grandly overlaid by evidences of gracious power. What a marvelous man was he with all those aches and pains, still bearing witness to his God, "But He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." He reasons well even in the heat of his passionate zeal for his character. He reasons bravely, too, and catches up the points of his adversaries like a trained logician. He holds fast his integrity and will not let it go. And best of all, he cries, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh, glorious challenge of a dying man to his immortal kinsman!

The enemy could not triumph over Job—he threw him on a dunghill and it became his throne, more glorious than the ivory throne of Solomon! The boils and blisters with which the adversary covered the patriarch were more honor to him than a warrior's gilded body armor. Never was the archfiend more thoroughly beaten than by the afflicted patriarch! And instead of pitying the sufferer, my pity curdles into contempt for that fallen spirit who must there have gnawed his own heart and drunk deep draughts of gall and wormwood as he saw himself foiled at all points by one who had been put into his power and one, too, of the feeble race of man! Surely, in this he experienced a foretaste of the bruising threatened at Eden's gate as to be given him by the woman's seed! Yes, Job endured unto the end and, therefore, he stands as a pillar in the house of the Lord. Cannot we also endure unto the end? What hinders divine grace from glorifying itself in us?

We may once more say that the patience of Job is the virtue of *one who thereby has become a great power for good.* "You have heard of the patience of Job." Yes, and all the ages have heard of the patience of Job—and heaven has heard of the patience of Job and hell has heard of it, too—and not without results in each of the three worlds. Among men, the patience of Job is a great moral and spiritual force. This morning, when musing upon it, I felt ashamed and humbled, as thousands have done before me. I asked myself, "What do I know of patience when I compare myself with Job?" And I felt that I was as unlike the great patriarch as I well could be. I recollect a minister who had been somewhat angered by certain of his people and, therefore, preached from

the text, "And Aaron held his peace." It was remarked that the preacher's likeness to Aaron reached no further than the fact that Aaron held his peace and the preacher did not. May we not penitently confess that our likeness to Job is much of the same order? He was patient and we are not. Yet, as I thought of the patience of Job, it caused me to hope! If Job was patient under trial and affliction, why should I not be patient too? He was but a man—what was worked in one man may be done in another! He had God to help him and so have I. He could fall back upon the living Redeemer—so can I and why should I not? Why should I not attain to patience as well as the man of Uz? It made me feel happy to believe in human capacity to endure the will of God, the Holy Spirit instructing and upholding! Play the man, beloved friend! Be not cut down! What God has done for one, He can do for another. If the man is the same and if the great God is the same, and be sure He is, we, too, may attain to patience in our limited circle! Our patience may be heard of among those who prize the fruits of the Spirit!

II. I will not detain you, lest I weary you, except to say, in the second place, IT IS NOT AN UNREASONABLE VIRTUE TO BE PATIENT for, according to our text, there is great love and tenderness in it. "You have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy."

We must have seen, in Job's story, if we have regarded it aright, that *the Lord was in it all*. It is not a narrative in which the devil is the sole actor—the great Lord of all is evidently present. He it was who challenged Satan to consider Job and then questioned him as to the result. Less seen than the evil one, the Lord was nevertheless present at every act of the drama. God was not away while His servant suffered! In fact, if there was any place where the thoughts of God were centered more than anywhere else in providence at that time, it was where the perfect and upright man was bearing the brunt of the storm. *The Lord was ruling, too*. He was not present as a mere spectator, but as master of the situation! He had not handed over the reins to Satan—far from it, for every step that the enemy took was only by express permission from the throne of God. He allowed him to strip his servant, but he set the limit, "Only upon himself put not forth your hand." When to complete the test, the enemy was permitted to plague his body, the Lord added, "But save his life." The ruling hand is always on the curb. The dog of hell is allowed to snap and snarl, but his chain is not removed and the collar of omnipotent restraint is on him. Come, dear friends, you that are in trouble, remember that God is in your sorrow, ruling it to its desired end and checking it that it should go no further than according to His will! And you neither have suffered, nor in the future will suffer any more than He in infinite love permits!

Moreover, *the Lord was blessing Job by all his tribulation*. Untold blessings were coming to the grand old man while he seemed to be losing all. It was not simply that he obtained a double portion at the end, but all along, every part of the testing process worked out his highest good.

Now have we seen the end of the Lord and that end is unmingled goodness! The Lord was standing by every moment to stop the refining process when it had come to the proper point, so that no more of it should happen than was really beneficial and, at the same time, no less than should secure His gracious purpose. True mercy is bound, at times, to seem rough, for it might be a great and lifelong evil for the surgeon to stop the knife before its work is done. The Lord was wisely tender and tenderly wise with Job—and even in his case the sore affliction was not allowed to proceed a single degree beyond the necessary point of intensity.

And when we come to look all Job's life through, we see that *the Lord in mercy brought him out of it all with unspeakable advantage*. He who tested with one hand supported with the other! Whatever Satan's end might be in tempting the patriarch, God had an end which covered and compassed that of the destroyer—and that end was answered all along the line, from the first loss which happened among the oxen to the last taunt of his three accusers! There was never a question, in the heights of heaven as to the ultimate issue! Eternal mercy was putting forth its irresistible energy, and Job was made to bear up though the trial and to rise from it a wiser and a better man!

Such is the case with all afflicted saints. We may well be patient under our trials, for the Lord sends them. He is ruling in all our circumstances. He is blessing us by them, He is waiting to end them and He is pledged to bring us through. Shall we not gladly submit to the Father of our spirits? Is not this our deepest wish, "Your will be done"? Shall we quarrel with that which blesses us? Shall we repine when the end of the trouble is so near and so blessed? No! We see that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy and, therefore, we will be patient.

Beloved, let us accept future sorrow with joy, for it is divine love which will add to our years whatever sorrowful seasons may yet come to us. Job's life might have ended in the first period without the trial, but if the patriarch, with perfect knowledge of all things, could have had his choice, would he not have chosen to endure the trial for the sake of all the blessing which came of it? We would never have heard of the patience of Job if he had continued in his prosperity—and that first part of his life would have made a very poor commonplace history as compared with what we now find in the pages of Scripture! Camels, sheep, servants and children make up a picture of wealth, but we can see this any day! The rare sight is the patience—this it is which raises Job to his true glory! God was dealing well with His faithful servant and even rewarding his uprightness when He counted him worthy to be tried. The Lord was taking the surest and kindest way to bless and honor one who was a perfect and an upright man—one that feared God and eschewed evil.

The Lord was full of pity to permit sharp trial to come upon Job for his good. There was more tender mercy in subjecting him to it than there would have been in screening him from it. False pity would have

permitted the good man to die in his nest, but true pity put a thorn into it and made him mount aloft as the eagle! It was great mercy, after all, which took him out of the state in which he washed his steps with butter, and cast him into the mire, for thus he was weaned from the world and made to look the more eagerly for a better portion.

No doubt, in Job's character, the Lord saw certain failings which we cannot see, which He desired to remove and perhaps He also marked some touches of grace which needed to be supplied—and divine love undertook to complete his perfect character. Perhaps his prosperity had sunned him till he had grown somewhat hard in tone and sharp in judgment and, therefore, the Lord would soften and mellow his gracious spirit. The things lacking were no common virtues, for in these he was perfect, but certain rich and rare tints of the higher life—and these could not be imparted by any other means than severe suffering. Nothing more could really be done for Job but by this special agency, for doubling the number of his camels and sheep would only enlarge his cares. Since he already had enough children, too, he had a sufficient family and of all earthly things, abundance. But to give him twice the divine grace, twice the experience, twice the knowledge of God, perhaps twice the tenderness of character he had always possessed, was a mode of enrichment which the tender and compassionate Lord adopted out of the greatness of His wisdom and favor. Job could only thus be made doubly rich in the rarest of all treasures—and the all merciful adapted that method.

Examining the matter from another point of view, it may appear that Job was tried in order that he might be better able to bear the extraordinary prosperity which the Lord had resolved to pour upon him. That double portion might have been too much for the patriarch if he had not been lifted into a higher state. If abundance is hard to bear, superfluity is even worse and, therefore, to those He loves, the Lord gives more grace.

Job by his trials and patience received not only double grace, and double wealth, but double honor from God. He had stood very high in the peerage of the excellent as a perfect and an upright man before his trial, but now he is advanced to the very highest rank of spiritual nobility. Even our children call him "the most patient man under pains and suffering." He rose from the knighthood of sincere goodness to the peerage of heroic endurance. At first he had the honor of behaving admirably amid wealth and ease, but he was in the end elevated to sit among those who glorify God in the fires. Benevolence, justice and truth shone as bright stars in the sky of his heavenly character, but now the moon of patience silvers all and lights up the scene with a superior beauty! Perhaps the Lord may love some of us so especially that He means to put upon us the dignity of endurance—He will make us knights, not of the golden fleece, but of the iron cross! What but great pity and tender mercy could plan such a lot for our unworthy selves?

Once more, Job by his trials and the grace of God was lifted up into the highest position of usefulness. He was useful before his trial as few

men of wealth and influence have been, but now his life possesses an enduring fruitfulness which blesses multitudes every day! Even we who are here this afternoon "have heard of the patience of Job." All the ages have this man for their teacher. Brothers and sisters, we do not know who will be blessed by our pains, by our bereavements, by our crosses if we have patience under them! Especially is this the case with God's ministers, if He means to make much of them, their path to usefulness is up the craggy mountain's side. If we are to comfort God's afflicted people, we must, first, be afflicted ourselves. Tribulation will make our wheat fit to be bread for saints. Adversity is the choicest book in our library, printed in black letters, but grandly illuminated! Job makes a glorious comforter and preacher of patience, but no one turns either to Bildad, Zophar, or Eliphaz, who were "miserable comforters" because they had never been miserable. You, dear sisters, whom God will make daughters of consolation to your families, must in your measure pass through a scholarship of suffering—a sword must pass through your own hearts if you are to be highly favored and blessed among women. Yet, let us all remember that affliction will not bless us if it is impatiently borne. If we kick at the goad, it will hurt us, but it will not act as a fitting stimulus. If we rebel against God's dispensations, we may turn His medicines into poisons and increase our grief by refusing to endure them. Be patient, be patient, be patient and the dark cloud shall drop a sparkling shower! "You have heard of the patience of Job." Imitate it. "You have seen the end of the Lord." Rejoice in it. "He is full of pity and of tender mercy." Yield yourselves to Him. Divine Spirit; plant in us the sweet flower of patience, for our patient Savior's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:1-22.

This precious chapter reminds us of the description of the land of Havilah, "where there is gold and the gold of that land is good."

Verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are to Christ Jesus.* [See Sermon #1917, Volume 32—IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is no condemnation to them—it is gone, and gone forever. Not only is part of it removed, but the whole of it is gone. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is their legal status before God—in Christ Jesus, without condemnation. And this is their character—

1. *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Their daily conversation is according to their new spiritual nature and according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit—not according to their fleshly nature and the guidance of self and Satan.

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of life and death.* "It cannot any longer rule me and it cannot now

condemn me. I am free from it, for I am now under the new and higher law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* [See Sermons #699, Volume 12—SIN CONDEMNED AND EXECUTED BY CHRIST JESUS and #2228, Volume 37—THE LAW'S FAILURE AND FULFILLMENT—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If there are any men in the world who keep the law of God, they are the very persons who do not hope to be saved by the keeping of it, for they have by faith found righteousness in Christ! And now by love and gratitude they are put under the power of the law of the spiritual life in Christ and they so live, by God's grace, that they do manifest the holiness of the law in their lives.

5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.* They care for nothing else—they are satisfied as long as their appetites are gratified. They are of this world and the things of this world fill them to the brim.

5. *But they that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit.* Spiritual joys, spiritual hopes, spiritual pursuits—these belong only to those who are spiritual!

6. *For to be carnally minded*—to be fleshly-minded—

6. *Is death.* That is what it comes to, for the flesh comes to death at last and, after death, it goes to corruption. If we live after that carnal fashion, this will be the end of our living—"death."

6. *But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* For the spirit will never die and the spirit has that within it which will bring it perfect peace.

7, 8. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* Those that have never been born-again, so as to be "in the Spirit," are still just as they were born—"in the flesh"—so they cannot please God. Do what they may there is an essential impurity about their nature so that they cannot be well-pleasing unto God. We must be born-again! We must become spiritual by the new birth which is worked by the Holy Spirit or else it is impossible for us to please God! O you who are trying your best to please God apart from the new birth and apart from Christ, see how this iron bar is put across your path—"they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Go, then, to Him and ask Him to give you of His Spirit that you may be spiritual and no longer carnal!

9. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* It does not matter what he calls himself—he may be a preacher, he may be a bishop—if he has not the Spirit of Christ, "he is none of His," and if he has the Spirit of Christ, though he may be the most obscure person on earth, he belongs to Christ!

10. *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin.* The grace of God has not changed the body—it still remains earth, dust—worms' meat—and it must die unless Christ should come and transform it by His coming. "The body is dead because of sin" and, therefore, come those aches and pains, that heaviness, that weariness, that decay, those infirmities of age which we experience as long as we bear about with us this body of death!

10. *But the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* There is a living power within us which triumphs over this dying, decaying body! So we rejoice notwithstanding all our afflictions, trials and depressions.

11. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* There is to be emancipation even for this poor flesh—a translation and a glory, for it is yet in Christ.

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* [See Sermon #96, Volume 2—THE CHRISTIAN—A DEBTOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Certainly not, for we owe the flesh nothing! It keeps us down and hampers us. It is a hindrance to us and we certainly owe it nothing! So let us not be subservient to it, let us not consult or even consider it and especially let us never come under its fatal bondage!

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* It is a dying thing, and "you shall die" if you live after its dying fashion.

13. *But if you, through the Spirit*—that living, immortal power.

13, 14. *Do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.* [See Sermon #1220, Volume 21—THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT, THE SECRET TOKENS OF THE SON OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, high dignity and blessed privilege! As soon as we get away from the dominion of the flesh and come to be led by the Spirit of God, and so become spiritual men, we have the evidence that we are the sons of God, for "God is a Spirit," so His sons must be spiritual.

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.* We did have it once, and it worked some good effect upon us for the time being. When we were under the law, we felt ourselves to be in slavery, and that made us go to Christ for liberty.

15. *But you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* Oh, blessed, blessed state of heart to feel that now we are born into the family of God and that the choice word which no slave might ever pronounce may now be pronounced by us, "Abba!" It is a child's word, such as a little child utters when he first opens his mouth to speak, and it runs the same both backwards and forwards—AB-BA. Oh to have a childlike spirit that in whatever state of heart I am, I may still be able to say, in the accents even of spiritual infancy, "Abba, Father!"

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* [See Sermons #339, Volume 6—THE SONS OF GOD; #402, Volume 7—THE JOINT-HEIRS AND THEIR DIVINE PORTION and #2961, Volume 51—"HEIRS OF

GOD"—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What better testimony can we have than that of these two witnesses, first of our own spirit and then of the Holy Spirit, Himself, "that we are the children of God"? Note that this is not spoken concerning everybody. The doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God is a doctrine of the flesh—not of the Spirit—it is not taught anywhere in God's word. This is a Fatherhood which relates only to those who are *spiritual*—we are born into it by the new birth and brought into it by an act of divine grace in adoption. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," this is a special privilege that belongs only to those who are spiritual!

17, 18. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Do we suffer now? Then let us wait for something better that is yet to come! Yes, we do suffer, and in this we are in accord with the whole creation of God, for the whole creation is just now, as it were, enduring birth pangs. There is something better coming, but meanwhile it is troubled and perplexed, moaning and groaning.

19-22. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.* See how it often weeps in the superabundant rain that seems like a minor deluge! Note how, at times, creation's very bowels seem to be tossed and torn with pain and agony by volcanoes and earthquakes. Mark the tempests, tornadoes, hurricanes and all kinds of ills that sweep over the globe, leaving devastation in their track! And the globe itself is wrapped in swaddling bands of mist, and shines not out like its sister stars in its pristine brightness and splendor. The animal creation, too, wears the yoke of bondage. How unnecessarily heavy have men often made that yoke!

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BEGGARS BECOMING PRINCES
NO. 3256

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 1911.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 21, 1864.

"He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.
1 Samuel 2:8.

GOD sometimes does this in providence. History records several very remarkable instances of persons who have sprung from the lowest ranks of society, or from the depths of poverty, yet who have mounted to a throne. When a certain king, in the olden days, was led in chains behind the chariot of his conqueror, he was constantly observed to look at the wheel and smile. And when he was asked why he did so, he said that it was because he noticed that those spokes of the wheel which were uppermost, at one time became the lowest not long after, while those which were lowest, in their turn took their place on high—and he would not wonder if it should be the same with him—and that he would again become a king and that his conqueror would be a captive. So strange are the workings of providence that, however low anyone may be in temporal circumstances, he need not give way to despair, but he may cherish hopes of better times coming to him.

About that matter, however, I have nothing to say tonight. I am going to speak of the far greater changes that have been worked by divine grace. We know that many who were "poor" in a spiritual sense, such "beggars," as words can surely describe, have been, by sovereign grace, lifted up from the dunghill of their natural degradation, set among the princes of the blood royal of heaven, and are even now inheriting the throne of glory, or are on their way to it! It is concerning this poverty and its cure that I want to talk to you in the hope that the Holy Spirit may so guide my words that they shall be for the encouragement of those who are seeking salvation by Christ Jesus.

In our text we see, first, *man's sad plight.* And, secondly, *God's infinite grace.*

I. First, then, here is MAN'S SAD PLIGHT. He is described both by his character and by his position. He is a beggar—that is his character. He is on a dunghill—that is his position.

Fallen man, whether he knows it or not, is spiritually a beggar. What is a beggar? He is one who is penniless. Empty his pockets and you will not find a single farthing there. Take his old clothes from his back and see what they will fetch—no one will give a penny for them. He has not a foot of land that he can call his own and the last six feet which he is pretty sure to have, must be given to him by the parish, and it will perhaps be even then given grudgingly. His old hat has almost lost its crown and his feet can be seen through his very dilapidated shoes. The old proverb says that a beggar can never be bankrupt, but it would be more correct to say that he is never anything else but bankrupt! Do any of you see your own portraits here? I can see just what I was by nature—utterly penniless. If you turn a natural man inside out, you cannot find a farthing's worth of merit in him. The very rags with which he professes to cover himself are so filthy that he would be far better without them. You may search into a man's thoughts, words and actions. You may ransack them and turn them over again, and again and again—and you may put the most charitable construction that you can upon them, but if you judge according to truth, and according to the Word of God—which is the only true way of judging, you must say of all that is in man, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Never was a beggar so short of money as a sinner is short of merit!

I want to preach experimentally tonight, so I ask you how many of us have felt this, how many of us are realizing our spiritual poverty now? Never will a man became rich in faith until first he has learned that he is penniless so far as his own merit is concerned. You must be emptied, you must be drained dry, you must be made to feel and to confess that in your flesh there dwells no good thing, or else the sovereign mercy of God and the riches of His loving-kindness shall never be your heritage.

But a beggar is not only penniless; he is also without a trade. The only thing that he can do is to beg. If he had ever learned a trade, he might turn to some handicraft and so earn his living. There are many who would be willing to give him a day's work, but there is nothing that he can do. If you should lend him any tools, he would cut his fingers with them, and then come to you to bind them up. He knows nothing and is good for nothing—he is shiftless, useless, and other men are eager to be rid of him! He is like an ill weed that only cumbers the ground. He is a hopeless, helpless man, unable to earn a penny—and such is every man of Adam spiritually. Not only has he no merit, but it is impossible for him to ever earn any! I have seen the foolish sons of men trying to win merit, hunting shadows, working in their dreams, seeking to build substantial houses upon sandy foundations, or to make garments out of spiders' webs. Yet they have wearied themselves in vain, for not a particle of merit have they ever been able to earn or win! Listen, sinner, there is as great a hope of a beggar getting rich as there is of your attaining to eternal life by any deeds of your own! No, some beggars do, by scraping and saving,

manage to hoard up what is to them comparative wealth, but you may seek to scrape and to save as much as you can—you may watch your morals, and be careful in your deportment, yet not a step nearer heaven will you be for all your pains! No, you must be born-again! God must intervene on your behalf. You must be saved by the grace of God, or not at all, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."—

"Not for our duties or deserts,
But of His own abounding grace,
He works salvation in our hearts,
And forms a people for His praise."

Further, though there are exceptions to the rule, it is so generally true that it may form part of the description—a beggar is usually a man without a character. The less that is said about his character, the better. He has a habit of helping himself when others do not help him, only that he helps himself to what does not belong to him! If there is anything lying handy, the beggar is very apt to appropriate it. I suppose that the largest part of beggary results from sin and that you could hardly read any beggar's true history without, at the same time, reading the story of wrongdoing. Certainly this is the case concerning spiritual beggary, for the sad state of humanity is not one of misfortune, but of sin. Well do I recollect when the truth of God stared me in the face and I saw that my character was such that it would have been an act of justice on God's part if He had shut me up in hell. Ask a convinced sinner about his character and see what he will say! Before God opens his eyes and shows him what he really is, he plumes his feathers as proudly as any peacock spreads his fine tail. But when he sees himself as he is in God's sight, he is anxious to hide his head anywhere! He feels that he is such a man of corruption—to use Augustine's strong expression, "such a walking dunghill"—that he loathes himself and never dares to open his mouth before God except to cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" "I have heard of You," said Job, "by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." A sight of God will soon show us what our own character is. "The heavens are not clean in His sight," said Eliphaz, "how much more abominable and filthy is man which drinks iniquity like water." May the Lord graciously give us this humbling view of ourselves, for we shall never seek true holiness until we are conscious of our own unholiness! That same divine power which reveals to us the light of God, also shows us the darkness of self. It is brightness that discovers dimness, holiness that reveals unholiness and the purity of God that shows the impurity of man.

I trust that these three points have been burned into our minds and hearts by the Holy Spirit. And if they have, thanks be to His holy name for it, for it is true of all of us by nature, that we think we are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," while all the time, we

are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But when, by grace, any one of us is brought to say with David, "I am poor and needy," with him we can add, "yet the Lord thinks upon me."

Again, the beggar is usually a man without any friends, or without any friends that are any good to him. In driving through various country districts, I have often seen this notice prominently displayed, "All vagrants found begging in this parish will be prosecuted." Yes, that is English law which reckons begging as a crime and I suppose it is also an offense to *give to beggars*, but that is an offense which some people are never likely to commit. Nobody cares to harbor beggars. They apply to a farmer, sometimes, and ask to be allowed to sleep in his barn, but he thinks so ill of them that he bids them begone from his premises for he will have nothing to do with them. If the beggar has any friends at all, they are only the companions who share his poverty who are generally as vile as he is and who can be of little or no service to him. And the natural man, as Adam left him, is one who has no friends to help him. I know that he has those whom he calls his friends, his companions in sin who make their kind of mirth for him, but they are really among his worst enemies—they cannot do him any good. He has no friends who can help him. The angels of God can only look upon him as a spectacle of divine mercy, marveling that he is still spared and wondering at his base ingratitude. But there is no hand in the heavens that can help a sinner except the hand of the Most High God! The saints on earth may look upon the man with pity and pray for him—

"But feeble our compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves."

The poverty of sinners is too great for us to cure. We might as well attempt to fill a bag that is full of holes, or to fill to the brim a bottomless vessel, as seek by anything that we can do to bring a sinner nearer to God! No, sinner, apart from God, you have not one friend who can help you! You have no merit with which to help yourself, no power to win any merit, no friend to get any merit for you and no character to be a recommendation to you. You are a beggar, indeed.

Then there is nobody who particularly cares for the beggar's acquaintance. His company is not generally sought after. There are few who make such a supper as that which our Savior described, to which those who were in the highways and hedges were to be compelled to come. Men may give the beggar bread and a place to sleep, but they put him by himself, for he is not a person whom they would like to have in their houses—they know not what loathsome disease he might impart to any who consorted with him. Now just such is man in his natural state when the Holy Spirit makes him see himself as he is in God's sight! I know that my own moral character was not worse than that of others and that it was indeed better than the characters of many whom I knew—yet when the Lord opened my eyes to see myself as I really was in

His sight, I felt that I was unfit even to go up to His house and I wondered how believers could let me join in the hymns they were singing, or take any other part in the service! I have known the time when I would have liked to occupy the worst seat in the chapel and when I would rather have been where no one could see me, that I might listen to God's word alone. My going up to the Lord's house in those days was like the dog's coming into the dining room when he tries to slip unobserved under the table and to watch for the crumbs that fall to the ground. He feels that he is there only on sufferance—he does not take his seat at the table, for he feels that he has no right to do so. I would not give much for a man's conviction of sin if it does not produce in him a very loathsome idea of himself and make him marvel how it is that the mercy of God can ever be outstretched to such a wretch, so vile and self-condemned as he is! If there is anyone here in such a condition as this, it is very likely that he is saying, "Why, I feel just like that, but I thought that mine was an utterly hopeless case." No, poor soul, your case is a very hopeful one, for it is the beggar, the loathsome, leprous, foul, filthy beggar covered with disease and defilement, whom God will lift up from the dunghill and set among princes, and make him inherit the throne of glory!

To complete the picture, let me add that the beggar is one whose entire dependence is upon charity. He knows that he cannot claim anything from you. As he holds out his hand to you, or follows you with his importunity, he is fully aware that whatever he may get will come to him, not according to law, but rather against the law, and simply as an act of grace. Such beggars are we with regard to spiritual gifts. If we are to receive pardon, it must come to us by divine grace. If we ever become reconciled to God by the death of His Son, it must be by an act of charity which we can do nothing to deserve. The beggar is a man whose only virtues are his boldness and his importunity—and as for you, sinner, there is nothing that becomes you so well as to press boldly to God's throne and appeal to the graciousness and goodness of His nature and especially to that display of His love which was given in the person of His bleeding and dying Son! There is nothing more fitting in you than to be importunate, to knock and knock, and knock again with a holy resolve to take no denial! Your sins are your most urgent reasons for coming to Christ. Your rags are your best livery. Your emptiness your only fitness! Your ruin is that upon which you are to look and you are to go to Christ in that ruin just as you are! As you go to Him, go boldly, for you are asking a great mercy from One who has a great heart! You are knocking at the door of the most hospitable King who ever invited beggars to come to Him! Come to Him with a holy boldness and perseverance—knowing that you will perish unless He looks upon you with eyes of love—and resolving that if you must perish, it shall be as a poor mendicant

pleading that for His mercy's sake, He would have pity upon you! No one ever perished who came to Him like that—and nor will you!

Thus I have described the character of the spiritual beggar, but it is much blacker than I have painted it. Now we are briefly to consider *the beggar's position*. According to the text, he is on a dunghill—that is the only throne he has by nature.

Why is the spiritual beggar said to be on a, dunghill? I think it must be, first, to show that he is as worthless as the rest of the stuff that is there. If the Lord shall only reveal to us our filthy condition as it appears in His sight, we shall feel that it is a positive nuisance, and we shall cry to Him, "Take it away, O Lord, take it away!" Sin is an offense to the nostrils of the thrice holy Jehovah even more than a dunghill can ever be to the most delicately active man or woman! And when we realize our true condition as sinners, we feel that a dunghill is a fitting place for such a mass of defilement and corruption.

Why is the spiritual beggar said to be on a dunghill? I think it is, next, because that is the most suitable place for the best thing that he has. The only thing a man can trust to before he comes to Christ is his own righteousness, and what is the verdict of Scripture upon that? You know well what it is—"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The best things that we have, those that we reckon to be of righteousnesses, are only like filthy rags that find a fitting resting place on a dunghill! So if our best things are only fit for such a position, it is no wonder that we, ourselves, in our natural state, are relegated to the dunghill with the rest of the unclean things that are thrown away there!

I think the spiritual beggar is also said to be on a dunghill because that place is typical of the best joy that he has. An unconverted man has some joy, some merriment, some pleasure of a certain sort—but what is carnal joy, after all? Think of the character of the places where the ungodly go for their amusement, or of the various ways in which they seek to gratify the lusts of the flesh and then ask yourselves if anything is a more appropriate emblem of them than a dunghill with all its filth and abominations! So, when the man who is a beggar with regard to spiritual things mounts his throne, and sits down upon its softest seat, it is only a dunghill!

That dunghill is also an emblem of his end. It is not only a symbol of the corruption that awaits his body after death, but it is also a type of the final doom of the body and soul when they are flung away as worthless refuse fit only for the dunghill. There have been sinners who, even in this life, have had at last a glimpse of the ruin that sin has worked in them, and who have, as it were, looked into the hell that stood ready to receive them. I have personally witnessed some terrible experiences in which men, helplessly and hopelessly lost, have been

upon the very brink of hell, and I have then understood what it meant be to be a spiritual beggar on a dunghill.

I have tried to make the meshes of my net so small that none of you might be able to escape from it, but I see some who seem determined not to be caught by it. They turn on their heel and say, "All that we have been hearing does not relate to us! We are not beggars and we are not sitting on a dunghill—we are most respectable members of society." Well then, sirs, why are you here? Why do you read your Bibles? Why do you pray? If you need no mercy, why do you come to the house of mercy, and call upon the God of mercy? We have no gospel to preach to such as you, for even Christ, Himself said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Go, you Pharisee, and say as he did in the temple of old, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are"—yet no justification shall drop like blessed dew upon you! But come, publican, you who dare not lift up so much as your eyes unto heaven! I think I hear you as you smite upon your breast, dolefully crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." You shall go down to your house justified rather than the other, "for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"—but to the humble and the contrite, God reveals the abundance of His mercy and to the poor in spirit He gives the riches of His divine grace!

II. Now, as my time has nearly gone, I must speak very briefly upon the second part of my subject, which is GOD'S INFINITE GRACE. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill; to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

As deeply as they fell, so high are they raised! No, they are raised still higher than they were before, so that Dr. Watts sang truly when he said that God—

"Has made our standing more secure
Than 'twas before we fell."

We lost much through Adam's transgression, but we get all that back and much more through Christ's obedience and death, so that where sin abounded, grace does much more abound, and—

"In Christ the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost."

Our text tells us *what is done for the poor beggar upon the dunghill*—he is set among princes and made to inherit the throne of glory. So, first, he is clothed as princes are clothed. The glorious robe of Christ's righteousness is thrown around this naked beggar and now he is clad as well as the best of the princes by whom he is surrounded! And he, also, fares as well as they do! Manna from heaven is his daily portion and water from the rock constantly supplies his needs! And, like all the

saints, in a spiritual fashion he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ, who is now his life!

He is also guarded as princes are, and far more securely guarded than any earthly prince unless he, also, is a child of God, for the strong right arm of the Almighty is his perpetual defense. He is also housed as princes are, for he dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty. He has a seat at the table of the royalty of heaven, for he is of the blood royal, a son of the highest and of the household of God.

Furthermore, he is rich as princes are. Are they heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ? So is he a sharer in that high honor. Are they priests and kings unto God? He, also, is a priest and a king. Do they say, "Abba, Father"? He, too, can say the same. Does each of the princes say, with, Thomas, "My Lord, and my God"? He too can say, "My Lord, and my God." Have they been pardoned? So has he. Have they acceptance, adoption, calling, regeneration, election, eternal security. He has the same, for however foul and filthy a sinner may have been, when God calls him by His grace, and adopts him into His family, He gives him not half the family inheritance, but the whole of it! He does not put off the big sinners with the leavings of the feast. When the father welcomed the prodigal home, again, he did not send him to the kitchen among the hired servants, but he killed for him the fatted calf and gave him a son's place at the table. It would be an eternal mercy if the Lord would allow us just to put our heads within the gates of glory, but that is not His way of rewarding the travail of Christ's soul. Jesus Himself 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 to His disciples He said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." That is the position that is reserved even for the chief of sinners—with Christ where He is! What a wonderful change is in store for the beggar from the dunghill!—

"To dwell with God, to feel His love,
Is the full heaven enjoyed above!
God the sweet expectation now
Is the young dawn of heaven below,"

See then, sinner, what the Lord does when "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." He gives them the full heritage of the saints on earth and then crowns it with the glorious inheritance of the saints in heaven! There is nothing good that the Lord keeps back from them. All the promises of this blessed book, all the blessing guaranteed by the everlasting covenant are theirs most richly to enjoy. Oh, that the Lord would come this very night and lift up some of you who are like the beggar upon the dunghill, and set you among princes and make you inherit the throne of glory!

Thus have I hurriedly set before you what is done for the beggar upon the dunghill, and I can only hint at the answer to the next question, *Who does it?* "He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill." If any of you saw a beggar lying on a dunghill and wanted to help him, I expect you would send your servants to lift him up from his unsavory resting place. I do not suppose you would go and do it yourselves. It would be very kind for a man to arrange for a beggar in such a position to be taken care of and so to do it by proxy. But listen to this. "HE raises up the poor out of the dust, and (HE) lifts up the beggar from the dunghill." The great Lord of heaven and earth does this work Himself! He does not do it by proxy. There are two verses in the 147th Psalm at which I have wondered thousands of times—"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names." He who loosens the bands of Orion, and brings forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons is the same Lord who bends down in tender pity over the broken in heart and binds up their wounds with a skill and success that no earthly surgeon can even equal! Oh, the matchless condescension of the great Lord of love that He should thus pity a sinner, love a sinner, embrace a sinner and even lift up a sinner from a dunghill! No one else can do it. The minister here frankly confesses his inability to do it. Not all the holy angels together can do it! Only the Spirit of the living God, who first opens our eyes to see our state as beggars can lead us to look to Jesus Christ and find in Him everlasting riches and eternal salvation!

Now, lastly, *why does the Lord do this great act of grace?* Why does He lift up the beggars from the dunghill? I cannot tell you any other reason than this—God does it because He wills to do it. Why does He thus look after some of the chief of sinners, and yet leaves many more respectable people to go on in their own way? I know no reason except than He does it because He wills to do it. His name and His nature are both love, and it is characteristic of love to pour itself out on behalf of misery and helplessness. The Lord looks abroad and sees the poor, ruined, helpless soul, and straightway the floodgates of His heart go up and out flows the stream of His loving-kindness and tender mercy!

Perhaps, someone asks, "Do I rightly understand you, sir? I do not often go to a place of worship, but I was passing the Tabernacle and just stepped in. Now I am as bad as I well can be, you surely do not mean to say, sir, that God loves me and such great sinners as I am?" Indeed, my dear friend, I do mean to say it, and to say it upon the authority of God Himself. "What? Do you mean to tell me that God loves me as I am?" Yes, just as you are. "What? God loves an ungodly man?" Yes, here is a text to prove it—"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." Why, if He had not loved us when we were dead in sins, He

would never have loved us at all! And we would have remained dead in trespasses and sins. 'Tis His great grace that lifts a beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes! When poor Jeremiah was in the pit and likely to die of starvation, Ebedmelech the Ethiopian did not go to him and say, "Come up out of the pit and I will dress your wounds, and feed you." He took men with ropes and some old rags to put under the prophet's arms, and so drew him out of the dungeon. In like manner, God does not say, "Now, sinner, make yourself a saint, and then I will love you," but He lets down the great rope of the gospel, which is long enough to reach you wherever you may be, and He lines it with the soft rags of loving invitations—and then He lets you put them beneath your arms and trust to them as Jeremiah trusted to Ebedmelech's ropes—and so you shall be drawn up out of sin's dungeon. David did not say, "I climbed up out of the horrible pit, and then began to sing." Oh, no! He said, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." David's song, like Hannah's, and like Mary's, ascribes all grace and glory to God! And if you put your soul's trust in Jesus, the one and only Savior, you also will—

"Give all the glory to His holy name
For to Him all the glory belongs."

Oh, that some spiritual beggar may tonight be lifted up from the dunghill and set among princes, and the Lord shall have all the praise, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 2:1-10; LUKE 1:16-56.

We shall read two portions of Holy Scripture, and may God the Holy Spirit bless us in the reading of His own words. We shall first read in the First Book of Samuel, the 2nd chapter, the song of Hannah. You remember that Hannah was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. A womanly sorrow preyed upon her heart and brought her very low. Not so low, however, as to prevent her from constantly praying to God. Her prayers were heard and when she came up to the Lord's house, the joyful mother of a son, she took care to remember her former supplication and to offer unto God thanksgiving. Hannah was a woman of great ability, perhaps the chief poetess of either the Old or the New Testament. I expect that Mary borrowed part of her Magnificat from the song of Hannah—at least the recollection of that song must have been strong upon her when she sang what we shall presently read.

1 Samuel 2:1. *And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the LORD. My horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation.* Her deliverance seemed to her

to be a type and symbol of the way in which God delivers all His people, so she rejoiced in that great salvation which He works out for His people as a whole.

2-7. *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside You: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has born seven; and she that has many children is waxed feeble. The Lord kills, and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up. The LORD makes poor, and makes rich: He brings low, and lifts up.* With what jubilation she sings of the way in which God deals with men, putting down the mighty and lifting up the lowly!

8. *He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and He has set the world upon them.* Whatever solid thing it is that bears up the frame of this natural world, it is God's power that supports it. He has made all things that are, and He upholds them with the word of His power.

9. *He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness.* What an awful picture that is of the doom of the wicked, "Silent in darkness." We read of the one, in the parable of our Lord, who had not on the wedding garment, that he was speechless. And at the last the wicked will have nothing to say, nothing with which to excuse themselves, nothing with which to comfort themselves, and all around them will be—

"Darkness, death, and long despair."

Vanquished in their fight with God, conquered forever, "the wicked shall be silent in darkness." I hardly know of a more dreadful picture than that of a spirit sitting amidst the clammy damps of the thick darkness of desolation, forever silent.

9, 10. *For by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces, out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.* That is the song of this happy woman—and if we read the last three verses of Psalm 113, we shall see that the writer seems to have studied Hannah's song and to have molded his Psalm upon it—"He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise you the Lord." Now let us read Mary's song in the 1st chapter of the gospel according to Luke.

You remember, dear friends, how the Lord Jesus said, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." The Savior's heart found a sacred satisfaction in the execution of His Father's sovereign will in revealing to babes what He had hid from the wise and prudent! And it is remarkable that both Hannah and Mary sang upon that very theme which made the heart of the Savior leap for joy. We might have expected to find an abundance of affection in a woman's song rather than a depth of doctrine, but both Hannah and Mary make the sovereignty of God the strain of their songs.

Luke 1:46, 47. *And Mary said, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.* [See Sermons #606, Volume 10—MARY'S SONG; #1514, Volume 26—THE KEYNOTE OF A CHOICE SONNET; #2219, Volume 37—A HARP OF TEN STRINGS and #2941, Volume 51—MARY'S MAGNIFICAT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The burden of Mary's Magnificat is very similar to Hannah's song, though there was one respect in which she could raise an even loftier note, for she had been chosen to be the mother of our Lord!

48-55. *For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away* [See Sermon #2582, Volume 44—ALTO AND BASS and Sermon #3019, Volume 52—THE HUNGRY FILLED, THE RICH EMPTIED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our father, to Abraham, and to His seed forever.* You see that the theme of the song is the same all through—the casting down of the proud and the mighty—and the uplifting of those that are bowed down and despised! And all this is ascribed to the sovereignty of God.

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THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT
NO. 3257

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The fruit of their thoughts."
Jeremiah 6:19.

DO you observe here, my brothers and sisters; how God declares that He would not only punish Israel for gross overt acts of sin, but that He would also bring upon the nation terrible chastisements for their thoughts? A solemn warning, full of instruction to us.

It has almost passed into a proverb, that "thought is free." Whether this is true or false, an axiom or a gaffe, must depend on the sphere in which thought moves. It is true in the sense of thought being free before men, since none of us can judge our neighbor's thoughts, nor have we any right to attempt the task. Religious opinion, for instance, is not a thing of which the law can justly take cognizance. As far as the civil government is concerned, whether a man's sentiments are those of a Christian or an idolater, a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Mormon, he is entitled to all civil rights. Be he who he may, he is oppressed if he is deprived of his liberty or of any privilege because of his thoughts! Be he who he may, he is injured if any one sect is rendered dominant, or is supported by a forced taxation drawn from the whole. Thought must be free and it shall be acknowledged, by God's help, perfectly free as between man and man! Whatever tyrants may decree, they have never yet been able to stop the progress of opinion! When they have used all their prisons and their racks, their dungeons and their blazing stakes, they have never been able to turn a sound man from a truth which he has embraced, nor, I may add, have they been able to confirm a wavering man in the lies which they have tried to thrust upon him. Thought, in that sense, is free by natural right.

Yet there is another side to the same question, by reason of which we are bound to make this solemn protest—thought is not free before God. I have no more authority to think of God as I please than I have to act before Him as I please! In either case, the charge of licentiousness would lie against me, for the God who is supreme over the outward actions of my body is likewise the only Lord and Governor of the inward motions of my spirit. All the provinces of the little Isle of Man's soul belong to God, the Great Governor. Over body, soul and spirit He is Legislator and Lord!

That thought in this sense is not free is to be proved very clearly, for *some of the commandments of God contained in the Decalogue particularly relate to thought.* Such, for instance, "You shall not covet your neighbor's

house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife," and so on. That commandment is clearly, particularly and peculiarly one relating to *thought*. God's law, therefore, takes cognizance of thought. Moreover, we know that God has told us, as we read in the 139th Psalm, that *He is constantly watching our thoughts*. He knows them before they are known to us—"You understand my thought afar off." To what end, do you think, does God watch our thoughts but with this view—to bring us into judgment at the last great day for every idle word and for every idle imagination and thought of our hearts? And, my brothers and sisters, we have it upon record that God not only puts His law to work on our thoughts, and watches our thoughts, but that *He is also angry on account of evil thoughts*. Remember what we read in Genesis 6:5, 6—"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." Do not, therefore, make light of evil thoughts! If your conscience is awakened, truly awakened, you never will. A steeled and seared conscience may look upon them with indifference—those whose hearts are not right toward God may sneer at the idea of any evil consequences coming from what they simply turn over in their minds—but if you have a tender heart, if God has been pleased to takes the callousness from off your conscience, and to make it sensitive, you will say at once, "Oh, save my soul from base and wicked thoughts!"

That thoughts are of the utmost importance may likewise be inferred from the fact that *God makes them here the ground of punishing His people*. He speaks of "the fruit of their thoughts." The thought in itself may not be a very great thing, but what will it come to? It may even be a very little thing, but what will be the end of it? *Thoughts of evil are in themselves evil thoughts!* It is questionable whether we can even read the report of our neighbor's sin without producing some sinful thoughts in ourselves. It is debatable whether a person can have much to do with speaking or hearing of the offenses of others without in some degree defiling himself, for as pitch sticks, and soot and things black and dirty defile one by the slightest contact, so does sin in any shape passing over the mind! Touched by the hand, it might scarcely leave any discernible mark behind, but there is a distinct impression left upon the *mind*, so that every picture of evil which passes through the soul remains there to do that soul injury. The thought of evil is in itself sin.

And what is more, *the thought of evil paralyzes the finer faculties of the soul*. The more we think of sin and become familiar with it, the less terrible does it become to our apprehension. I am sure this is the result where men habituate their reveries with any form of evil. Could the minds of men who have become murderers be analyzed, I doubt not it would be found that they had been a long time in schooling themselves to the commission of the horrible crime. They have thought upon it, meditated and deliberated about it until, at last, it has seemed to them but a mere trifle—and then they have gone forth to do it without

misgiving. I do not believe that a man becomes a villain all at once. He puts his soul to school—his thoughts are his teachers—or, rather, they are the schoolbooks in which his soul reads and, at last, he becomes capable of transacting the deeds of a scoundrel. If you think long upon any sin, the probability is that as soon as the temptation to that sin comes, you will commit it.

I have known persons produce a pathological obsession by constant brooding. I knew a man, once, who was constantly apprehensive that he was being poisoned by people—and I always stood in trepidation for that man lest he should poison himself! If you will harbor the evil thought—if you will ponder on any sin, turn it over and talk with it on your pillow, your familiarity will disarm your fear and the traitor you have harbored will betray you before your suspicions are awakened! Beware, then, of all thoughts of sin! If you show a thief all the locks, bolts and bars in your house—and tell him how the cellar window could be opened, or the backdoor lock be made to give way—do not be surprised if one of these nights you should find all your goods stolen! If you do this and introduce these evil things into your habitation, you cannot wonder at the consequence, however startled your friends may be at the detection!

It is certain that thoughts are the eggs of sin. These are the embryo out of which sins spring—the spawn from which every form of iniquity is developed. We sometimes hear of fever lairs and of pest dens—evil thoughts are just like these. They are the jungles where the monsters of sin fatten and grow. Thoughts of sin are the dark woods that harbor all sorts of evil—they are the evil birds of prey that destroy all sorts of good!

Therefore, as God takes cognizance of our thoughts, let us be mindful of the responsibility they entail upon us. Let us no longer despise them, but look into the nursery where they are reared and begin to search our hearts—and to judge ourselves as in the sight of Him who searches all hearts.

I. BAD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT EXHIBIT A VERY LARGE VARIETY. I shall, however, but refer you to the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus, where the Ten Commandments will help us to a list of thoughts, all of which are horribly mischievous.

The first commandment God gives to us is, *"You shall have no other gods before Me."* That is, in fact, *"You shall have no other god but Me,"* since God is everywhere. This precept is easily broken in our thoughts. If I say to myself, "This is God's law, but the contrary action will be most to my profit," then I make myself, or my money, my god. If on any occasion I say within myself, "I clearly perceive that I ought not to indulge in that sin, but then it will give me great pleasure"—should I indulge in it, then I make my pleasure, that is to say, *myself*, my god—I worship myself instead of God! This is a sin, the essence of which must lie in the thoughts, in the judgment, in the affections. You need not make an image of gold, or of wood and bow down before it—you can become a

thorough paced idolater in the temple of your heart by offering homage to your own self will!

The second commandment contains a further prohibition, *"You shall not make unto you any graven image,"* and so on. That is, "You shall not worship God under any *symbol*—you shall not worship God through any symbol," or, in spirit, "You shall not worship God in any way which God has not commanded." "You shall not invent to yourself methods and modes of worship, but you shall do as God commands you." Now, we can very easily, in our thoughts, fabricate an image. This is what most of us do. We say and think that God is altogether such an one as we are and, having formed to ourselves an idea of God, we bow down before it and say, "These are your gods, O Israel!" Brothers and sisters, you may be idolaters as much by worshiping a god whom your fancy has made as by worshiping a block of stone! That incomprehensible one who has proclaimed Himself in Scripture according to the mysterious attributes of His being, and has further revealed Himself so sweetly and gloriously in the person of the Lord Jesus—this is the God we must worship! We must not make a god, but take the God whom the Scripture reveals! We are not to fashion in our thoughts a god such as we should like him to be—a god who is pure benevolence, but who has no justice—but we must take the God of Scripture—grandly stern, severely dreadful in His wrath while He is unbounded in His compassion and is always gracious and full of mercy! We must acknowledge the God of the Bible and not make a deity to ourselves, or else in our thoughts we have broken the divine law and the fruit of that thought will be that we shall be idolaters and sin will be laid at our door!

The third commandment, as you will clearly perceive, can be broken without saying a word—*"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."* Light thoughts of God, and irreverence of soul towards Him is a violation of the solemn interdict. You have but to think lightly of His name and you have blasphemed it! Before your mouth has been opened to utter the rash expression, the rebellious thought is a profanation of the Most High.

As for the *law of the Sabbath* in the fourth commandment which binds our race, that is readily enough violated by us all. Do not suppose that you are a keeper of the Sabbath because you do no work with your hands—you are just as guilty if you work with your brain! You are to rest on that day from all your own works. Do as much as you please for God on that day, but your mind should lay aside its care. You must not bring your shop here—you might almost as well stay at home and carry on your trade. You must not bring your burden in here! No, my brothers and sisters leave that at the door and ask God's grace that you may rise this day from all these things and give your heart and mind entirely to the worship of Him who has sanctified the day unto Himself. You see, then, that this commandment may readily be broken without any overt act—and the breach destroys the validity of the Sabbath to you. It yields you no comfortable rest while your mind is toiling, tugging and straining

about a thousand troubles and difficulties! But if you kept the commandment in your spirit, it would be a sweet and blessed rest to you.

We turn now to the second table, the commandments which relate to men. "*Honor your father and your mother*." Ah, when we were children and since then, unkind and unhallowed thoughts of our parents have been quite sufficient to convict us of offenses against the law. Without a disobedient action, without a rebellious word, the child may in thought be a rebel to his parents.

"You shall not kill." But Christ tells us that he that is angry with his brother without a cause is virtually a murderer! So that *thought* can slay and kill and, indeed, it is the angry thought that lays the foundation of the deadly stroke! There would be no murdering and slaying if there were no enmity. Men would not march to slay each other, surely, or waylay their hapless victims and do desperate deeds of violence unless, first of all, their souls were set on the fire of hell.

"You shall not commit adultery." Little will I say on this commandment, but here is our Lord's own exposition of it, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Fornication may thus abound in us to our defilement—and our souls' ruin—even though we may still be kept back by fear, perhaps, from the commission of the evil deed. Beware, then, you who can gloat over evil, you who can suck the forbidden sweet behind the door, you who can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue—beware lest you shall have your portion with those who fall into the sin! I say not that the thought of the sin is as bad as the sin, itself—it cannot be so, certainly, in its result to others—but it is still a sin—and a sin to be answered for in that tremendous day when the judge of all the earth shall allot their portions unto men!

"You shall not steal." Every envious thought of another man; every desire to possess myself of what is not mine; everything of this sort, in which I would grasp that which does not belong to me, is a constructive theft! The thief does not so much steal when he puts out his hand to take his neighbor's purse, as in the thought which led him to do it, for the hand may sometimes take the purse without offense—it may be to protect the property of one who is disabled and incapable of guarding it himself. Such a thing is supposable—that one man might legitimately take another's purse and have a right to do so. It is not the act, but the *motive* when he deliberately ventures to take that which is not his own and would possess himself of his neighbor's goods to his neighbor's injury—this constitutes the very virus and soul of the theft.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." If I think harshly of my neighbor without a cause; if I conceive an unjust prejudice against him; if I look coldly upon him when he really does not deserve it; if I make up my mind out of some whim or fancy that he is a bad fellow, and shrug my shoulders, and I know not what, besides—though I have never said a word—yet still in thought I have injured my neighbor! Above

all things, brothers and sisters, avoid that shoulder shrugging—it is an abomination! We sometimes see it in company. Ah, they will not dare to say what it means, the cowards! You might suppose that the man against whom it is directed had killed his mother if you liked, for you are sure to suppose the worst. Be brave enough, if it must be spoken, to speak it! And if it must not be spoken, well then, do not say it in that mysterious language which may ruin a man in the estimation of others. Avoid any false witnessing in your thoughts and you will not bear it in your words.

To the last precept of the catalog I have already referred. It is especially a thought command—"*You shall not covet.*" All greedy desires which make us wish to get our neighbor's goods to the injury of others, are sins—and the fruits of such thoughts are guilt, punishment and the wrath to come!

Let me now conduct you a step further to another set of evil thoughts which could not be very easily comprised in the Decalogue.

There are *self-righteous thoughts*—the supposition that we are not as sinful as God says we are! The conceit that we may, perhaps, work ourselves out of our difficulties and force our way to heaven! Now, the fruit of such a thought as this will be amazement in the day when God will strip us of our self-righteousness and make us stand naked to our eternal shame! Beware of self-righteous thoughts, my hearers! They are the Tarpeian rock from which Satan has hurled thousands of souls! It were better for you that a millstone were fasten about your neck and that you were cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should thank God that you are not as other men when, after all, you are as corrupt as other men and will perish as they do! Self-righteousness keeps you from coming to Christ and certainly it excludes you from eternal life and will close the gates of heaven against you. God deliver us from the fruit of such thoughts!

Then, again, *proud, boastful, vainglorious self-seeking thoughts* are, alike, obnoxious. How highly some people think of themselves! You can see it in their gait and their speech betrays them. Yet their wine is all froth and their gold is all counterfeit. Their speech, when they begin to tell of what they have, and what they can do, and what they *did* do upon such and such occasion—all this is an abomination to honest men—and their thoughts must be very abominable to God! It is one of the things which He says He hates—a proud look. God grant us grace to be rid of every proud thought, for we have nothing to be proud of! A proud man is nothing but a windbag, and when either the ills of life, or the crisis of death shall put a pin into it, what a collapse there will be! How the haughty one will discover himself to be nothing but emptiness and vanity! Get rid of proud thoughts, for oh, what will they do? Pride dragged an angel from heaven and made a devil of him—and pride will drag any of us down to the level of the devil if we fall into its snare.

Another still more common set of thoughts, but not much decried, are *murmuring thoughts*. Ah, me; how full some people are of these! They can

hardly speak but what they have something to grumble about. Trade with them is always bad. Ever since I have been in London, trade has been bad, but it is even worse now! It never was so bad as it is now, except that it was just as bad last year and, as far as I know, has always been at the worst! Farmers never have, to the best of my recollection, had more than "an average crop." And most years there has been a failure. If the wheat has been good, the turnips have always gone bad, or *something* has! I notice murmuring to be a very common thing with many people—and you no sooner sit down in the cottage than, instead of telling you that someone has been there to help them a little, and give them some assistance—they say they have only the parish allowance—a miserable pittance! So it is—but they forget the mercies that they have. Why should I always be telling how often I have rheumatic pains and how many times I find that there is something wrong with my constitution? Why should I make it my constant habit to compel everybody to be miserable wherever I go? "Well," says one, "but you know we cannot help it!" My dear friend, if you do not help it, then I will tell you what will be the fruit of it—*you will make yourself incorrigibly miserable*. You will bring yourself into a desperate state in which nothing will comfort you! I believe that in this respect, we are very much our own masters. Not all bounties of providence can make us happy if we have a thankless, ungrateful heart! You may have all that the world can give you, and yet be wretched—or you may be very, very poor, and yet be cheerful! A thankful heart is the thing we need and, oh, may God be pleased to give us that thankful heart! But what I want you to remember is that murmuring is a great sin. They murmured against God in the wilderness and He sent fiery serpents among them. God thinks much of our complaints against His providential dealings with us—let us not think so little of the sin of provoking Him with our thoughts.

How prone we are likewise to cherish *unbelieving thoughts!* Oh, that we were all rid of these! But I suppose if I went round these galleries, I would find in every pew somebody who has unbelieving thoughts. We fancy that God will forsake us, that providence will turn against us. We get like old Jacob when he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Whereas *everything* is working for us, only we cannot see it. Be gone, unbelief, for the fruit of unbelieving thoughts is weakness, sorrow, rebellion against God and I know not what else of rashness and presumption! God save us from these thoughts!

Procrastinating thoughts have been the fruitful source of mischief to full many of you. You have good thoughts and good resolves, but you always put things off and think that better times will come for leaving off your sins and seeking Christ! Even though the least evil would be a fearful waste of time—worse than which you run a perilous risk—it is yet to be dreaded that your souls will be lost at the last.

Others of us have to complain of *wandering thoughts when we are worshiping God*—and the fruit of these is to spoil the golden seasons which, well used, might yield great profit. Oftentimes, when the service has been fitted enough to minister refreshment and instruction—and others have been nourished by the word—some poor soul goes out and says, "I have not enjoyed it at all." Why, of course not, for your thoughts have been elsewhere! These are the birds that come down upon the sacrifice. If, like Abraham, we drive them away, we shall be able to worship in peace. But if not, the fruit of wandering thoughts in the house of God is that the service is spoiled. So, too, in the closet, whether ostensibly engaged in private devotion or the reading of Scripture—unless the thoughts are centered upon the subject in hand—there can be no spiritual gain in drawing near unto God.

II. For a few minutes, now, let us think of brighter things while I mention A FEW GOOD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT.

"Of which," says an apostle, "we cannot now speak particularly," when he had a long list and little space, so I must say now. If you would have good faith in your soul, *cultivate humble thoughts*. No man was ever injured by having too lowly a view of himself! The best definition of humility I ever heard was this—"to think light of ourselves." To think of ourselves as below the standard is lowliness—to think of ourselves as above the standard is pride. But to form a right estimation of ourselves is true humility! Avoid the counterfeit which is in the world—that is mock humility. Be truly humble. Have low thoughts of yourselves, especially before God! Penitent thoughts of sin, humble views with regard to divine grace and a close account of your own responsibility are indispensable—so, you will find that humility will sweep out the chamber of your soul and prepare it for the incoming of the great prince.

Cultivate very much *forgiving thoughts towards your fellow men*. Never be hard to be persuaded to pardon an offense. He that takes his brother by the throat will be sure to be taken by the throat himself. Evil for evil, it is said, is beastlike. Good for good is manlike. Evil for good is devil like, but good for evil is Godlike! Try to do it and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart, it will be to forgive one who has very greatly and wantonly injured you. The worse the offense, if you can overlook it, the greater will be your own joy and the better proof will you have that you are a child of God.

Go to bed each night and wake up each morning with *admiring thoughts of God's goodness and with adoring thoughts towards God's greatness*. You will find these thoughts to be like bees that will come home to you laden with honey. Let your soul be a hive of them! Worship the Lord. Think much of Him. Let every blessing you receive make you think of Him. Do not sit at the table and offer what we call, "grace," because it is the custom to do so, but let your soul really see God's hand in the gift of everything that is on the table! We need not fear worldly thoughts if we were to sanctify those worldly thoughts. Said one, "The road on which I tread makes me think of Christ—the Way. The door

through which I pass makes me think of Christ—the Door. I cannot handle money but what I think that I am not my own, but am bought with a price. I do not receipt a bill without recollecting that He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against me. I cannot talk to my fellow man and receive his answer without thinking how I talk with God and how He answers me." In such manner, with many thoughts of God, you will find the fruit of heavenly mindedness in your spirit. Angels will come and go to and fro between you and the courts of the Most High if you have many of these admiring and adoring thoughts of God!

Thankful thoughts are well-deserving your high encouragement. Get a cage full of these birds of paradise and let them fly about in the groves of your soul and sing there at all times! Oh, there is no better companion than cheerful gratitude! If a man can but see the mercy of God in everything, instead of looking always at the black side of the picture, you will be happy, indeed! The fruit of thankful thoughts will be summer in your soul even when it is the depth of winter outside! Cultivate thankful thoughts as you cultivate sweet flowers in your garden!

Yet again, dear friends, get *many and abundant believing thoughts;* when you cannot see your way, still trust in your Lord. Believe in Him. Though everything should give the lie to the promise, still believe the promise to be true.

Abound much in *thoughts of submission* to God. Every morning exercise such thoughts. Put your soul into God's hands that He may deal with you according to His will all the day. And each night, when you review the day, thank God for it all, whatever it may have been—knowing that it must be good—no, must be *best* if God has ordered it!

I will finally say, seek, believer, to have many longing thoughts after Christ. Have longing thoughts to be with Him where He is! Let Christ have the best thoughts—the cream of them. Let Him have the first growth of your spirit. Be with Him in waking. Say to Him in the evening, "Abide with us, for the day is far spent." And if you lie awake at night, still seek to have some precious thought of Christ, like a wafer made with honey, to put under your tongue. Oh, we can bring heaven down to earth if we can take our thoughts up to heaven! If thoughts are the wings and the Spirit is the wind, we will fly away to the celestial paradise!

Be much, then, in such thoughts as these, and may the fruit of your thoughts be such as God, Himself, may delight in, to Jesus Christ's praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 7:1-15; 17:1-14

Jeremiah 7:1-3. *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, that enter in*

at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings; and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Many of them thought that if they went up to the temple, it was all right with them. If they did but go through the outward ritual, they would certainly be accepted. They must have been astonished when Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, met them at the temple door and told them that the best worship of God was holiness—not the mere outward ceremony but the renewal of the life, the cleansing of the heart before Him.

4-7. *Trust you not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD. The temple of the LORD, are these. For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.* The blessing is not to the temple and the temple worshipers—the blessing is to holy men, to such as love righteousness, to such as obey the living God and do justice between man and man—and especially between themselves and the poor and needy of the earth. It is necessary to say this even now, for there are some who talk of being regenerated by baptism, of being saved by sacraments—they trust in their priests and rely upon their performances. "Trust you not in lying words"—that is the Scriptural description of all that kind of thing—just lying words and nothing better!

8-10. *Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not; and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?* Will you quote the very decree of God as an excuse for your sin? Will you make it out that even He is partaker in your criminality? That will never do! Only a lying heart could conceive of such an abomination!

11-16. *Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, says the LORD. But go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all the works, says the LORD, and I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by My name, wherein you trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your father, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make interception to Me: for I will not hear you.* You know how, through the sin of Eli's sons, God forsook Shiloh—and the tent of His house, and the ark of His covenant were removed—and

Shiloh became an utter desolation. So will God do to any church that becomes unfaithful to Him! Go to Rome and see what she is today—mother of harlots, though once she seemed to be the chaste spouse of Christ. Her idolatries are as many as those of the heathen, for she forsook the truth of God and turned aside from the Most High! Think not that God is tied to any place, or to any ministry. If we walk not before Him aright, He may take the candlestick out of its place! He may take the talent away and give it to others and then, "Ichabod," shall be written on the walls whether it is of Shiloh or of Jerusalem! Jeremiah has thus shown us clearly that no confidence can be placed in holy places or outward ceremonies—the state of the heart and the life is the all-important matter!

Jeremiah 17:1. *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.* [See Sermon #812, Volume 14—THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is so ingrained in their very nature that you might as well try to erase an inscription that is written upon steel with the point of a diamond as hope to get this perversity out of the nation! It is engraved upon the tablets of their heart. What is mere habit can be altered, but what is ingrained in the heart cannot be taken away except by a miracle of grace! It was the heart that was wrong—the fountainhead was polluted—so what could the streams be, but foul?

1. *It is engraved upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;* Their holiest things were defiled. They wrote up the names of their idol gods even upon God's altar and so they bore a written testimony against themselves!

2. *While their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.* God forbade the setting up of altars. There was one altar at Jerusalem and there were to be no more—but they selected spots where great trees had long grown—they chose the tops of the hills—and they built shrines for their idols there! And therefore God was angry with them. Oh, how readily we may turn anything into sin! How easily our choicest mercies may be made into occasions of iniquity!

3-8. *O My mountain in the field, I will give your substance and all your treasures to the spoil, and your high places for sin, throughout all your border. And you, even yourself, shall discontinue from your heritage that I gave you and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you know not: for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever. Thus says the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes , but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* Oh, the blessedness of confidence in God! You

see it here set out in contrast with the misery of trusting in men! Drought comes even to this tree and times of trouble come to the believer—but the drought does not affect the tree, for it has secret, underground sources from which it sucks up its life! It spreads out its roots by the river and blessed is that man who has a secret life, a secret strength, a secret comfort which sustains him in the trying hour! The world cannot perceive it, but he drinks it in and lives upon it.

9. *The heart.* That is the principal matter; it was the heart of the nation which had gone astray from God. "The heart—

9-11. *Is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. As the partridge sits on eggs, and hatches them not; so he that gets riches, and is not right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.* The prophet likens the man who gets riches by falsehood and oppression to a bird which has many eggs, too many for her to cover and, consequently, though she sits on them, there is such a heap of eggs that they are, none of them, hatched—they come to nothing. I think I know some men who are very much like that partridge. It would be a great mercy for them if they had only half of the eggs that they have, for all they get is the care and trouble of covering them, but no living joy comes out of them—the eggs are worthless. He that has not the grace of God in his heart is just like a bird sitting upon worthless eggs. Poor soul! "At his end he shall be a fool." He must therefore be something of a fool, now, for he that pursues an end which shall end in folly is a fool to have such an end before him!

12-14. *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake You shall be ashamed and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are my praise.* [See Sermon #1786, Volume 30—OUR SANCTUARY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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STUMBLING AT THE WORD
NO. 3258

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 13, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1864.

"And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient."
1 Peter 2:8.

YONDER is a wreck after a terrible tempest. That is all that remains of a once fine vessel and on the wreck, lashed to the mast, I see a number of mariners clinging, almost frostbitten with the cold and drenched through and through with brine. But there goes the lifeboat, so I trust they will soon all be rescued from their perilous position. I am absolutely certain of one thing with regard to all those who are clinging to that poor wreck of a ship—that there is not a man among them who will raise any objection to being saved! No, whatever may have been their previous position in life, or their habits, or tastes, or anything else—they will all be equally glad to welcome the friendly lifeboat and to be taken on board the vessel of mercy. Yet is it not a strange thing, dear friends, that when poor humanity has become a total wreck and poor souls are clinging to the sinking ship with hopes that must certainly be disappointed—and when Jesus Christ appears within hail, willing and able to save unto the uttermost—there are multitudes who raise all sorts of objections to being saved by Him? He is not the sort of Savior they would like to have, or His way of saving sinners is not the one that they approve! And there are all manner of difficulties which they invent, which they imagine being evidences of their wisdom, but which are really only proofs of their folly and vanity. They prefer to be lost rather than to be saved by such a Savior in such a way as He has ordained!

Men in a dungeon do not take exception to the man who breaks open their prison and sets them free! Men who are dying do not generally object to the physician who is seeking to save their lives. A man who is condemned to death does not quarrel with the king who gives him a free pardon! There is nothing which shows the strange infatuation of sin more than this—that a man quarrels with his best friend, puts away from him the plan of salvation which God has made with infinite wisdom and will not come to Christ that he may have life! I want, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to plead with all those in this assembly to whom Christ, Himself, has hitherto been "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense"—those who still "stumble at the word, being disobedient."

I shall try, first, *to plead with you against your objections*. Then I will endeavor *to plead with you for Christ.* And after that *I will plead with God's people for you and ask them to plead with God on your behalf.*

I. First, then, let me PLEAD WITH YOU AGAINST YOUR OBJECTIONS.

What is it that makes you think so little of Christ or that makes you think so badly of Christ? Shall I take the words out of your mouth? It may be that one reason of your quarrel is that *Christ's commands seem to you to be so strict*. He will have you pluck out your right eye and cut off your right arm if they would prevent you from entering into life. He lays the axe to the root of the tree and not only condemns your overt acts of sin, but tells you that a look or a word is sufficient to condemn you! He would have you turn at once from all those pleasant but seductive things which will ruin your soul unless you forsake them. You do not like such strictness as this—if you could be permitted to keep some of your sins—if now and then you might be allowed some sinful indulgence and yet be saved, you would be quite content. But to give up all—to be separated at once from the world and from mammon is more than you can endure!

But my dear hearer, is this objection of yours founded upon the belief that Christ denies you anything that is really good and pleasant? Is it a good thing for a man to even occasionally do that which his Maker condemns? Does not God desire your happiness and would He deny you anything which would be for your highest enjoyment? No, sirs, He is too good to do that! His very name is LOVE! Why, if sin were for your eternal welfare, He would not only permit you to indulge in it, but He would command you to commit it! But knowing it to be a deadly poison, He forbids you to touch it. More fatal than an adder's sting is sin! More terrible than the conflagration which first devours the peasant's cottage and then wraps a whole city in its fiery embrace! And God, in commanding you to forsake it, and Christ, in entreating you too leave it, do but consult your real welfare and lasting happiness!

After all, what is the gratification which you derive from sin that it should make you quarrel with Christ for taking it from you? How much sorrow does it bring you afterwards? What pleasant fruit have you had from sin up till now? Are you a happy man or a happy woman? If you have so long sought the pleasures of sin and have been in no wise the better for them, why do you still pursue such a profitless counsel? Can it be worthwhile to sin yourselves into hell? Can there be any supposable pleasure that can ever compensate you for everlasting pain? If so, then choose the pleasures of sin for a season, but rest assured that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment! But if, on the other hand, it is a wise decision to think more of eternity than you do of time, I pray you not be angry with my Master because He is willing to cure you of your fatal diseases, to pluck from your hands the poisoned cup and to kill the venomous reptiles that would destroy you! Surely you can see abundant reason why you should drop your objection that Christ's commands are too strict—may the Holy Spirit enable you to drop it forever!

Perhaps, however, you say that you do not so much object to the strictness of Christ's commands as to *the severity of His threats*. Well, I freely admit that my loving Master did say some of the sternest things that ever fell from mortal lips! None of His servants have ever uttered more terrible warnings than He did concerning the worm that never dies and the fire that cannot be quenched. But why are you angry with Him for speaking thus? Is it not the duty of an honest and sincere friend to give warning of impending danger? Are you such fools as to wish to be flattered with lies concerning your immortal souls and their eternal interests? Do you want men to come to you in soft raiment and to use dulcet notes to charm you to the pit? Your own hearts will flatter you quite enough without my Master doing it! It is His great love that moves Him to speak what you call harsh words—He foresees the ruin that awaits you if you continue in your present course of sin—so be not angry with Him because of His faithfulness! It pained Him more to say those words than it can ever pain you to hear them. He never uttered a threat without first feeling its force in His own heart. If you could have looked into His tearful eyes; if you could have gazed upon His sympathetic countenance as He pleaded with men, you would have seen and heard ineffable love speaking in every word that He uttered! O sinners, quarrel not with Christ for warning you of a hell from which He would gladly preserve you! Be angry with yourselves, rather, for choosing the path to destruction! Be vexed and wrathful with your own sins for dragging you down to ruin! But oh, be not angry with the loving Savior for telling you, once and for all, that you cannot escape if you neglect this great salvation! Let your objection to the severity of His threats drop forever—that very severity ought to make you fly to Him—not drive you from Him!

Possibly there is one here who says, "*I do not like the spirituality of Christ's teaching.* If He would tell me to take the sacrament, if He would bid me go to such and such a church so many times a day, I would do it. But He tells me that all these things count for nothing unless I worship God in spirit and in truth. He tells me that I must be born-again and that the Holy Spirit must dwell within me or else I am none of His. Now sir, all this kind of teaching is too difficult for me to grasp—it is a sort of invisible, impalpable thing that I can neither see with my eyes nor touch with my hands—and this causes me to stumble at the word." But sinner, such talk as that is utterly unreasonable! If you will but think seriously for even a minute or two, you must see that no drops of water, no priestly incantations, no cups of wine, no loaves of bread, not even your own prayers can take away your sin!—

"No outward forms can make you clean,
The leprosy lies deep within."

You know that it is a spiritual disease from which you are suffering, so why should you be angry because the great physician prescribes a spiritual remedy for you? Suppose that in Christ's teaching there "are some things hard to be understood"? They are well worth understanding and it is quite possible for you to understand all that is necessary to

make you wise unto salvation! Some very simpleminded persons have comprehended the meaning of the gospel message and have been saved! Many a man who never went to school has gone to heaven! And he who is willing to understand the gospel can understand it. Besides, the Holy Spirit is waiting and willing to instruct all who desire to be taught. It was He who inspired the Apostle James to write, "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." And the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "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 ask Him?" It is your own fault if you remain in the darkness of ignorance when the Spirit is ready to illuminate you and to guide you into all the truth of God! May He graciously shine into your hearts, now, and then you will welcome the spirituality of Christ's teaching instead of stumbling at it!

I hardly imagine that there is one here who will raise the objection that *the gospel is too simple*. Yet we do sometimes get people here who seem to think themselves much too important or too learned to listen to our simple story of the crucified Christ of Calvary! They want something more philosophical, something that ordinary people cannot comprehend; something that they can monopolize and keep to themselves. The gospel is too simple for such as these who regard themselves as the elite of society and, sometimes, those who have neither rank nor education get similar whims into their heads! They do not like to be told that they must come to Christ as guilty sinners needing to be washed in His blood and as helpless sinners needing to receive everything from Him. No, many of you want to *do* something, or to *be* something—you want to learn something mysterious—and that simple message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—that plain, understandable gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," is too easy, too ABC like, too childish for you! Now, sirs, why do you talk thus foolishly? Suppose the gospel had been of such a philosophical character that it could only have been understood by those who had high intellectual powers—what would have been the use of it to nine persons out of ten? Suppose it had consisted of some very inexplicable revelation—how would any of the poor and the simpleminded have been saved? We thank God that the way of salvation is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The gospel is so simple that many, who have had but feeble intellects, have been able to understand it, and have been saved by it. I bless God that the gospel we have to preach is the gospel for the illiterate, the gospel for the poor—and that we can still say, as our Master did—"the poor have the gospel preached to them." And that many of them have, through that gospel, become "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him." Do not quarrel with my Master because of the simplicity of the gospel, lest your pride should hang you on a gallows as high as Haman's.

A more common objection, however, which is raised against Christ, is on account of *the doctrine that He teaches*. Some do not like the doctrine of election; others do not like the doctrine of final perseverance. Some kick at one thing and some at another, but one doctrine at which many stumble is the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They cannot see how it is possible for Christ to be a substitute for sinners. They cannot understand how God can punish Christ in the place of men and that men shall be saved because Christ died in their place. Well now, suppose I was in a burning building and a man brought to the house, a fire escape of a very unusual shape, but one that he assured me had been the means of saving thousands of lives? Do you think that I would object to trust myself to it because it was such a peculiar shape? Of course I would not be so foolish! Then why are sinners so foolish as to object to the shape of the fire escape which God has designed to rescue them from everlasting burning? What could be better than the divine plan of substitution? God must punish sin—He could not be God unless He did—it is a necessity of His nature that He should hate sin with an infinite hatred and He must punish it! Yet, as He had loved His people with an everlasting love, how could He better show His love to them and His hatred of sin than by giving up His well-beloved Son to die instead of them—making Him who knew no sin, to be sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him? This seems to me to be the most beautiful thing I ever heard of and it delights my soul to preach it! There is something so fresh about the gospel that if I were to preach it every day in the week, I do not think I would grow weary of telling it over and over again! See what wisdom and love are here combined so that we have a just God and yet a Savior—sin punished and yet love magnified! Mercy free to go about her gracious errands—and yet the faithfulness of God glorified to the highest degree! To my mind, the most glorious work that God ever performed was when God incarnate died that sinners might live! You surely cannot object to that doctrine of substitution! If you do and if you persist in that objection, let me tell you that you will perish—for he who rejects the Savior who died upon the cross brings eternal ruin to his soul.

There are many who raise objections to Christ because of *the character of His people*. They say that there are so few of them—and that they are such a poor lot—and they are not, all of them, what they should be. So, sirs, you object to go to heaven because you think there are so few going there? But if you go to hell, it will be no relief to you to know that many are sharing the agony with you! It seems to me to be wisdom to be saved even if I were the only one—and eternal folly to be damned even though everyone else should be lost with me! So do not raise any objection because of the number of the saved. And as to their being poor, what of that? Would it not be better to go to heaven side by side with a poor old almshouse woman, or a chimneysweep, or a pauper from the workhouse, than to go to hell with a lord, a duke, or a millionaire? I can always find

the best of company among the Lord's poor people. I am glad to be associated with all of you in your various works of faith and labors of love—and I have often learned more about Christ from the poor than from the rich. Besides, if Jesus Christ was willing to be reckoned among the poor, there is no man who needs to be ashamed of his poverty unless it is brought on by his own sin! I will not say more upon that point, for I can scarcely imagine that I have any simpletons in this congregation who are foolish enough to raise such an objection as this.

Some, however, object to Christ because *if they take up with Him, they will have to break off their friendship with others*. One of them says, "If I become a Christian, everybody will laugh at me!" Well, who minds being laughed at when he is in the right? "But all my old companions will forsake me." It will be a good thing for you if they do unless they also will join you in following Christ! "But when I go to the workshop or the market, they will point me out as a Christian." I hope they will, or I hope you will be such an out and out Christian that they will not need to point you out! I trust that your life will be of such a character that wherever you go, men will be compelled to say, "Yes, that man is a Christian." Why should you need, as it were, to sneak into heaven by some back way where nobody could see you? There is nothing in Christ of which you have any need to be ashamed! So I hope you will have the grace to say, "I will take my stand with Christ. If He is despised, I will be despised. If He is spit upon, I will be spit upon. If He bears the cross, I will bear a cross. I am not ashamed of Him and I pray that He may not have reason to be ashamed of me."

Now, though I hope some of your objections have been removed, I feel that the great objection with which we began, still remains—that is, *you stumble at Christ's word because He bids you repent and turn from your sins*. There are some of you of whom I almost begin to despair—you continue to come where the gospel is preached, but sometimes you sing the song of the drunk, or you join the ranks of the profane, or indulge in other sins that I need not name! Yet you would not like to give up the hope that you still cherish that someday you will be converted. O sirs, I implore you to delay no longer! Christ and your sins will never agree, so come to Christ and leave your sins! However stern may be the conflict, draw the sword and fling away the scabbard—let it be war to the death with sin for Christ's sake and your soul's sake! May the Spirit of God, who alone can separate you from your sin, proclaim the divorce this very hour—that you may be saved now and saved forever!

II. Having pleaded with you against your objections, I pray now for power from on high that I may PLEAD WITH YOU FOR CHRIST.

I have tried to show you that you have no reason to object to Christ. I want, now, just for a minute or two, to remind you that you have many reasons for yielding to Him. First of all, let me ask, *How is it that you are still alive*? If stern justice had dealt with you without the interposition of *mercy*, you would not now have been living upon the earth. You remember that long and serious illness from which you scarcely expected

to recover? Yet here you are in robust health and strength—why were you so wonderfully restored? You recollect that time when you were in the river and you gave up all hope of being rescued? Yet you were saved as if by a miracle—why was that? You have had many marvelous escapes from accidents in which others have been killed—why were you spared? It may be soldier that the bullets whistled close by your ear yet you came back from the war unscathed. It may be, sailor that your ship was almost gone or possibly she was a total wreck—and only you escaped to tell the tale—why was that? Well, let this great mercy that you are still alive move you to repent of your sins and trust in Christ as your Savior! As He has been your preserver, may He also be your Redeemer, your Lord, your All-in-All!

Then let me further ask, *How is it that you are in a place where the gospel is being preached?* Suppose that tonight, instead of a preacher of the gospel being on this platform, there had come here some stern prophet, like Moses or Elijah, and that he had turned to you who are out of Christ and had said to you, "The day of mercy is over, justice now reigns supreme. Hear, you despisers, and wonder and perish, for God will tear you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver you!" What could you have said to delay judgment? But this has not been the case! I have not pronounced a curse upon you! I have not spoken a hard word to you, but I have pleaded with you—oh, that the Lord would teach me how to plead with you more earnestly and more effectually to turn to Him, and live! "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The fact that there is a proclamation of mercy still made to you ought to cause you to weep tears of penitence for your sin and to move you to turn believingly unto Him who died upon the cross, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Then, again, should you not run to Jesus when you remember that *He tells you that He will hear your prayers*? What? Will He hear your prayers and yet will you refuse to pray to Him? He says to you, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men"—so will you not believe that your sin and your blasphemy shall be forgiven for His sake? Oh, that you really knew Him! But you do not know how full of love and grace He is. I wish that you could hear His voice saying to you, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whenever I repeat my Master's words, I feel vexed with myself because I cannot utter them as they ought to be uttered. I know that He must have spoken them with a majestic tone and with a melting melody of earnestness that must have put more force in them than I can ever hope to do! He lived for sinners, He died for sinners, He rose again for sinners, He pleads in heaven for sinners! Ah, how can you refuse to trust Him and love Him and serve Him forever?

III. Now I close by PLEADING WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD FOR SINNERS.

I know that there are in this assembly, not merely hundreds, but thousands who love the Lord Jesus Christ! And it is with them that I am now going to plead. Brothers and sisters in Christ, while I have been talking to those who stumble at the word, have you not been reminded of what you used to do? I have been thinking of my own experience, for I, also, stumbled at the word, being disobedient. And I feel some comfort in preaching to those to whom Christ is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense," by reflecting that He who could save *me* can also save them! And as Christ has quickened you "who were dead in trespasses and sins," you cannot doubt His power to quicken others!

Probably most of you remember that *when you were dead in sin, there were some who prayed for you.* My mother and father and many others prayed for me, and I feel that this is one of the many reasons why I should pray for others. Most of you had someone who thus cared for you, so ought you not to care for others in a similar fashion? I feel sure that you do care for others—there is in your heart an earnest longing to see them brought to the Savior. May I, therefore, urge you to be more earnest than ever in prayer for the salvation of sinners? I rejoice that we are a praying church, but I am always jealous lest we should lose the spirit of prayer which the Lord has so graciously poured out upon us. Some of us recollect times when we have gripped the angel of the covenant and we would not let Him go until He blessed us. Many of you were given to us in answer to these effectual fervent prayers—and this makes me the more urgent in pleading with you to pray for others.

Nor must you be content with praying for them, for *others very earnestly sought to bring you to the Savior.* And this encourages me in pleading with you to grow more completely devoted to the blessed work of winning souls for Christ. We must all be up and doing for our glorious Lord and Master. Members of this church, you will be ungrateful for all that the Lord has done for us in the past if you slacken your efforts in the future! In your homes, in your workshops, in your mission rooms, in your street preaching, in your tract distribution, in your Bible classes, in your Sunday schools—wherever you are—anywhere and everywhere seek after souls as diligently as the hunter seeks his prey! There are many reasons why you should be earnest in bringing sinners to the Savior**.** The terrible doom of the lost is reason enough by itself, but you can find abundant reasons in the back streets and alleys of this great city and in the sin that abounds in the splendor of the West End as much as in the squalor at the East End.

Do you need arguments for soul winning? Look up to heaven and ask yourself how sinners can ever reach those harps of gold and learn that everlasting song unless they have someone to tell them of Jesus who is "mighty to save." But the best argument of all is to be found in the wounds of Jesus! You want to honor Him. You desire to put "many crowns" upon His head and this you can best do by winning souls for

Him! These are the spoils that He covets. These are the trophies for which He fights. These are the jewels that shall be His best adornment. O Christian men and women, if any of you have been negligent of late in your Master's service, may the Holy Spirit make you more diligent! I would like to make a personal appeal to each one of you to consecrate yourselves and your substance more and more to the advancement of the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ, your Lord, so that you shall live wholly for Him! To be a true Christian is something higher and nobler than simply sitting in our pews twice on Sunday, or even teaching in a Sunday school or giving away tracts. It is the laying of one's whole self upon the altar—offering your body, soul and spirit as a living sacrifice unto God, which is our reasonable service, so that whether we live or whether we die, we shall be the Lord's, and live or die for Him! I plead with you, Christians—and I wish I had more power to do it effectually—for the sake of sinners, to stir yourselves up to pray for them and to labor for them that through the mighty working of the Spirit of God, they may no longer stumble at the word, but may yield themselves to Christ and be saved!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:17-25; 2:1-12.

1 Peter 1:17. *And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* Not in unbelieving fear, but in that holy carefulness which watches against sin of every kind lest in any way you should spoil your holy work for God.

18, 19. *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* [See Sermon #621, Volume 11—"THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* As your redemption cost so much, prize it highly and do not go back to the sin from which you have been so dearly redeemed! Fear lest you should do so. Remember that heredity has a great power over you—the traditions of your fathers will imperceptibly draw you back unless you watch against them. But you have been so gloriously redeemed with the very blood of Christ's heart that you must not draw back.

20, 21. *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.* Whenever you think of the glory of your risen Lord, remember what your redemption cost Him and quit all dead works—lay aside the grave clothes of care and anxiety and live in newness of life as those who have been redeemed by the risen Savior!

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*—[See Sermon #398, Volume 7—THE NEW NATURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See how this love of the brethren is linked on to regeneration. The first time we are born, we are born in sin, and that tends to hate. But when we are born-again, born unto God, our life tends to love. "Being born-again"—

23. *Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever*. Peter reminds us, in the 18th verse, that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with incorruptible. And he here reminds us that we are "born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Everything about a Christian means his deliverance from corruption and the bringing of him into a state of immortality and incorruption!

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*. Everything earthly is corruptible. That which is merely natural has its season of decay, but the children of God have the word of the Lord abiding in them—and that never dies—it has no autumn or winter.

20. *And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you.*

1 Peter 2:1. *Therefore, laying aside all malice.* This is one of the old corruptible things, so put it away from you—

1. *And all guile.* All crafty tricks, all lies, exaggeration, double meanings to your words, and the like—

1. *And hypocrisies, and envies.* All hatred of those who are either better or better off than you are—

1. *And all evil speaking.* Thus the tongue expresses what the heart feels. Laying all these evil things aside, you will prove that you have been born-again—born of the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.

2. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.* You are in the family of God, but you are only babes in it. You have to grow to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus, so "desire the sincere (unadulterated) milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." There is no other way of growing.

3, 4. *If so you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him, as unto a living stone*—So that "the Lord" here meant is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly "a living stone"—

4. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious*—When men disallow Christ, it is a matter of small account to us. As for what they have to say, it is less than nothing and vanity. Like the wild bluster of the winds, let it bluster until it has blown itself out. Christ is "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious"—

5. *You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus*

Christ. [See Sermon #1376, Volume 23—THE TRUE PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See what Jesus Christ has made of you who believe in Him! By the incorruptible blood and the incorruptible seed, He has brought you into a heavenly priesthood and you are, today, to stand at the spiritual altar and "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Will you not pray, will you not praise, will you not love? These are sacrifices with which God is well pleased!

6, 7. *Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious.* [See Sermons #242, Volume 5—CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS and #2137, Volume 37, a Sermon with the same title—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Is He not? Then enjoy His preciousness, all of you who truly believe in Him! Precious Christ, precious to all His people, precious to me!

7, 8. *But unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* When Peter wrote these verses, he must have thought of his own name. He was called a stone or a rock—and once he was to his Master "a rock of offense" when he stumbled at Christ's word, and began even to rebuke his Lord! But he was forgiven and saved, so now he gives a warning to others lest they should still more grievously sin by making Christ, Himself, to be to them "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."

9. *But you are a chosen generation*—Hear this, you believers! Drink in this precious truth of God! See God's election, making you to be a people born of the Holy Spirit—"a chosen generation"—

9. *A royal priesthood*—This is a wonderful combination! Kings and priests at the same time! All honors meet on you through divine grace! "A royal priesthood"—

9. *An holy nation, a peculiar people*—You have national privileges. God reckons you not as a mob or a herd of men, but as a nation, and a nation with this peculiar hallmark upon you, that you are "a holy nation." This is the true token of your nationality that you are "holiness unto the Lord." "A peculiar people" belonging to God alone, marked off from the rest of mankind as peculiarly His! You are not and you are not to be as other men are—you are "a peculiar people." Your road is not the broad one where the many go—it is the narrow one which the few find. Your happiness is not worldly pleasure, but pleasures at the right hand of God which are forevermore. You are "a peculiar people"—

9. *That you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*—[See Sermon #2765, Volume 48—MARVELOUS LIGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You are to be advertisers of the praises or virtues of Christ, not only to know them and to be glad to know them,

but to make them known to others. Beloved, how far are you doing this? I put the question personally to each one of you, for you were chosen by God on purpose that you "should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"—

10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God*—In time long past, who ever heard of the Britons, or of the Anglo Saxons? We were not a people, but we "are now the people of God"—

10. *Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* We may well leap for joy, we who once had not obtained mercy! We sinned against the Lord, but He was longsuffering, and now we have obtained mercy.

11. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims*—For you belong not to the corruptible world, you are of an incorruptible race—"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims"—

11, 12. *Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers*—Which they are sure to do. The better you are, the more will they censure you. This is the only homage that evil can pay to good, to fall foul of it and misrepresent it—"that whereas they speak against you as evildoers"—

12. *They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* God bless to us the reading of His word.

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FAITH'S WAY OF APPROACH
NO. 3259

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 20, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17.

[Another Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1031, Volume 18—HOW CAN I OBTAIN FAITH?—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

ACCORDING to the Christian religion, faith is the great essential thing. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Whatever we may do or may be, we cannot be acceptable with the Most High unless we believe in Him. Even prayer can only be a mockery if it is not the prayer of faith. "He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," or else he does not really pray. The Lord Jesus Christ has died to save men, but it is certain that no man will be saved without faith. Even the blood of Jesus Christ does not save any except those who believe in it. "God so loved the world" is a very wide expression, but we must not make it wider than Scripture makes it, for remember how the verse goes on, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." Without *faith* Christ is not ours. His blood cannot cleanse us, His life cannot quicken us. We must have faith to get at the blessings of salvation.

Suppose we could be brought into touch with Christ without faith for a while, yet, if we had not continuous faith, we would not have a continued connection with the Savior and, consequently, would not abide in eternal life, for it is written, "The just shall live by faith." They not only *begin* to live by faith, but *continue* to live in the same manner. In our holy religion, everything is by faith—faith for life and faith for death. Even the first tears of repentance must be salted with faith—and the last song on earth shall be full of faith. You must have faith or you will perish. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned," is the declaration of Jesus Christ, the Savior, Himself!

I. So, first, LET US DISCOVER WHAT FAITH IS.

We have seen that it is essential. It is very important to understand its nature. Well, faith with regard to God is the same as faith with regard to anything else. It is the same act of the mind, though it differs as to its object. When I believe in God, it is the same kind of mental act as when I believe in my friend. I believe with the same mind. 'Tis true that all saving faith is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, but be it always remembered that we, ourselves, believe, and that the Holy Spirit does not

believe for us! What has the Holy Spirit to believe about? It is not written that He is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. No, but we are to believe in Him! He leads us to faith, but the faith is our own act and deed—and if there could be supposed to be a faith which was not our own act and deed, it could not possibly be the faith which saves the soul! If I understand aright the faith which saves is just this—God has revealed such and such a truth. I believe it to be true and I so believe it to be true that I act upon it. God has said that He has laid sin upon Christ—I believe He has done so. He tells me that if I trust Christ, I may be assured that *my* sin was laid upon Christ. I trust Christ, that is, I rely upon Him—and the reliance which springs out of belief is the essence of faith.

When a man believes a bank to be safe, he will put his money into it if he has need to do so. When a man believes in the honesty of another, the practical issue of it is he takes his word and trusts him. I believe in the truthfulness of God, in the truthfulness of certain narratives given by the four evangelists. I believe that Christ was born at Bethlehem, that He was the Son of God, and that He lived and died as the Savior of men. I believe that His sufferings were expiatory, that He suffered in the place of sinners to make recompense to the justice of God for our sins and, believing that, I trust my soul upon His sacrifice. I rest on it and that faith saves me!

Now, mark, if I do readily rest in Christ I shall do what Christ bids me. *Faith must lead to obedience.* He bids me forsake sin—and I shall do it by His help. He bids me follow Him—and I shall do it if I really believe in Him. A doctor says, "Now, trust me, my man, and I will cure you." Very good. I trust him. He sends me medicine and I take it. But suppose I do not take the medicine? Well, then, I never trusted him! My neglect proves that I cannot have done so.

The only trust that saves the soul is that practical trust which obeys Jesus Christ. Faith that does not obey is dead faith—nominal faith. It is the outside of faith, the husk of faith, but it has not the vital corn of faith in it. Sinner, if you will be saved, you must give yourself up to Jesus Christ to be His servant and to do all that He bids you! You must rely alone upon Him! Trust not in fiction, but in reality—not by mere profession, but with your whole heart—and you must continue to lean, rest and lie upon Him, trusting alone in Him! This is what saving faith is.

Now, there are some who say they wish they could get this faith. They declare that they would do anything to get it. They earnestly long to believe, but somehow they cannot get a grip of faith, cannot quite make out what it is or, if they know what it is, they are still puzzled—they cannot exercise it.

Albeit faith is the gift of God, it is always the act of man—while faith is a privilege, it is always a natural *duty*! Men are bid to believe in Jesus and are sinful if they do not believe in Jesus. Where faith does exist, it is the gift of God, but where it does not exist, it is because men will not believe in Him, but shut their eyes to His light. If they would but see it, that light of God would convince them!

II. LET US, THEREFORE, CLEAR AWAY SOME DIFFICULTIES WITH REFERENCE TO FAITH.

You want faith, you say. You are not a skeptic—you accept the Word of God. You are not one of those who are unsound about the deity of Christ, you receive that. Still, you cannot, you say, get at faith in Jesus Christ. Listen, then, to these observations.

First, remember that it will be your wisdom not to think so much about faith as about the objective of faith. If I want to believe a thing that is in the newspaper, it is no use my sitting down and reading it over and saying, "I should like to believe it and I will try to believe it." My proper way is to begin to look into the matter—not into my faith, but into the matter, itself! And when I have looked into the matter itself, I shall see whether it is reasonable—whether it looks true and, by and by, perceiving the truthfulness of it, faith will come to me as a matter of course.

You are to believe in Jesus. Now, forget the believing and think only of Jesus. If I wanted to love a person, it would be useless for me to sit in my chamber and say, "I shall try to love so and so." You cannot pump love up out of your heart in that way. But suppose that person is exceedingly beautiful, has a delightful character and has lived a charming life? Well, I gaze upon that person's face. I hear the story of his life and I feel that what I could not *make* myself do, I do without attempting to make myself do it! Love comes of itself. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised." So it is with faith. Speaking naturally, it comes of itself through the work of the Spirit of God, from the force of the evidence which is presented to the mind. "Faith comes by hearing." Look then, more at *what* is to be believed than at the mere act of believing!

And next, be solemnly persuaded that what you want is faith and that you must have it. *Do not, therefore, begin confusing faith with something else*. Some of you want an *impression!* You want a *revelation!* You want a *feeling!* You want a *sensation*! Now that is not faith—it has nothing to do with faith! It is feeling, it is being, but it is not believing! What you really need is to believe in God—and if you do that—you shall be saved! But instead of that, you begin to cry, "Oh, that I felt as Mr. Bunyan felt on such an occasion!" That is not the matter in hand, and you are but turning aside from the point you should aim at when you look to those things instead of faith. All other good things will follow faith, but for you who are unsaved, the first, the *only* matter is faith in Jesus Christ!

Many persons are anxious to be saved, which is a good thing, but they have mapped out the way in which they want God to save them—which is a bad thing! They have read the biographies of eminent Christians and they have discovered that some of them, before they found Christ, were sorely tried by horrible thoughts, doubts and fears, temptations to blaspheme and so on. Possibly they have read Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and have noted that he went through a very terrible season of distress before he found peace with God. Perhaps

some of you, my dear friends, have fallen into the idea that if ever you are to be saved, you must feel just as John Bunyan did. And although you have been told, over and over again, that simple faith in Jesus Christ will save you, and save you just as you are, yet you still think it cannot be so but that you must have a deep law work and most dreadful feelings before you can come to the Savior!

I would exhort you earnestly to pray for help in this matter of believing. Ask the Lord to give you faith, but I ask you to *remember that prayer without faith will not save you* and that the gospel is not, "He that prays shall be saved," but, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Some have unbelievingly made a kind of Savior of their prayers and their tears—but that will not do. Away with your prayers if they stand in the place of Christ! It is not what you ask for, or feel, or do—it is what Christ suffered on the cross that is to save you! And the way you are to appropriate the merit of Christ is by faith! So keep to that. Know what it is you need and press forward to get it.

Now we come more closely to the text. Faith is the thing we need. We shall get it according to God's order, and God's order is this—"Faiths comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." *Faith does not come by sacraments.* Nobody ever got faith through a sacrament! It does not say, "Faith comes by seeing." Those processions are very pretty, very pretty, indeed! And very fine are those banners and very sweet the smoke of that incense—but faith does not come that way! Eye gate is closed—through Ear gate eternal life comes into the soul of man! "Faith comes by hearing."

The religion of Jesus Christ is not a religion of performances. It has its ordinances which belong to believers, but it never attempts to change the moral nature by mechanical acts. Eating and drinking and washing cannot possibly be the means by which men are reconciled to God and taught to love the Redeemer. There is a moral means needed—a spiritual means, and the moral and spiritual means are as simple as possible—"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

The text suggests two things, then, as to faith's way of approach. If I want to get faith I must hear, but I must mind *what* I hear. And I must mind *how* I hear.

III. LET US REMEMBER, THEN, THAT FAITH COMES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD.

Soul, would you have faith? Then mind what it is you hear, for the hearing must be "by the Word of God." Faith comes by hearing, but not by hearing anything and everything! The hearing is "by the Word of God" and only as the preaching is according to the Word of God will God bless it. God never blessed a lie to the creation of a newborn spirit. The truth of God has vitality in it—only the Word of God is the living seed in the soul!

"Well," you say, "how am I to hear the Word of God, then?" I reply, first, hear the Word of God as you have it in the Bible. Reading is tantamount to hearing! Be sure, then, if you would find faith, to study much this priceless, matchless book. Study it all! But if you would find

Christ, dwell most on those four inestimably precious books which tell us most about Him. Read the story of His life and His death as given by the four evangelists—and if you would have a comment upon them—read the epistles and study them.

Remember, the point about the Word of God is this—that God has spoken to men through this book. Men wrote it, but they wrote as they were inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit. Especially about the Lord Jesus Christ has God spoken to us by chosen witnesses. There were first the apostles who have written a considerable part of the New Testament. These men saw Christ. John says, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." There were many of them and they saw the miracles of Christ, so that they were sure He was divine. They saw His holy, guileless life. They saw Him in His death and, what is best of all, and most to be remembered is that they saw Him risen again, they watched Him at intervals during forty days and they saw Him till a cloud received Him out of their sight!

They were simpleminded men who could not have invented the story. They were mostly unlettered men and they and hundreds of others so believed it that they died for preaching what they believed! They gained nothing by the statement except scorn and shame. If there is a fact in human history which is verified beyond a doubt, it is the death and resurrection of the Son of God!

Does not that help you believe? "Ah," you say, "I do believe these facts." Well, if you do believe them in very deed and truth, what follows from your belief? Why, that you must hate God in your heart, or else you would be saved because this glorious One of whom they speak came here to save men and will save all that trust Him! You perceive Him to be a divine person—can you not trust Him? If not, it must be because you have some hatred to Him and prefer to be damned rather than acknowledge your salvation by the free grace of God!

Let it not be so! But rather, I pray you, hear His word by attentively reading it, until at last, as you read it, the glory of the inspired truth which shines in the pages shall flame into your soul and you shall say, "I do believe it! How could I have rejected it? It speaks for itself—the deity is in the word!"

Next to that, however, *hear the preachers of God's word,* for though they are not inspired, yet they can do something for you. We can bear witness to what we have known and felt of the work of Jesus Christ in men's hearts and this will supplement the witness of the inspired men and may help you to believe! As one has well said, "If you question a convert, you will generally find that he owes his conversion to a text of Scripture." It is God's word, not man's comment on God's word, that generally saves souls. If you long to be saved, go, therefore, to those that keep to the gospel, that keep to the *real* gospel and have nothing else to say. That is what you need!

Seek also to hear the preacher who preaches experimentally, one who can tell you that he knows he is a sinner, but that he has believed in

Jesus and is saved and knows he is saved! For your healing, you need to have not a surgeon who has never seen a case like yours before, but one who knows about it! And if he has gone through a similar experience, himself, then he is the man for you. If a man has not had anything done for his soul, he cannot tell you of anything that has been done. If he has never seen himself to be a sinner and has never passed from death unto life. If he has never known the bitter pangs of soul trouble and has never looked to the precious Savior on the cross and leaped to find himself set free, why, what is the good of him as a preacher? Let him go and bake bread, or break stones on the road—what has he to do with preaching a gospel of which he knows nothing? Therefore I say again to you—if you would get faith, hear that gospel that speaks to your soul because he who preaches it speaks from his soul about something that he knows for himself!

And if you have your choice, hear one who speaks earnestly, for to hear a cold preacher is the surest way of getting cold, yourself! He that trifles with his ministry will make men trifle with their souls! If I am speaking to any who preach the gospel, I would say that if we do not preach earnestly, people will conclude at once that there is nothing in what we preach—and their blood will lie at our door! We have a weighty theme and we must speak with all our heart and soul. Does not that help you to believe?

To you, sinner, I would also say hear the preacher who speaks pointedly. Do not feel vexed with one who exposes your faults! What do you go to a place of worship for but to have your heart laid bare? A doctor who never makes an examination of his patient, or who, knowing that there is an evil somewhere, is too delicate to allude to it, is a disgrace to his profession! The man who desires to heal men will be plain and honest with them and will not at all attempt to deny an evil thing.

Take heed what you hear, for if you hear the Word of God preached in the power of the Spirit of God, then faith comes by such hearing!

IV. LET US BE ASSURED THAT FAITH WILL COME BY HEARING.

If we would get faith, we must take care how we hear, as well as what we hear. The hearing is, itself, almost as important as the preaching. Faith does not come by every sort of hearing. There have been persons who have heard the gospel for many years, but they have really heard nothing, for it has gone in one ear and out the other. Faith does not come by such hearing!

Brothers and sisters, if we really seek faith, *we ought to hear the gospel aiming at the sense of it first.* It is *what* a preacher says, not *how* he says it, that is the vital thing. I am certain, however, that nine tenths of our hearers are more taken up with *how* we say it than with *what* we say! Of course, we all hear a thing the better if it is put well, but woe to the man who cares only about delicacy of diction and lets his hearers go down to hell! Woe unto him in the great day of account! If, however, the preacher preaches Christ, yet he does not preach Him as you would like to hear Him preached, but somewhat uncouthly, yet listen to him, whoever he may be, for it is the truth of God that he declares! Do not

regard his *manner* so much as his *matter*—and pray that it may be blessed.

You who have not believed, *hear every sermon with the desire to get faith through the sermon*. I believe that our hearers generally get what they come for. If a man goes fishing, he will generally catch fish according to his bait. Some come expecting to get something to find fault with. Well, they are sure to find it! But when a man comes with this design—"I want to find Jesus! I need to get good for my soul. I need to be saved"—then if the preacher is what he should be, the man or woman cannot go away disappointed! If the minister does not preach at all, but only reads part of a chapter of the Word of God, there will be a blessing. If it is only a hymn that is sung, the seeking soul will lay hold of Christ in a hymn—especially if it is such a hymn as, "Just as I am, without one plea," or, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," or, "Jesus, lover of my soul." If you want faith, you need not be long wanting it if you really come anxiously desiring to obtain it!

Dear friends, *the kind of hearing that brings faith is attentive hearing*. I have heard of a child who used to always lean forward to catch every word the preacher said. And his mother asked him why he did so. He replied, "Because, Mother, I heard the preacher say that if there was anything in the sermon by which God meant to bless us, the devil would try to draw our attention some other way when it was being said. And I was so afraid that some good thing that would have blessed me might escape me if I was inattentive." It is a great joy to preach to a house full of people like that—people who are praying as the preacher speaks, "Oh for a blessing, Lord! Oh that the word might come with power to my soul!"

Then, take care to hear retentively. Lay hold upon the word! Keep it, treasure it. Perhaps you say, "I have a bad memory." Well, the very best thing to do when you have a bad memory is to do as the man did who never could remember what he owed—he took care to always pay as he went! If you cannot remember, go and do at once what you are bid to do and then you will not forget it! "Be you doers of the word, and not hearers only!" If you get the substance, never mind the words. If you have a bad habit and it is preached against, never mind the sermon—go and break off the evil habit! If you have been neglectful of prayer, never mind the sermon, pray more! And if Jesus Christ is lifted up before you and you cannot remember what the preacher said—never mind—look to Jesus! There is Christ upon the cross and if you look to Him at this moment, you shall live forever! What memory is needed if you look to Him now? Now, poor sinner, turn your eyes and you shall have heard the gospel in a most retentive manner, indeed!—

"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."

Lastly, *hear the gospel with deep reverence and earnest prayer*. It is no small matter that God should deal with your soul at all, but that He

should condescend to speak to you on terms of love is a wonderful thing! That His own Son should bleed and die for sinners—is not this a miracle of mercy? With such great themes under discussion in the pulpit, you ought to be greatly reverent during the hearing of the word. You should be, indeed, like the earth in the dry weather that opens wide its mouth, chapped and parched as it is, to suck in every drop of rain that falls! If you are sitting under the sound of the gospel thus parched and dry, but opening your soul to receive it and saying, "Drop from above, O sacred dew! Come out of heaven, O showers of grace, and fall on me," it will not be long that you will have to wait!

Your chief business is to believe! And my business is to ask you, in the name of the eternal God, whether you will believe Him or whether you will make Him a liar? One of the two it must be! He that makes God a liar involves himself in awful guilt! But he that believes in Him has glorified Him. God accepts the act of believing in Him as one of the noblest acts of man—so great an act that He sees His own Spirit's work in it wherever He perceives it! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Believe Him now! Our witness is that He does save—He saves from the guilt of sin, He saves from the dread and wrath of hell, He saves from the anger of God, He saves from despair, He saves at once! He saves all who come to Him. Come you to Him!

Now we are going our several ways—what report am I to carry back to my Master, whose message I have been trying to deliver—

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by,
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?"

Young man yonder, is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? I ask your heart, young woman, for my dear Lord and Master. And you, old friend, your life is drawing to its close—it would have been better if you had given Christ the morning of your days—yet He will accept you even now if you will come to Him! May He give you the divine grace to rest upon Him, now, to trust Him this very hour! Then, where He is, there shall you be, also, through the efficacy of His great atoning sacrifice! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 11.

In this chapter we read of the wonders of faith. But I have never read a chapter setting forth the wonders of unbelief. Unbelief is barren, impotent, a mere negation, a dead and accursed thing! But faith bears fruit! Faith produces good works! Faith achieves marvels!

Verse 1. *Now faith* —That is, belief, trust in God—

1. *Is the substance of things hoped for.* It gets a grip of them and holds them fast!

1. *The evidence of things not seen.* The sight of what we cannot see with our mortal eyes!

2. *For by it the elders obtained a good report.* Those who lived in the olden time gained fame and glory from God, Himself, by faith.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* By faith we know more about the creation of the world than philosophy can ever teach us! It has invented the most remarkable and ridiculous theories of how the worlds were made and men produced. We have the truth of God here—the worlds were framed by the Word of God, not made of things which existed previously, but spoken out of nothing by the voice of the Almighty!

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it, he being dead yet speaks.* Faith teaches us how to worship God aright. Faith brings the appointed sacrifice which is therefore accepted.

5, 6. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* The way to please God, then, is to believe in Him! And if there is any possibility of entering heaven without seeing death, faith alone can point the way. You cannot be Enochs unless you please God—and you cannot please God unless you have faith in Him!

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, 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.* Noah was the second great father of men as Adam was the first. In the flood, all died except Noah and his family. Faith made him build the great ship on dry land, into which he went with his wife and family and all manner of living creatures—and when the rest of mankind were destroyed, they outlived the flood.

8-18. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing where he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith, also, Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there from one and him as good us dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable! These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly. Therefore God is not*

ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called. The great trouble of Abraham was not his fatherly instinct, hard as it was to overcome that, and to be the slayer of his only son! His great difficulty was, "How can God's promise be kept? He has given me a promise that in Isaac shall my seed be called, yet He tells me to offer up my son! How can this be?" But by faith he did it—

19. *Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead from which he also received him in a figurative sense.* The doctrine of the resurrection is a precious jewel that faith wears as a ring on her right hand. "God can raise the dead," says faith, and that is a most comforting truth of God! O you bereaved ones, wear that ring! [See Sermons #107, Volume 3—FAITH; #2100, Volume 35—FAITH ESSENTIAL TO PLEASING GOD; #2513, Volume 43—HOW TO PLEASE GOD; #2740, Volume 47—WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IN COMING TO GOD? and #2147, Volume 46—NOAH'S FAITH, FEAR, OBEDIENCE AND SALVATION—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] O you who fear to die, wear that priceless jewel! It will be better than any amulet or talisman that the ancients ever wore!

20, 21. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* Faith can bless other people as well as the believer, himself! It not only brings good cheer into a man's own heart, but it enables him to speak words of love and consolation to his children. Dying Jacob pronounces living blessings upon his sons and upon their sons generation after generation!

22. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.* He would not have his bones buried away from those of his godly ancestors, for he never forgot that he belonged to the chosen nation!

23. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.* They were not afraid to brave the consequences of disobeying Pharaoh's command because of their faith.

24-26. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* Nothing but faith could have brought him to that decision!

27-29. *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, which the Egyptians attempting to do were drowned.* For faith can do what unbelief must not attempt to do—and when unbelief tries to follow in the footsteps of faith, it becomes its own destroyer! You must have real faith in God, or you cannot go where faith would take you. But

with faith you may go through the cloud or through the sea and find yourself safe on the other side!

30. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.* You could not see faith at work on those solid walls. Those huge ramparts and battlements seemed to stand fast and firm, yet they "fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." No battering rams played upon them, but faith can do better work than battering rams or dynamite!

31-33. *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and* [See Sermons #1401, Volume 24—JACOB WORSHIPPING ON HIS STAFF; #966, Volume 16—JOSEPH'S BONES; #1421, Volume 24—THE HIDING OF MOSES BY FAITH; #163, Volume 18—MOSES' DECISION and #2030, Volume 34—MOSES—HIS FAITH AND DECISION—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions*—Remember Daniel in the lions' den and then ask yourself, "What is there that faith cannot do?"

34. *Quenched the violence of fire.* Think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and remember how the fierceness of Nebuchadnezzar's fire was quenched for them!

34-36. *Escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women*—For faith works equal wonders in women as in men! "Women"—

30-38. *Received the dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* This is the grandest roll of heroes that ever lived and every one among them was a man or woman of faith! Faith made them mighty! They were not greater and, in some respects, not better than the rest of us, but they believed in God, they were firm in faith and this became the basis of their conquering character—and thus their names are imperishably recorded here. They did not win the Victoria Cross, but they bore the cross for their Lord and He has honored them with an everlasting crown which shall never be taken from them!

39. *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise*—They passed away before Christ's day, so they did not see the fulfillment of the promises concerning His coming.

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect.* They are waiting up yonder for us! The choirs of heaven cannot be completed without you and me. Heaven's full complement—the perfect number of the divine family of love—can never be made up till we who have believed go up yonder to join all those who

have had like precious faith! By God's grace, we shall all be there—that they with us may be made perfect!

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SPIRITUAL CONVALESCENCE
NO. 3260

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 27, 1911.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 17, 1864.

"And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD."
Zechariah 10:12.

ACCORDING to our own natural conceit, we are very strong—it is as hard for us to part with our belief in our own strength as with our trust in our own righteousness! It is a very painful cut which severs us from confidence in ourselves. But when the Spirit of God performs that most necessary operation, then we discover that our supposed strength is utter weakness and that our righteousness are but filthy rags! If our eyes have been opened to see ourselves as we are in God's sight, we know that we are weak as water and that from us, unassisted by divine grace, there can never come any good thing. Our past experience might have been sufficient to teach us this lesson. The feeble way in which we have performed any duty that devolved upon us, the sad manner in which we have met any temptation that assailed us, the impatient and murmuring spirit in which we have endured any affliction that has come upon us—all these must have shown us that even after we are renewed by divine grace, though "the spirit indeed is willing," yet, "the flesh is weak." And though to will is present with us, yet how to perform that which is good we find not. We are not now like a stone which lies on the ground and cares not to stir, but we are like a bird with a broken wing which longs to soar into the clearer air above the clouds, but which is quite unable to reach that higher atmosphere. We know something of our weakness, but we probably do not yet know how weak we are and, I suppose, it will be one of our life lessons to learn by experience how great our weakness is.

Perhaps some of you have been discouraged by the consciousness of your weakness and, in looking forward to the future, you have been greatly distressed. You are anticipating some important duty for which you feel quite unfit, or it may be that the shadow of some impending trial is just beginning to fall upon you. Possibly you have come to the verge of the valley of the shadow of death and you know that the way to the Celestial City lies thought it and you intend to press through it—but you are half afraid of what will happen to you, there, for you know how weak you are. And, perhaps, just at this juncture, Satan may have whispered in your ear, "It is no use for you to try to get through! You have started on a wild goose chase and look how you already limp! Your arm is so weak that you will be no match for the giants you will have to fight. Give it up, man—how can a poor timid creature such as you are ever pass by

the lions' dens and the mountains of leopards? Such weakling as you are should not go on pilgrimage—leave that task to those who are stronger and braver than you are!" Well, if such a temptation as that has come to you, the message of the text is peculiarly timely to you! It does not deny that you are weak—it implies that you are—it would not have you for a moment forget your weakness, it even reminds you of it! There would be no necessity for this promise if you were strong! "I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD."

There are three things for us to notice in the text. First, *divine strengthening promised.* Secondly, *Christian activity predicted.* And, thirdly, *both blessings divinely guaranteed.*

I. First, then, is DIVINE STRENGTHENING PROMISED—"I will strengthen them in the LORD."

Observe the discrimination of the promise, or what is not promised in it. It is not said, "They shall have no work to do. I will take them out of the vineyard in the middle of the day and bid them sit down in the cool arbor and rest and refresh themselves." No, there is no such promise as that! The Lord does not say, "I will take you away from your labors," but, "I will strengthen you, so that you will be able to perform them." I do not remember any promise that the waters of trouble shall be dried up! But you all remember this one, "When you past through the water, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." I have no recollection of any promise that the fires of trial shall be quenched, but the Lord has said, "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." If you had not to trudge along the pilgrim way; if you had not to carry your cross and fight for the crown, you would not need this promise. The Lord would not strengthen you in order that you might sit still, or put "the everlasting arms" beneath you so that you might lie down in blissful laziness. Oh, no! But as you are bid to "put on the whole armor of God," you may be certain that there is stern fighting before you—and as the Lord promises to strengthen you, there must be no relaxation of watchfulness and no cessation of activity on your part! So, Christians, seek the promised strength, for you are sure to need it! Seek it now, for you may need it tonight! Seek to get as much of it as you can, for when you have the most of it that you can get, you will find that you will need it all!

Then notice, next, the comprehensiveness of the promise—"I will strengthen them in the Lord." You may view this promise in many different lights. Perhaps you have fallen into such a state of despondency that you question your interest in Christ. Possibly you have almost begun to doubt the veracity of your God or His faithfulness to His promise. Well then, in your case the promise of the text will apply to your faith! Come to God at this moment and say, "Lord, You have said, 'I will strengthen them.' Will you not graciously strengthen my faith which is now like a reed shaken by the wind, so that it shall become like an oak of the forest which fears not the stormiest wind that blows?"

Or it may be that your hope has grown dim—you cannot see far off, you cannot—

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

Well then, take this promise to the Lord and ask Him to fulfill it to you! He will give you some heavenly eye salve and as soon as your eyes are anointed with it, your vision will become clear and strong—and you will be able to see the land of far distances where, in due time, you shall arrive and "see the King in His beauty!"

Possibly it is your courage that has declined. The fear of man has ensnared you—you cannot now face a hostile multitude as you once could—indeed, you are half ashamed to go back to the home where you are laughed at because of your religion! You are not now inclined to nail your colors to the mast. You would rather sail away to some peaceful shore than remain to fight the foe. O my brothers and sisters in Christ, plead this promise, "I will strengthen them," for so shall you get your courage renewed until you, who are now timid as a deer, shall become bold as a lion!

Is it your zeal that is flagging ? Do you who once gloried in being in the thickest of the fight, now try to hide away among the baggage? Then pray to God to restore to you your former fervor and devotion to His cause and, pleading this promise, you shall surely get your heart's desire! The promise is such a comprehensive one that it not only includes the strengthening of any special part of our spiritual being that is weak, but also the thorough restoration and strengthening of the entire spiritual constitution! Lord, I would be made strong, not only in the hands of my faith, but also in the feet of my obedience! I would be so strengthened in the vitality of my spiritual life that my eyes should be able to see much that is now invisible to me, that my ears might hear the music of Your matchless voice, that my heart might dance at the sound of Your name and that I might be like Elijah when he girded up his loins and ran before king Ahab because he heard the sound of an abundance of rain—the promise of those welcome showers which the Lord was about to pour down upon the thirsty land.

But we must not forget *the provision that is made for the fulfillment of this promise.* "I will strengthen them in the Lord." We know that it is the Holy Spirit's work to strengthen believers and I trust that many of us have experienced His mysterious operations. We have sometimes felt so despondent that we did not know what to do—and then, though perhaps we had not been specially engaged in prayer, and had not been up to the house of God to worship—all of a sudden our spirits have become elastic as we have felt some precious promise applied with power to our soul—and the burden which threatened to bow us down to the earth has become light as a feather! And we have stood upright and rejoiced "with joy unspeakable." There is no grief which the Holy Spirit cannot relieve! That divine Comforter knows so well how to get at the secret springs of our sorrow and to put the comfort right into the spring, itself, that there can never be a grief which can elude Him, or which can baffle His skill!

Usually, however, the Holy Spirit is pleased to work by the use of *means*. And you know, dear friends, how often you have been strengthened in this way. What a strengthening cordial is prayer! When you have gone to cast your burden upon the Lord, many a time you have gone upstairs groaning, but you have come down singing! Oftentimes you have received strengthening through this blessed book. When you have opened it, your eyes have been full of tears, but as you have lighted upon some precious promise that has exactly met your case, your tears have all vanished and your soul has been filled with joy! God has spoken to you through His word and so you have been strengthened. Or you have come up to the house of the Lord and you have found something there that has strengthened you. I know that many of you find spiritual food in the services here on the Sabbath—but by the time that Thursday night comes round—your soul is very hungry and you are well near famished! But the Holy Spirit graciously applies the word to your heart and you go out to meet the trials and engagements of the week feeling strong through the strength you have received from heaven! Yes, the Master is pleased, in the assembly of His saints, when we break the bread of life, to feed the multitude to the fullest and they go away refreshed! This is especially the case when we gather around the table of the Lord. I wish that all the saints would meet for communion on every "first day of the week." I cannot conceive it to be possible for them to meet thus too often. As for myself, unless sickness keeps me away, I find it most helpful to come to the Lord's table every Lord's day, for although we believe neither in transubstantiation nor in consubstantiation, yet there is a very real sense in which we do spiritually eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man and so become "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Nor are the means of grace the only channels by which we are spiritually strengthened. Christian society will often produce the same blessed results. Some Christians live too much alone. It is true that there is an evil of an opposite character, for some professors spend far too much time in one another's houses, wasting precious hours in idle gossip and chatter! But brothers and sisters in Christ ought to find opportunities for profitable conversation concerning their Lord and His work at home and abroad. Some of us might derive great benefit from the Christian experience of those who are older than we are, or who have been more deeply taught in the things of God. While others of us might be able to impart some spiritual gift to those who are less favored than we are. In the olden days, "they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another." Let this good practice be revived, for thereby, depend upon it, many will be strengthened in the Lord!

Still, dear friends, the best way of obtaining a renewal of spiritual strength is by getting near to Christ, and staying near to Him! He who lays hold of Christ has grasped "very God of very God!" He who can come so close to Christ as to lay his head upon Christ's bosom and say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," must grow stronger and stronger every moment that he is in the immediate presence of his Lord!

We grow in grace as we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The clearer view we have of Christ, the firmer confidence we have in His faithfulness and His power to save, the stronger will our spiritual nature grow and the more like our Lord shall we become! They who live near to Christ must derive strength from Him. Having waited upon the Lord, they shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Before I pass from this point, I would like to emphasize the words of this part of the text. There are not many of them, but they are all significant—"I will strengthen them." You cannot strengthen yourselves, and your minister cannot strengthen you—it is God who first gives you spiritual life and then sustains it by His grace! In fact, He is, Himself, as David says, the strength of our life. It is still true that power belongs to God, and that power He imparts to all as He pleases. Note, too, that He says., "I will strengthen them in the Lord." They are not strengthened in themselves—there is no Christian who grows stronger through the force of his own personality. But he derives more and more strength from the Lord—he learns how to draw continually from the inexhaustible supplies of omnipotence and so is himself strengthened in the Lord. Perhaps someone says, "I have been a Christian for 30 years, but I am not spiritually any stronger than I was when first I knew the Lord." No, nor will you be any stronger if you live for another 30 years unless you depend upon God to strengthen you! Is anyone here more able than in the past to live by faith upon the Son of God and to drink deeper draughts from the fountain of infinite fullness? Then it is clear that in your case, my brother or sister, the promise of the text has been fulfilled, and you have been strengthened in the Lord!

Now lay the emphasis on the divine, "I will." "I will strengthen them in the LORD." This promise was true more than 2,000 years ago and it is just as true today! It has been fulfilled many thousands of times since then, but it is just as full of force, as when it was first given! Suppose I take a note to the Bank of England and get five pounds for if? That note will be canceled and I cannot get the cash for it a second time. But it is not so with God's promises! You may take a promise to the bank of heaven in the morning and cash it, as it were. And you may take the same promise in the afternoon and cash it again! And you may take it again at night, and once more get the full value for it. You may have pleaded that promise when you were a young man of twenty, but it is just as true now that you are an old man of eighty! And at the very last moment of your life, you shall find that the promise shall be fulfilled in your experience! "I will strengthen them in the Lord."

Note, too, the comprehensiveness of the promise. The Lord does not say, "I will strengthen them up to such and such a point," but it is implied that the strength will be sufficient for all their needs. So it will, my brother or my sister—"as your days, so shall your strength be." You shall always have strength enough but you shall never have any to spare! If you had any superfluous strength, you would only do mischief with it.

But you will have all that you really need. When you come to the last river, you may feel, "If there is another river after this to be crossed, I shall be unable to cross it," but there is not another and your strength shall fail when you have no more need of it, but not before! Your strength shall be like the widow's oil—as long as there were any empty vessels, the oil kept on running—but as soon as her son said to her, "There is not a vessel more," the oil stopped! And until your life's task is complete, the Lord will strengthen you! The manna kept falling until the children of Israel entered Canaan—and the manna of divine grace shall keep on falling into your heart until you shall enter the heavenly Canaan! Therefore be of good courage, brothers and sisters in Christ, for you shall have just as much strength as you will require! Your Lord's promise concerning you is, "I will strengthen them in the Lord."

II. I must speak but briefly upon our second point which is, CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY FORETOLD. "They shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD."

How strongly some people read their Bibles and how wickedly they pervert its plainest teaching! They learn that salvation is all of grace and then they say, "Therefore, as it is all of grace, we need not do anything at all! It is God which works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, so we can also leave the working out to Him. God begins this work of grace, God carries it on and God completes it, so we can be as careless and indifferent as we please." If they do not actually put their thoughts into words, this is practically what they think. They seem to imagine that divine grace is an excuse for human laziness, but I have never yet found any passage of Scripture to warrant such an assumption as that! Certainly our present text does not support that idea—"I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in His name." According to the lazy system, it ought to read, "I will strengthen them in the LORD, and they shall be carried to heaven in a sedan chair," for that seems to be some people's notion of how they are to get there! May our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth before our preaching shall ever lead our hearers into such a state of spiritual slumber as that! Our doctrine may be as high as the Scripture warrants us in teaching, but we shall never find there any ground for the infamous deduction that because God works in us, we are to lie inert as if we were logs or stones. Oh, no! That is not His will concerning us, for the apostolic injunction is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

So *true Christians are to be active*—"they shall walk up and down in His name, says the Lord." Christianity has its meditative side and it has its passive stage, but these are the necessary preparation for an active life. A devout contemplation of the doctrine of divine sovereignty will be like the underlying rock which supports the good rich mold of holy gratitude and love which yields an abundant harvest both to God and man. True Christians delight in sacred activity! In that respect, they are like the angels of God, "that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." And like the glorified saints above, who "serve Him

day and night in His temple." A life of Christian activity down here is a fitting prelude to a life of heavenly activity up there! The best Christians are those who serve God the most. Ask the gardener which is the best apple tree in the garden and he will tell you that it is not the one which has the best shape, but the one which yields the most fruit! And he is not the best Christian who occupies the highest position, or who talks the most about divine things, but it is he whose life is most fruitful in good works to the glory of God!

Further, *Christian activity is, as far as it is possible, incessant*. This is implied in the phrase, "they shall walk up and down," as though they were never to be inactive and certainly never to be idle. The true Christian, when he is in a healthy spiritual state, has always some good work on hand—something on the anvil, or something heating in the fire, or something cooling in the water—something that he is planning for the future, something that has yet to be completed, or something that is just finished and ready to be presented to God—a prayer to offer, a hymn to sing, the sick to visit, the poor to relieve, the ignorant to instruct. He advances from one duty to another while he is about in the world and serves his God. And when he gets home, he still serves his God by gathering his family and servants together for prayer! As Satan is represented as a restless spirit continually going to and fro, walking up and down in the earth, so is it with the true Christian—he is constantly traversing the world, not seeking to do evil, but like His Master, going about doing good!

The expression, "they shall walk up and down," also implies *variety of service*. They shall not only walk up, they shall also walk down. There are some departments of Christian service that we like and others that we do not like. Many would far rather glorify God by preaching to hundreds or thousands from the pulpit than by lying alone in the chamber of affliction. Some like to serve God in what they regard as a respectable sort of way, but they do not care to work for Christ in the back slums, the cellars, or the attics! But true Christians will be just as willing to go down as to go up! We must be ready to go anywhere and to do anything for Christ! It is just as great an honor to be employed in Christ's kitchen as to serve Him in His temple! If He allows us to wash His feet even with our tears, let us count that as high a privilege as to anoint His head with oil! Happy is that servant who shall be permitted to kiss his Master's feet, but equally happy should he be who is bid to unloose the latchet of His shoes. It should be a matter of no consequence to us whether we go up or down as long as we are doing our Lord's will!

But do not forget to notice that all is to be done in God's name—"they shall walk up and down in His name." It is Jehovah who is speaking here and it is in His name, under His authority, at His command, and to His praise and glory that all our service is to be rendered! It is all to be done as unto the Lord, and not unto men. I rejoice that so many whom I am now addressing are occupied in various forms of Christian activity—and I hope that each one of us who loves the Lord will continue thus to walk

up and down in His name until He calls us to serve Him in the upper sanctuary!

III. Now I close by briefly reminding you that BOTH THESE BLESSINGS ARE DIVINELY GUARANTEED. "I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD."

Perhaps some Christian brother or sister here is thinking sorrowfully, "I can never be made strong enough to serve God as I would like to serve Him." But, my dear friend, here you have a triple guarantee from the Lord, Himself! Here is the divine "I will" of omnipotent grace! The divine "they shall" of consecrated free agency! And the divine "says the LORD" of infallible faithfulness! What more can you need? Is not God's declaration of more value than the oaths of all the men who ever lived? Would you not sooner rely upon His divine assurance than trust to anything that you can see? Possibly you say that you would, but I am half afraid for you. When things go very pleasantly with you, it is easy for you to believe—but it is another matter when the sun has set, it is very dark and there are no stars to be seen! O beloved, seek to have a faith which can trust God as well in the dark as in the light! What a grand life that man leads who lives upon whatever is guaranteed to him by, "Thus says the LORD!" He never gets any poorer because, "Thus says the LORD" never fails him and he never needs to get any richer for, "Thus says the LORD" is all that his spirit can possibly crave! Here is one of the promises which is guaranteed to us by, "Thus says the LORD"—"All things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." That is enough for me! I will take that promise and plead it at the throne of grace, and I know I shall not be sent away empty! Will you not, dear friends, do the same with the promises in our text? You need supernatural strength for the service to which your Lord has called you and here He has promised it to you! "Thus says the LORD" is surely sufficient for you! So, seeing this divine seal attached to the promise, do not be slow to secure the fulfillment of it, but tonight, before you retire to rest, seek the strength you need from the strong one and then, tomorrow go forth and walk up and down in His name!

But there are some here, I fear, who never think of God's promises—and that is a strange and sad state for anyone to be in. To one who has been brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous light, it does seem amazing that anyone can live without a thought of God and His many exceedingly great and precious promises. It is most extraordinary that an immortal being, created by God, can be content to go on from day to day and from year to year without any care about pleasing his Creator! But if anyone here is feeling, "Oh, I wish that I could get to God! I would not for all the world have Him as my enemy, and I long to know how I can come to Him." I am thankful that you feel like that and I am glad that I am commissioned to tell you the way to come to Him. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me," said Christ. "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus." Look first at the crucified Christ lifted up upon yonder tree, for—

"There is life for a look at the crucified one

There is life at this moment for you."

Trust Him as your mediator, your advocate with the Father, and you will find that God will then receive you for Christ's sake! He will strengthen you in the Lord and you shall walk up and down in His name and, by and by, you shall dwell with Him forever! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 12:1-17.

May the Spirit of God graciously instruct us while we read this chapter! You know that in the 11th chapter, the apostle has pictured the ancient worthies and their victories. Imagine that you see them mounting in their chariots of fire up to their seats in heaven! Behold them going from the mouths of lions, from the deserts, mountains, dens and caves of the earth up to their glorious thrones on high where they recline in ease and honor!

The apostle then introduces us to a racecourse in which he represents all these conquerors as sitting upon seats all around the course, watching those who are about to run. And thus he begins—

Verses 1, 2. *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.* [See Sermon #2037, Volume 34—THERE RULES OF THE RACE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was no excitement to run if there were no onlookers. The spur to the racers and wrestlers in the Grecian games was found in the eyes of those who gazed, in the clapping of their hands, in the shouting of their applause, as well as in the prizes that awaited the winners! Behold, my brothers and sisters, even our most private acts are looked upon by the millions of eyes of the great cloud of witnesses! Angels tell the news of how we run the great race and they rejoice when we prosper. Let us "run well" because so many are looking at us and, just as the Grecian runner stripped himself of his clothes before he started, so "let us lay aside every weight"—the weight of sin, the weight of care, the weight of grief, the weight of worldliness and everything else that might hinder us. Above all, let us beware of that sin which, like a trailing garment, might entangle our feet and trip us up, for if we fall, our opponent will certainly win the prize! Look well to that sin to which you are the most liable. We all have some besetting sin—let us especially be on the watch against that. While we keep all the wall with diligence, let us set a double guard at the most vulnerable point.

"And let us run with patience" or, "endurance." There is to be a combination of the active and passive in the Christian—he must be able to endure and yet be able to still work. "Let us run with patience"—run when we are out of breath, run when our bones ache, run when the prize seems to be further off than ever and to be hidden from our eyes, run

when the hot sun makes us thirsty. Still, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us," for it is he that endures unto the end who shall be saved—not merely the starter in the race, for there are many who begin, but who begin not in the power of the Spirit of God and who, therefore do not persevere unto the end. By this sign shall the true children of God be known, that they run with endurance unto the end, "looking unto Jesus." As the wife of the Persian nobleman said, when her husband asked her what she thought of Darius, that she had not looked at him, she had no eyes for any man but her husband, so the Christian has no eyes for any but Christ—"looking unto Jesus"—keeping his eyes always upon Him and so running the Christian race!

Jesus is here delightfully called "the author and finisher of our faith." In most of the arts, there is a division of labor—one man begins and another completes—there is scarcely anything that is completed by one man. But the stupendous work of our salvation was not only commenced, but it was also completed by the Lord Jesus Christ alone! Let us look unto Him then. This will help us to persevere to the end because He persevered to the end.

2. *Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* It was this joy that made Christ strong to endure in the day of His sorrow. And joy must make you also strong to endure unto the end. He had the joy of anticipated victory. It "was set before Him," and so He "endured the cross, despising the shame." He ran with a heavy cross on His back and yet He ran faster than you or I have run—He ran because He had more joy than we have! So, my brothers and sisters, let us live in the joy of heaven, let us live in the joy of ultimate victory—and this will enable us to bear all the toils and trials of our present life.

3. *For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.* Luther says, "When I think of what Christ suffered, I am ashamed to call anything that I have endured, suffering for His sake." He carried His heavy cross, but we only carry a sliver or two of it! He drank His cup to the dregs and we do but sip a drop or two at the very most. "Consider Him." Consider how He suffered far more than you can ever suffer and how He is now crowned with glory and honor—and so you are to be like He, descend like He into the depths of agony, that with Him you may rise to the heights of glory!

4-7. *You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and encourages every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?* Here is a little variation in the subject. First we have the trials which come from the world—these we are to endure looking to Christ for grace to enable us to overcome them. Now we have the trials which come from God and here nature becomes an assistant to grace. We are reminded

that children have to be chastened and, therefore, if we are the children of God we must expect to be chastened by Him.

Note in the 5th verse, the two evils of which we are in danger—either of deepening God's chastening or else of fainting under them—either of thinking too little or too much of them. Happy is the Christian who always takes the middle course and never despises the chastening of the Lord, nor ever faints under them.

Note, in the 6th verse, that we are to expect sharp blows from God's chastening hand. That word "encourages," is an incorrect word—"Whom the Lord loves, He chastens and *scourges* every son whom He receives." The scourge was always a most severe form of punishment. God will not spare His children when they need to be chastened—they shall have some blows as hard as He can well lay on them, that is to say, as hard as such a loving heart as His will permit Him to give. They shall have such blows that each one of them shall have to cry out, "I am broken in sunder, my heart is smitten and withered like grass." And this is to be the treatment for every son whom God receives—not for some of them, but for all—"He scourges every son whom He receives."

8. *But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.* He does not say, "then are you alone." He is speaking about those who profess to be the children of God, writing concerning those who claim to be members of the Lord's family—and he stigmatizes with one of the most dreadful of names, those who may escape without chastisement. But, brothers and sisters who among us would have the pleasure of carnal ease if with it we are to have the shame of spiritual illegitimacy?

9, 10. *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? For they, verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasures.* [See Sermon #1073 Volume 18—A HONEYCOMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There was, possibly, much of their own temper mixed with their chastisements. They let off their wrath upon us sometimes by the medium of chastisement, but God never chastens His children merely out of anger.

10-12. *But He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward 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.* Let not your service to God slacken. Lift up to God that which was idly hanging down through despondency. Let not your prayers grow weak through grief, but strengthen the feeble knees!

13-15. *And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many are defiled.* For, alas, under the means of grace, there are many who "fail of the grace of God." They

get something that they think is like grace, but it is not the true grace of God and they ultimately fall from it and perish! What we need is to have unfailing grace and power to hold on to it so that, at the last, we may inherit the crown of life. But for this we must look diligently, for the best of us has good cause to suspect himself, and in church fellowship we ought to be very watchful lest the church as a whole should fail through lack of the true grace of God, and especially lest any root of bitterness springing up among us should trouble us and, thereby, many are defiled.

16. *Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* Those who seek the pleasures of the flesh rather than the pleasures of a higher world are here put side by side with Esau. Now Esau sold the right to his future heritage for a present mess of pottage—and many there are who do something very like that—sell their souls for a little Sunday trading, or for a little carnal company, a little of that fool's mirth which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. They are willing to damn themselves to all eternity because they cannot bear the jeers and sneers of a ribald world. O brothers and sisters, let us not be like they or like Esau!

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 never repented of his sin, but only of the *consequences* of it. He never sought pardon of God, but only sought to inherit the blessing. And there will be many who have lived for this world, and loved it, who, when they wake up in another world, will begin to seek the blessing, but they will be rejected! This may happen even in this world. If they only seek to die the death of the righteous and seek not the pardon of their sin, they shall hear the Lord say to them, "Because I have called, and you refused. I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded: but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes." [See Sermons #528, Volume 9—CHASTISEMENT—NOW AND AFTERWARDS, and #2902, Volume 50—HOLINESS DEMANDED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org]

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THE COVENANT
NO. 3261

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He will ever be mindful of His covenant."
Psalm 111:5.

[Another Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the same text, is #2681, Volume 56—Covenant Blessings—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT is an amazing thing that God should enter into gracious covenant with men. That He should make man and be gracious to man is easily to be conceived, but that He should strike hands with his nature and put His august majesty under bond to him by His own promise is marvelous! Once let me know that God has made a covenant and I do not think it amazing that He should be mindful of it, for He is "God that cannot lie." "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" Has He once given His pledge? It is inconceivable that He should ever desert from it. The doctrine of the text commends itself to every reasonable and thoughtful man—if God has made a covenant, He will ever be faithful of it. It is to that point that I would now call your attention with the desire to use it practically.

For God to make a gracious covenant with us is so great a gift that I hope everyone here is saying within his heart, "Oh, that the Lord had entered into covenant with me!"

We shall practically look into this matter, first, by answering the question, What is this covenant? Secondly, by putting the enquiry, Have I any portion in it? And, thirdly, by bidding each one say, "If, indeed, I am in covenant with God, then every part of that covenant will be carried out, for God is ever mindful of it."

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS COVENANT?

If you go to a lawyer and inquire how a deed runs, he may reply, "I can give you an title deed, but I had better read it to you." He can tell you the sum and substance of it, but if you want to be very accurate—and it is a very important business—you will say, "I would like to hear it read." We will now read certain parts of Scripture which contain the covenant of grace, or an abstract of it. Turn to Jeremiah 31:31-34—"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says

the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Print every word of that in diamonds, for the sense is inconceivably precious! God in covenant promises to His people that instead of writing His law upon tablets of stone, He will write it on the tablets of their hearts. Instead of the law of God coming on a hard, crushing command, it shall be placed *within them* as the object of love and delight, written on the transformed nature of the beloved objects of God's choice! "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts"—what a covenant privilege this is! "And I will be their God." Therefore all that there is in God shall belong to them. "And they shall be My people." They shall belong to Me. I will love them as Mine. I will keep them, bless them, honor them and provide for them as My people. I will be their portion and they shall be My portion.

Note the next privilege. They shall all receive heavenly instruction upon the most vital point—"They shall all know *Me*." There may be some things they do not know, but "they shall all know Me." They shall know Me as their Father. They shall know Jesus Christ as their brother. They shall know the Holy Spirit as their Comforter. They shall have communion and fellowship with God! What a covenant privilege is this! Hence comes pardon, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." What a clean sweep of sin! God will forgive and forget—the two go together. "I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." All gone—all their transgression blotted out, never to be mentioned against you again, forever! What an unutterable favor! This is the covenant of grace! I call your attention to the fact that there is no, "if," in it! There is no, "but," in it—there is no requirement made by it of man. It is all, "I will," and, "they shall." "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." It is a charter written in a royal tone and the majestic straining not marred by a "perhaps" or a "maybe"—but dwells always on, "shall," and, "will." These are two prerogative words of the divine majesty and in this wondrous deed of gift in which the Lord bestows a heaven of grace upon guilty sinners, He bestows it after the sovereignty of His own will without anything to put the gift in jeopardy, or to make the promise insecure!

Thus I have read the covenant to you in one form.

Turn over the pages a little and you will come to a passage in Ezekiel. There we shall have the bright eyed prophet—he who could live among the wheels and the seraphim—telling us what the covenant of grace is. In Ezekiel, the 11th chapter, 19th and 20th verses, we read, "I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and

keep My ordinances, and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God."

You will find another form of it further on in the 36th chapter of Ezekiel, beginning at the 25th verse. How intently ought you to listen to this! It is a deal better than hearing any preaching of mortal men to listen to the very words of God's own covenant—a covenant which saves all those who are concerned in it! Unless you have an interest in it, you are, indeed, unhappy. Let us read it—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them...And you shall be My people, and I will be your God." This promise always comes in at the close, "I will be your God." In this form of the covenant, I call you again to witness that God demands nothing, asks no price, demands no payment—but to the people with whom He enters into covenant, He makes promise after promise, all free, all unconditional, all made according to the bounty of His royal heart!

Let us go into a little detail about this. God has made a covenant with certain people that He will do all this for them—and in each case it is of pure grace. He will take away their own hearts—it is clear from the promise that when He began with them, they had stony hearts. He will forgive their iniquities—when He began with them, they had many iniquities. He will give them a heart of flesh—when He began with them, they had not a heart of flesh. He will turn them to keep His statutes—when He began with them, they did not keep His statutes. They were a sinful, willful, wicked, degenerate people and He called to them many times to come to Him and repent—but they would not. Here He speaks like a king and no longer pleads, but decrees! He says, I will do this and that to you and you shall be this and this in return. Oh, blessed covenant! Oh, mighty, sovereign grace!

How came it about? Learn the doctrine of the two covenants.

The first covenant of which we will now speak was that of works, the covenant made with our first father, Adam. This is not first in purpose, but it was first revealed in time. It ran thus—You, Adam, and your posterity shall live and be happy if you will keep My law. To test your obedience to Me, there is a certain tree—if you let it alone, you shall live. If you touch it, you shall die, and they whom you represent shall die.

Our first covenant head snatched greedily at the forbidden fruit and fell—and what a fall was there, my brothers and sisters! There you and I, and all of us, fell down while it was proven once and for all that by works of the law no man can be justified! For if perfect Adam broke the law so readily, depend upon it, you and I would break any law that God had ever made! There was no hope of happiness for any of us by a covenant which contained an, "if," in it. That old covenant is put away, for it has

utterly failed. It brought nothing to us but a curse—and we are glad that it has waxed old and, as far as believers are concerned, has vanished!

Then there came the second Adam. You know His name, He is the ever blessed Son of the Highest. This second Adam entered into covenant with God somewhat after this fashion—The Father said, I give You a people; they shall be Yours: You must die to redeem them and when You have done this—when for their sakes You have kept My law and made it honorable—when for their sakes you have borne My wrath against their transgressions—then I will bless them. They shall be My people. I will forgive their iniquities. I will change their natures. I will sanctify them and make them perfect. There was an apparent, "if," in this covenant at the first. That "if" hinged upon the question whether the Lord Jesus would obey the law and pay the ransom—a question which His faithfulness placed beyond doubt! There is no "if" in it, now. When Jesus bowed His head and said, "It is finished," there remained no "if" in the covenant! It stands, therefore, now as a covenant entirely of one side, a covenant of promises—of promises which must be kept because the other portion of the covenant having been fulfilled—the Father's side of it must stand! He cannot and He will not draw back from the doing of that which He covenanted with Christ to do! The Lord Jesus shall receive the joy which was set before Him. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." By His knowledge shall the Christ who became God's righteous servant justify many, for has He not borne their iniquities? How can it be otherwise than that they should be accepted for whom He was the surety? Do you see why it is that the covenant, as I have read it, stands so absolutely without, "ifs," "buts," and, "perhapses," and runs only on, "shalls," and, "wills"? It is because the one side of it that did look uncertain was committed into the hands of Christ, who cannot fail or be discouraged! He has completed His part of it and now it stands fast and must stand fast forever and ever! This is now a covenant of pure grace and nothing else but grace! Let no man attempt to mix up works with it, or anything of human merit! God saves now because He chooses to save—and over the head of us all there comes a sound as of a martial trumpet and yet with a deep, inner peaceful music in it—"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God observes us all lost and ruined and, in His infinite mercy, comes with absolute promises of divine grace to those whom He has given to His Son Jesus.

So much, then, with regard to the covenant.

II. Now comes the important question, "HAVE I ANY PORTION IN IT?" May the Holy Spirit help us to ascertain the truth of God on this point! You who are really anxious in your hearts to know, I would earnestly persuade to read the Epistle to the Galatians. Read that epistle through if you want to know whether you have any part or lot in the covenant of grace. Did Christ fulfill the law for me? Are the promises of God, absolute and unconditional, made to *me*? You can know by answering three questions.

First, Are you in Christ? Did you not notice that I said that we were all in Adam and in Adam we all fell? Now, “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Are you in the second Adam? You certainly were in the first one, for so you fell! Are you in the second? Because if you are in Him, you are saved in Him! He has kept the law for you. The covenant of grace made with Him was made with you if you are in Him, for as surely as Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him, so were all believers in the loins of Christ when He died upon the cross! If you are in Christ, you are a part and parcel of the seed to whom the promise was made—but there is only one seed, and the apostle tells us—“He says not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ.” If, then, you are in Christ, you are in the seed—and the covenant of grace was made with you!

I must ask you another question. Have you faith? By this question you will be helped to answer the previous one, for believers are in Christ. In the Epistle to the Galatians, you will find that the mark of those who are in Christ is that they believe in Christ. The mark of all that are saved is not confidence in work, but *faith in Christ.* In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul insists upon it, “The just shall live by faith,” and the law is not of faith. Over and over again he puts it so. Come, then, do you believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart? Is He your sole hope for heaven? Do you lean your whole weight, the entire stress of your salvation, on Jesus? Then you are in Him and the covenant is yours—and there is not a blessing which God has decreed to give but what He will give to you! There is not a gift which out of the grandeur of His heart, He has determined to bestow upon His elect but what He will bestow it upon you! You have the mark, the seal, the badge of His chosen if you believe in Christ Jesus!

Another question should help you. It is this—Have you been born again? I refer you again to the Epistle to the Galatians which I would like every anxious person to read through very carefully. There you will see that Abraham had two sons. One of them was born according to the flesh. He was Ishmael, the child of the bondwoman. Though he was the firstborn son, he was not the heir, for Sarah said to Abraham, "cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” He who was born after the flesh did not inherit the covenant promise! Is your hope of heaven fixed on the fact that you had a good mother and father? Then your hope is born after the flesh and you are not in the covenant! I am constantly hearing it said that children of godly parents do not need converting. Let me denounce that wicked lie! “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing better! They that are born after the flesh—those are not the children of God! Do not trust in gracious descent, or in holy ancestors! You must be born again, every one of you, or you will perish forever, whoever your parents may be! Abraham had another son, even Isaac—he was not born

of the strength of his father, nor after the flesh at all—for we are told that both Abraham and Sarah had become old. Isaac was born by God's power according to promise. He was the child given by grace. Now, have you ever been born like that—not by human strength but by divine power? Is the life that is in you a life given by God? The true life is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of natural excellence—it comes by the working of the Holy Spirit and is of God. If you have this life, you are in the covenant, for it is written, "in Isaac shall your seed be called." The children of the promise, these are counted for the seed. God said to Abraham, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and that was because He meant to justify the Gentiles by faith, that the blessing given to believing Abraham might come on all believers! Abraham is the father of the faithful, or the father of all them that believe in God—and with such is the covenant established.

Here, then, are the test questions—Am I in Christ? Am I believing in Jesus? Am I born by the power of the Spirit of God according to the promise, and not by the fleshly birth, or according to works? Then I am in the covenant! My name stands in the eternal record! Before the stars began to shine, the Lord had covenanted to bless me. Or before evening and morning made the first day, my name was in His book of life. Christ, before the world's foundation, struck hands with the Father in the council chamber of eternity and pledged Himself to redeem me and to bring me and multitudes of others into His eternal glory! And He will do it, too, for He never breaks His suretyship engagements any more than the Father breaks His covenant engagements! I want you to get quite sure upon these points, for oh, what peace it will breed in your soul, what a restfulness of heart to understand the covenant and to know that your name is in it!

III. This is our last point. If, indeed, we can believe upon the good evidence of God's word—that we are of the seed with whom the covenant was made in Christ Jesus—then EVERY BLESSING OF THE COVENANT WILL COME TO US. I will put it a little more personally—every blessing of the covenant will come to you!

The devil says, "No, it, won't." Why not, Satan? "Why," he says, "you are not able to do this or that." Refer the devil to the text! Tell him to read those passages which I read to you and ask him if he can spy an, "if," or a, "but," for I cannot. "Oh," he says, "but, but, but, but, but you cannot do enough, you can't *feel* enough." Does it say anything about feeling there? It only says, "I will give them a heart of flesh." They will feel enough then! "Oh, but," the devil says, "you cannot soften your hard heart." Does it say that you are to do so? Does it not say, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh"? The tenor of it is—I will do it. I WILL DO IT. The devil dares not say that God cannot do it—he knows that God can enable us to tread him under our feet. "Oh, but," he says, "you will never hold on your way if you begin to be a Christian." Does it say anything about that in the covenant further than this, "they shall walk in My statutes"? What if we have not power in and of ourselves to continue in

God's statutes? Yet *He* has power to make us continue in them! He can work obedience and final perseverance in holiness in us. His covenant virtually promises these blessings to us. To came back to what we said before—God does not ask of us, but He gives to us! He sees us dead and He loves us even when we are dead in trespasses and sins! He sees us feeble and unable to help ourselves—and He comes in and works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure—and then we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The bottom of it, the very foundation of it, is Himself! And He finds nothing in us to help Him. There is neither fire nor wood in us, much less the lamb for the burnt offering—all is emptiness and condemnation! He comes in with, "I will," and, "you shall," like a royal helper affording free aid to destitute, helpless sinners, according to the riches of His grace! Now be sure that, having made such a covenant as this, God will ever be mindful of it!

He will do so, first, *because He cannot lie.* If He says He will, He will. His very name is "God that cannot lie." If I am in Christ, I must be saved—none can prevent it. If I am a believer in Christ, I must be saved—all the devils in hell cannot stop it, for God has said, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." God's word is not, yes, and, no. He knew what He said when He spoke the covenant and He has never changed it, nor contradicted it. If, then, I am a believer, I must be saved, for I am in Christ to whom the promise is made! If I have the new life in me, I must be saved, for is not this spiritual life the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever? Did not Jesus say, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"? I have drunk the water Christ gave me and it must spring up into everlasting life! It is not possible for death to kill the Life that God has given me, nor for all the fallen spirits to tread out the divine fire which Christ's own Spirit has cast into my bosom! I must be saved, for God cannot deny Himself!

Next, *God made the covenant freely*. If He had not meant to keep it, He would not have made it. When a man is driven up into a corner by someone who says, "Now you must pay me," then he is apt to promise more than he can perform. He solemnly declares, "I will pay you this day fortnight." Poor fellow, he has no money, now, and will not have any then, but he makes a promise because he cannot help himself. No such necessity can be imagined with our God! The Lord was under no compulsion—He might have left men to perish because of sin—there was no one to prompt Him to make the covenant of grace, or even to suggest the idea! "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?" He made the covenant of His own royal will and, having made it, rest you sure that He will never run back from it! A covenant so freely made must be fully carried out.

Moreover, *on the covenant document there is a seal.* Did you see the seal? The grand thing in a deed of gift is the signature or seal. What is this—this red splash at the bottom of it? It is blood! Yes, it is blood.

Whose blood? It is the blood of the Son of God! This has ratified and sealed the covenant. Jesus died. Jesus' death has made the covenant sure! Can God forget the blood of His dear Son, or do despite to His sacrifice? Impossible! All for whom He died as a covenant substitute He will save! His redeemed shall not be left in captivity, as if the ransom price had effected nothing. Has He not said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? That covenant stands secure, though earth's old columns bow, for despite to the blood can never be possible on the part of the Father.

Again, God *delights in the covenant* and so we are sure He will not run back from it. It is the very joy of His holy heart! He delights to do His people good. To pass by transgression, iniquity and sin is the recreation of Jehovah! Did you ever hear of God singing? It is singular that the divine one should solace Himself with song, but yet a prophet has thus revealed the Lord to us, "He will rest in His love; He will joy over you with singing." The covenant is the heart of God written out in the blood of Jesus—and since the whole nature of God runs parallel with the tenor of the everlasting covenant—you may rest assured that even its jots and its tittles stand secure!

And then, last of all, O you who are in the covenant, do not doubt that God will save you, keep you, bless you seeing you have *believed* on Jesus, are *in* Jesus and are quickened into newness of life! You dare not doubt if I tell you one thing more—if your father, if your brother, if your dearest friend had solemnly stated a fact, would you bear for anybody to say that he lied? I know you would be indignant at such a charge! But suppose your father, in the most solemn manner, had taken an oath—would you for a minute think that he had perjured himself and had sworn a lie? Now turn to the Word of God and you will find that *God, because He knew that an oath among men is the end of strife, has been pleased to seal the covenant with an oath.* "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." God has lifted His hand to heaven and sworn that Christ shall have the reward of His passion, that His purchased ones shall be brought under His sway, that having borne sin and put it away, it never shall be a second time charged on His redeemed!

There is all of it. Do you believe in Christ? Then God will work in you to will and do of His good pleasure! God will conquer your sin! God will sanctify you! God will save you! God will keep you! God will bring you to Himself at last! Rest on that covenant and then, moved by intense gratitude, go forward to serve your Lord with all your heart, and soul and strength! Being saved, live to praise Him! Work not that you *may be* saved, but *because* you *are* saved—the covenant has secured your safety! Delivered from the servile fear which an Ishmael might have known, live the joyous life of an Isaac! And moved by love of the Father, spend and be spent for His sake! If the selfish hope of winning heaven by works has moved some men to great sacrifice, much more shall the godly motive of

gratitude to Him who has done all this for us move us to the noblest service and make us feel that it is no sacrifice at all! "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 which died for them, and rose again." "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." If you are saved under the covenant of grace, the mark of the covenanted ones is upon you and the sacred character of the covenanted ones should be displayed in you! Bless and magnify your covenant God! Take the cup of the covenant and call upon His name! Plead the promises of the covenant and have whatever you need! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:1-22.

Verse 1. *At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.* During the Israelites' banishment to Babylon, God's covenant with them had been, as it were, in abeyance. But in this promise of their restoration, He brings it to the front, again, and He gives a peculiarly gracious turn to it—"I will be the God of all the families of Israel." What a mercy it is to have a family God and to have our whole family in Christ! Brothers and sisters, you have a family Bible and you have, I hope, a family altar—may your whole family belong to God!

2. *Thus says the LORD, the people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.* Pharaoh tried to kill Israel. When he drew his sword, it looked as if the whole nation would be slain. But God got them away from Pharaoh into the wilderness—and there He caused them to rest. God still has a people whom He will certainly save and the adversary shall not be able to destroy them. Now comes this glorious verse—

3, 4. *The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.* [See Sermons #1914, Volume 32—SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED; #2149, Volume 36—EVERLASTING LOVE REVEALED and #2880, Volume 50—NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Again I will build you and you shall be built.* Jerusalem was all broken down. Her houses were vacant and her palaces were in ruins, but God's promise to her was, "Again I will build you, and you shall be built." If the preacher tries to rebuild those who are spiritually broken down, his work may be a failure. But when God does it, it is effectually done.

4. *O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry.* God can take away His people's sorrow and fill them with exultant joy. Their flying feet shall follow the flying music and they shall be exceedingly glad. May the Lord make His people joyful, now, in His house of prayer!

5. *You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.* God's people shall get to work, again, and they shall have the fruit of their toil and shall rejoice before God because they do not labor in vain nor spend their strength for nothing.

6. *For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the Mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.* The men of Ephraim did not go up to Zion to worship—they forsook the one altar at Jerusalem. But the day will come when they will turn again to the Lord! Watchmen have to be on the lookout for enemies, but the day will come when even they shall be able to leave their watchtowers and say, "Let us go up to Zion unto Jehovah our God." Are any of you watching just now with anxious eyes? Have you been watching all through the night? Well, you have not seen much and your eyes ache with looking out for evil—so drop your watching, now, and say, one to another, "Let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God."

7, 8. *For thus says the LORD, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations, publish you, praise you, and say, O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them!* Notice the prayer and the answer. The prayer is put into our mouths and before we hardly have time to utter it, the answer comes—"O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them!"

8. *From the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame.* How can *they* come? Will they help one another? God Himself will be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame!

8. *The woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.* They were not fit for traveling, yet God, in His great mercy, can make the feeblest of His people strong! And when He means to bring them to Himself, they shall come even though it looks as if they could not come!

9. *They shall come with weeping.* Never mind the weeping, as long as they do but come, and remember that there is no true faith without the tear of repentance in its eye—"They shall come with weeping."

9. *And with supplications will I lead them.* The way of prayer is the way home to God.

9. *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble.* Happy are the people who have such precious promises as these! The way is to be straight and their feet are to be so firmly planted in it that "they shall not stumble."

9-11. *For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob.* The secret of every other blessing is redemption! If God has redeemed, He will save—depend upon it—the precious blood of Jesus shall never be shed in vain!

11, 12. *And ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come.* If they are redeemed, "they shall

come." Christ did not die in vain! The redemption that He worked must be effectual—"therefore they shall come."

12. *And sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd.* These are all temporal mercies and it is a great blessing to see God's goodness in them. If God blesses common mercies, they are blessings, indeed! But without His blessing they may become idols and so may become curses.

12. *And their soul shall be as a watered garden.* What a delightful simile! It is of little use for the body to be fed unless the soul is also well nourished! "Their soul shall be as a watered garden."

12-14. *And they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.* God will give the spiritual leaders of His people enough and more than enough—more than they can take in—He will satiate them with fatness.

14. *And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD.* What a delightful promise this is! Listen to it and carry it home, all of you who are truly the Lord's people.

15. *Thus says the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.* There is here a prophetic allusion to the massacre of the infants by Herod at the time of the birth of our Lord. It was a time of sorrow, indeed.

16, 17. *Thus says the LORD; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD: and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border.* As Rachel is represented as weeping for her children, so is she represented as mourning for the tribes that were carried away into captivity. Yet is she comforted with the Lord's gracious assurance—"they shall come again from the land of the enemy." So they did, and there is to be a glorious future yet for the people of God of the ancient race of Abraham!

18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.* [See Sermon #743, Volume 13—EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is never a penitent in this world bemoaning himself without God hearing him! Do not think that a single penitential cry ever rises unheeded from a contrite heart! That cannot be—God has a quick ear for the cries of penitents.

18. *You have chastened me, and I was chastened as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.* "I bore the chastisement, but derived no benefit from it. I have not repented of my sin, I have not turned unto You."

18. *Turn You me, and I shall be turned,* [See Sermon #2104, Volume 35—THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *for you are the LORD, my God.* If the Lord undertakes to turn us, we shall be truly turned—that is, converted.

19. *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Are there any here recollecting the past with terror, and lamenting before God because of their sins? Then hear what God says! He seems to echo the voice of Ephraim. As Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him!

20. *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* You might expect the answer to be, "No, he has lost the rights of childhood. He has been unpleasant and provoking to God." Yet God does not give such an answer as that to His own questions, but He says—

20. *For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* Notwithstanding that the Lord threatened him, and sent prophets to foretell evil to him because of his sin, yet He says, "I do earnestly remember him still."

20. *Therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him says the LORD.* What a wonderful speech for God to make! Even the infinitely blessed God represents Himself as in trouble concerning penitent sinners, remembering them in pity and longing to have mercy upon them.

21. *Set you up signs, make you high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities.* In crossing the desert, travelers raise little mounds of stone that they may be directed on a future occasion across that pathless sea of sand. And so God bids them set up signs and make high heaps that they may know how to come back to Him.

22. *How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter?* God still asks in pity, "how long will you seek here and there for comfort?" You will never find it till you come back to your God! Emptiness is written upon everything till the heart comes to its Savior and Lord!

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SATAN'S ARROWS AND GOD'S
NO. 3262

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1864.

"He has bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my soul." Lamentations 3:12, 13.

JEREMIAH did not intend these verses to be a description of a sinner under conviction of sin. He was sorrowing over the woes of Jerusalem and the nation that had been so heavily punished for its sin, yet we may rightly apply his words to the most bitter of all human griefs—I mean, of all human griefs except that ruinous remorse which sometimes comes at the prelude of eternal destruction!

Dear friends, when we preach to you, we do, as it were, shoot arrows at a mark but, alas, how few of them ever reach the target! If any of our arrows are shot without earnestness and zeal, they are almost certain to fall short of the mark. How sad it is that any of us who are sent by God to do such important work as this, should be coldhearted or lukewarm! Shame on the preacher who does not bend the bow with all his might and throw his whole strength of spirit, soul and body into his efforts to win souls! At times our arrows fly too high. Perhaps we use expressions which out hearers do not understand, or do not talk sufficiently concerning the simplicities of the gospel. In such a case we ought to repent and be grieved with ourselves that we have not better carried out our commission and so adapted the means we have used as to achieve the end we ought to have had in view. But even when we aim aright and put our whole force into the drawing of the bow, how often do our arrows glint off the steel armor of indifference in which so many of our hearers are encased from head to toe! The point of the arrow is blunted, or the shaft is snapped as we shoot again and again at those who try to prevent the entrance of the truth of God into their hearts. Year after year I have drawn my bow at some of you—I have used the sharpest arrows and the most polished shafts that my quiver could supply—and have thrown my whole strength into the effort, yet, up till now no arrow has pierced your hearts or reached your soul. But how different is the case when God Himself draws the bow! Ah, my brothers and sisters, His arrows never miss their mark! The joint in the sinner's harness is always visible to Him, and though it is but a very small opening which no one else can see, between the plates of the armor the arrow unerringly enters! God knows how to wound mortally, too. As the text reminds us, the arrow is

driven right into one's soul—into those parts of our being where the vital principle is most active—so that there is no hope of escape from the arrows which God sends right into the heart, the soul, the conscience of the one at whom He shoots His shafts.

As God shall enable me, by his Holy Spirit, I intend to describe the case of those who have been pierced by God's arrows. But I want, first, to speak of some arrows which do not come from God's quiver at all, but which, nevertheless, cause very much pain to some sensitive spirits. So, first, I am going to try to break the devil's arrows! Secondly, to endeavor to describe God's arrows. And then, thirdly, to seek to comfort those who have been wounded by these arrows.

I. First, then, I am TO TRY TO BREAK SOME OF THE DEVIL'S ARROWS.

I will venture to say that nine out of ten of the terrible feelings which men have when under conviction of sin are not the work of God's Spirit, but are the result of the uprising of their own unbelief stirred and agitated by the diabolic suggestions of Satan. He knows that it is "now or never" with them—if he can now drive them to despair and keep them from coming to Christ, he will have gained his end. But if now the anxious soul should find shelter and rest in the atonement of Christ, the prince of darkness will have lost it forever and, therefore, he exerts all his power and stirs up all his fellow fiends to do their utmost to keep the poor soul in despair!

One of the arrows which the devil shoots at such a time is this is that he says to the troubled soul, *"Your sins are so great that it is not possible for God to forgive you*. You have sinned so grossly and so long—remember your sin on such and such a day and on such and such a night? If you had not committed such and such a sin, you might have been forgiven, but now there is no hope for you! Besides, think of the many ways in which your offenses have been aggravated. You have sinned against light and knowledge—though you have often been reproved, you have hardened your neck and you shall surely be destroyed—and that without remedy. Your case is utterly hopeless." Now, although part of Satan's speech is quoted from the Scriptures, I dare to affirm that this arrow never came out of God's quiver! That quotation has no reference to one who sincerely repents of sin and comes to God seeking mercy for Jesus' sake. However great your guilt may have been, remember that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." If you had gone as far in sin as Satan, himself, could have led you, that great promise of the Lord Jesus Christ would still have been available for you, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto man." If the guilt of a thousand sinners had been concentrated in you, yet still, if you did but wash in the—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins"—

there is potency enough in that precious blood to make you whiter than the newly fallen snow! O poor troubled one, let this arrow be broken in

pieces once and for all! Let the thought of God's everlasting mercy and His boundless power to forgive snap it in two and cast it to the ground!

Another of the devil's arrows which often goes whizzing through the air is this—"*The Holy Spirit cannot soften such a hard heart as yours*. You cannot repent as a sinner should do—sin has got too firm a hold upon you. Why, you know that you can listen to a most earnest discourse and yet not be in the least impressed by it! Or if you are for a time moved by the message, you soon go back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit and as the sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire. There is no tenderness left in you! Your conscience is seared as with a hot iron! The Holy Spirit is powerless to do anything in such a case as yours." That is another lie—a gross and slanderous lie! What is there that the Holy Spirit cannot do? O my brothers and sisters, when anyone is talking about what the deity can do, the word, "powerless," must never be mentioned! Even the word, "difficult," is not to be put side by side with the name of God! "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear." Why, one drop of Jesus' precious blood could melt a mountain of ice as huge as a million worlds! One flash of the Holy Spirit's celestial fire could make a rock of granite run like the water that gushed from the smitten rock in the wilderness! There is no doubt about the hardness of your heart and the badness of your nature—you are probably much worse than you think are—but it is impossible that your depravity could exceed the potency of the Holy Spirit's influence to renew your nature and change your whole life! So let this diabolical arrow also be smashed to atoms so that even the devil, himself, cannot use it again!

Here is another shot from Satan's quiver. The devil says to the poor troubled soul, "It is too late for you to repent. If you had repented and turned to God years ago, you might have been saved. When you were a young man, you had your day of grace, but that is now over. Do you not remember being in a certain chapel one Sunday night when the minister was so earnestly pleading with sinners and many were smitten down under conviction of sin? You also seemed to be impressed, but your anxiety was all gone in the morning—so you missed your opportunity and now the gates of heaven are shut against you forever! You may seek the Lord, but you shall not find Him! You may call upon Him, but He will not answer you." That is another of Satan's lies, for there is no man living who has arrived at a period when it is too late for God to save him! We rightly sing—

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

Did not Christ save the dying thief? He was fastened to a cross and was soon to die, but when he repented of his sin and pleaded with Christ to remember him, he received the gracious assurance that he should be *that day* with Christ in Paradise! If old age could keep men out of heaven,

there are many now before the throne of God who would never have been there! If you are seventy, or eighty, or even 90 years of age, it is a sad and solemn thing that you should have lived so long without Christ—but this is no reason why you should die and be damned! God's message to you is still this, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?" The commission to Christ's servants is still the same as when He gave it to His first disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"—not merely to every creature—under 50 years of age, but to every one of the whole human race! If you are over a 100 years old, yet, as you are a creature, I have to preach the gospel to you and the gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!" So, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, however great your age may be, or however many times you may have refused to believe on Him, there is no doubt about God's willingness and power to still receive, pardon and accept you!

Another of Satan's arrows is this. He whispers in a sinner's ear, *"You are not one of God's elect.* You are shut out of the kingdom of heaven. It is no use for you to think of being saved—a stern decree has blotted out all possibility of hope for you." But how does the devil know that? This is one of the things that God has never revealed to *anyone*, and I am sure that Satan has never been allowed to read the names in the Lamb's book of life, so do not let this arrow trouble you for a moment! Why should not you be one of God's elect as well as any other man? Have you been a drunk? Many drunks have been saved in spite of their drunkenness! Have you been addicted to profane swearing? There are many who once uttered the foulest oaths, but who were afterwards washed in the precious blood of Christ—and who are now singing the new song before the throne of God in glory! Have you been a willing servant of the devils? There are many who long served him here below, who are now playing their golden harps in the presence of God above! You cannot tell whether you are one of the elect or not until you believe in Jesus—when you do *that*, you will have positive proof that God chose you unto salvation and gave you to His Son long before He formed the world! The doctrine of election is not one about which you need trouble yourself just now. Begin to read your Bible and the gospel according to Matthew, and see there how you are bid to repent and invited to come to Christ. When you have done that, you can go on to the epistles and read about election and all the other doctrines of grace, but your first business is to repent of sin and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

I have also known Satan whisper to a man, *"It is no use for you to pray*. You know that you have been praying for a long time, but you have got no comfort from it, so give it up, for it is an utterly useless exercise! It is no use for you to believe. There was a man the other day who said that he believed, but he was just as great a sinner afterward, so what good is it for you to believe?" Here again we have Satan's lies sat in contrast with God's truth. It is of great use for everyone to pray, for our Savior said, "Everyone that asks, receives and he that seeks, finds. And to him that

knocks, it shall be opened." There is not one case of true prayer that is exempt from this general rule! Then as to Satan's assertion that there are some who say that they have believed and yet they are not saved, we can reply that it is one thing to *say* that we believe, but quite another thing to really believe! No doubt there are some who say that they believe who are no better for it, but it is equally true that, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Faith does justify the soul—"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So will you believe Satan's lie or God's truth?

I do not know what other arrows the devil may have shot at any of you. He may, perhaps have told you that *you have committed the unpardonable sin*, but that is certainly more than he knows. If you now desire to be saved, you may depend upon it that you have *not* committed that sin which is unto death! And if you are now believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the best possible proof that this sin cannot be laid to your charges, for whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but has everlasting life! Cling to the cross of Christ and you shall never sink down to perdition.

II. Having thus tried to break some of the devil's arrows, I want, next, TO ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE SOME OF GOD'S ARROWS.

Here I will give you a piece of my own experience. When God began to deal with me, one of the first arrows that flew right into my heart was this, "You God see me." I recollected that *God knew all about my sins*, that He had seen them or heard them, and had noted them all down in His book of remembrance. I was greatly alarmed, for I had forgotten many of them and had dreamed that God also had forgotten them.

Then came another arrow, bearing this motto, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." I realized that *God knew all about my motives and thoughts*. He had seen my selfishness when I was seeking to do what was right merely that I might be saved by it. He had watched all the wanderings of my heart, and all the evil imaginations of my mind—and I was almost driven to despair as I thought what must be the fruit of my doings!

Then came another sharp arrow and it was labeled thus, *"The soul that sins, it shall die."* I knew that I had sinned and I felt that I must die, for the law can show no mercy—it can only punish the guilty. Then I heard that terrible sentence, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Then was I sorely afraid, like Belshazzar was when he saw the mysterious handwriting on the wall!

Then came another arrow bearing this inscription, *"Your commandment is exceedingly broad,"* and I began to see that the law of the Lord was much more than I had thought it to be. I had fancied that if I kept the letter of the commandments, I would be accounted innocent, but I found that the commandment which said, "You shall not kill,"

meant that if I hated my brother, I would be a murderer! And that, "You shall not commit adultery" not only referred to that shameful act, but also included the lascivious look and the unclean thought! Ah, me, where was all my fancied righteousness, then? In view of the spirituality of God's holy law, I might well say with Moses at Sinai, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

Another arrow that came to me was marked, "*Without Me you can do nothing*." I found that by my own unaided power, I could not pray, I could not repent, I could not believe—but there I lay, as helpless as the dirt beneath my feet—and with no more power to save myself than a sere leaf driven by the blast of a tornado would have had!

Ah, these were sharp arrows, indeed, and just when I seemed covered with wounds all over me, I thought I had another arrow shot into me bearing this terrible message, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." When I went to sleep, I determined that I was in hell—and when I woke up, I wondered that the earth did not open and swallow up such a sinner as I felt myself to be! Life became almost unbearable to me.

Then there came another arrow which caused me to suffer still more. It bore this missive, *"You have sinned against light and knowledge*. You were not ignorant, as many lads were, of what you ought to do. You had received gracious instruction and you knew what the gospel was! You sinned against your father's prayers and your mother's tears." I recollected the Sunday evenings at home when my mother had prayed with me and pleaded with me to lay hold on eternal life, yet I had still refused to turn to God and to trust in Jesus as my Savior—and this thought came to my mind, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you." Thus did the arrows of God's quiver enter into my soul!

These are God's arrows and the messages they bear are all true. It is true that God sees us. It is true that He reads our thoughts and motives. It is true that He punishes sin. It is true that His commandments are exceedingly broad. It is true that we are powerless to save ourselves. And if, my dear hearers, you are feeling the force of any of these truths of God, I congratulate you that God has thus made you a mark for His arrows!

III. Now, thirdly, I want TO SEEK TO COMFORT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WOUNDED BY THESE ARROWS.

My dear afflicted friends, thus troubled and distressed in mind, please consider why God sends these arrows to you. Remember that they are not sent to destroy you, but to save you—and to save you by destroying some things of which you are very fond! They are sent, first of all, to destroy your false peace. God cannot bear that you should say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace and, therefore, He shoots these arrows to kill your carnal ease that you may be stirred up to seek His face. They are also sent to slay your self-righteousness—and they are blessed arrows that can do that! When Mr. Hervey asked a poor farmer what was

the hardest thing to get rid of, he expected him to answer, "Sinful self." But the reply was, "Righteous self." And certainly, of the two, *righteous self is much harder to part with than sinful self*. These arrows are also sent to kill your strength. Remember, sinner, when you can do nothing, then God will do everything! When you are so completely emptied that you have nothing left, God will give you everything! If you wish to save yourselves, do it, but God will have no share in the work under such conditions. If He is to save you, He must be Alpha and Omega—He must have all the praise because He gives all the power!

Next, as God's name and nature are both love, *He cannot take any pleasure in seeing you suffer*. He has a purpose in setting you as a mark for His arrows. He has a design in causing the arrows of His quiver to enter your soul. He does not wound you out of ill will toward you, but He is aiming at your good all the while. So thank Him for shooting at you and beg Him not to spare any of His arrows, but to keep on shooting until He has killed the last relic of evil and self- righteousness that has kept you from coming to Christ!

Further, *do not imagine that you are the first person who has suffered in this way*. All the people of God, in their measure, pass through a similar experience. If they do not become God's target at the time of their conversion, they find that His quiver is emptied against them sooner or later. Therefore, my poor wounded brother or sister, look upon your pathway as being the pathway of the saints—it is the King's Highway which has been trodden by the pilgrims to heaven in all ages!

Once more, *you are one of those who are especially invited in this blessed book*. Listen—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden"—that must mean you! "And I will give you, rest." This is what you need. "Ho, everyone that thirsts"—that means you! "Come you to the waters, and he that has no money"—that means you! "Come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Whoever will"—that must mean you, for you are willing enough to be saved—"let him take the water of life freely."

If you cannot get any comfort out of these invitations because you fear you are not the person described in them, remember that *there is a general call given in the gospel*. Not only are we invited to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and bid to repent of sin, but as Paul said at Athens, "God now commands all men everywhere to repent." Be thankful that it is not too late for you to obey that command! The door of heaven is not yet closed against you! The gate of hell has not yet been fastened as your eternal prison—you are still on praying ground and on pleading terms with God—so "seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Above all, my dear hearers, *remember that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"*—sinners, mark you—not the righteous, the good,

the excellent, but the sinful, the bad, the guilty! God loved not men because of their goodness. Christ bought not men because of their moral beauty. The Holy Spirit quickened not those who were already alive—but "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Look by faith, sinner, to Him as He hung upon the cross! It is God's eternal Son, "very God of very God," who died there, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Recollect how He cried, "It is finished," before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. What was finished? Why, the road from hell to heaven! The pathway along which the vilest sinner may travel to glory—the fountain in which the most scarlet sins may be washed away—the redemption by which the bond slaves of sin and Satan are forever set at liberty! All this and more than this was finished on Calvary! And if you will trust in Jesus now, a finished salvation shall be yours this very moment! May the Holy Spirit enable you, just as you are, to rest upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will find that He who wounded you with His arrows, shall heal you by His grace, and you shall be His forever and ever! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LAMENTATIONS 3:1-35; JEREMIAH 31:22-37.

I am about to read a portion of Holy Scripture which may seem very strange to some of you, but it belongs to a part of the congregation, and I hope it may be the means of giving them comfort. I read is as a picture of the suffering of a soul under a sense of sin. I think it is a most graphic portrait of a heart that is awakened and made to feel its lost estate. If there are any such here, they will be sure to see themselves in the picture.

Verse 1. *I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.* It is a mistake that most souls make when in trouble, to suppose that no others ever felt as they do. John Bunyan describes Christian as being very much comforted by hearing someone quoting Scripture as he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for then he perceived that there were others in the same case with his own. Do not think, poor troubled soul, that no one was ever so broken in pieces as you are—your path of sorrow is a well-trodden one,

2. *He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light.* A Hebrew method of saying that it was a thick darkness without any light, either starlight or moonlight. You who have passed through this state of conviction know what it means—no comfort from ordinances, no comfort from God's word, no comfort from your daily mercies. Every stream of comfort seems dried up to you—and sin lies heavily upon you.

3. *Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day.* As if when a man is about to strike, he smites not with his open hand but turns his hand, so the prophet says God did with him. He felt

that he was being smitten with the heaviest blows that God seemed able to give.

4. *My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones.* As men through excessive grief sometimes appear to grow prematurely aged, so the prophet says he had gone through grief. He felt as if his bones were broken. The sore vexations of his spirit had dashed the solid pillars of the house of manhood from their place.

5. *He has built against me, and compassed me with gall and travel.* That is to say, as the besiegers erected a mound against a city and threw up earthworks, so the prophet says God seemed to have thrown up earthworks from which He might fire off the great guns of the law against him.

6. *He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old.* As though he had to live in a tomb, where neither life nor light could come to him.

7. *He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy.* "My way seems blocked up, nothing prospers with me." As the convict sometimes drags about his chain, and has a ball at his foot, so the prophet felt as if God had clogged him with a heavy chain so that he could not move because of its terrible weight.

8. *Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.* Which was the worst trial of all!

9. *He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He has made my paths crooked.* It was believed that hewn stones made the strongest wall as the joints would the more closely fit into one another. Jeremiah seems to speak as if God had taken care and trouble to build, not as men do roughly with common stones, but with polished and well shapen troubles built like strong barriers in his way.

10. *He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places.* He felt as if the justice of God was about to spring upon him. He was afraid to move, lest the couched lion should leap upon him and tear him to pieces. John Bunyan, in his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, describes in his own experience precisely what the prophet here speaks of.

11-13. *He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my soul.* And all this while, to aggravate his grief, he found no comfort anywhere.

14. *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.* It is just so with a man who is under a sense of sin. His companions ask him why he is so melancholy. He has an attack of the mopes, they say. They do not want his society, they will chase him from their midst. I marvel not that they want not his company, for well do I know that he wants not theirs, but this adds much to his grief, to find that they make derision and laughter of his woe.

15. *He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood.* What a strong expression the prophet uses! As a drunken man has lost his wits and staggers he knows not where, even as is a sinner when he really begins to taste the bitterness of sin. He does not act as if he were endowed with reason—despair and sorrow have driven his senses away.

16. *He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He has covered me with ashes.* The Easterns usually baked their cakes on the hearth and very frequently there would be in the cakes pieces of grit, perhaps large lumps of cinder and sometimes small gravel stones, which would break the teeth. "So," the prophet seems to say, "when I went to try to get some nourishment by the eating of bread, I was disappointed—my teeth were broken with gravel stones." I remember when I used to go up to the house of God to try to get comfort, but instead thereof, I came away more wretched than I went—for sin, that great devouring dragon, still followed me everywhere.

17-21. *And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope are perished from the LORD: remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* [See Sermon #654, Volume 11—MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Notice the gracious change that has taken place, as if the sun had risen after the blackness and gloom of the night! Now the birds of joy begin to sing and the flowers of hope begin to open their golden cups.

22. *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassion fails not.* Bad as our state is, we are not yet in hell—we are not yet beyond the reach of hope!

23. *They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.* We had new mercies this morning, and we have had fresh mercies this evening. God has not forgotten us! The very breath in our nostrils is a proof of His goodness to us. Let us, therefore, dear friends, still hope for yet further favors from Him!

24, 25. *The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.* [See Sermon #2436, Volume 41—"HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can you get a hold of this blessed truth of God, any of you troubled ones who are here? Brokenhearted sinner, can you get a grip of this comforting assurance? If so, there will soon be peace for you!

26, 27. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* [See Sermon #1291, Volume 22—THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] For this yoke, though it may seem to be very heavy for a time, when it has

humbled us and brought us to Christ, will bring us innumerable blessings!

28-33. *He sits alone and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust so there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the LORD will not cast off forever: but though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.* Unless He has some gracious motive for it, He never afflicts or grieves them, and when He does act thus, it is as when a father smites his child. It is because it must be done and not because he loves to do it. See, then, the great mercy of God! May it lead the sinner to repentance, yes, and lead us all to put our trust in the Lord!

[The following Exposition is the concluding portion of the one published with Sermon #3261, Volume 57—THE COVENANT—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

The passage here expounded is Jeremiah 31:22-37.

Jeremiah 31:22. *For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.* Here is a prophecy of the birth of Immanuel, God With Us, born of a woman by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Mary was indeed blessed among women and we rejoice in that man who was thus miraculously born to be the Savior, Christ the Lord.

23-20. *Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.* There are good times in store for Israel! Jerusalem shall then be the "habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness."

26. *Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.* Jeremiah woke up with a pleasant impression of his vision upon him, and well he might, for was there ever a more blessed one than that of which we have just read?

27, 28. *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, says the LORD.* All the ingenuity of heaven seems to be taxed to bless believers! And just as man sought out many inventions for evil, God, in His infinite love and mercy seeks out many inventions for the good of His people.

29, 30. *In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.* We live under a *personal* dispensation—there is no such thing as hereditary godliness or salvation by proxy! Every man must for himself repent, and for himself believe. Vain and foolish is the idea that because we have had Christian parents, therefore we also are Christians!

31, 32. *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the LORD.* What bliss it is to know about this new covenant! Let us notice its tenor.

33. *But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*—[See Sermons #1687, Volume 28—THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART and #2992, Volume 52—GOD'S WRITING UPON MAN'S HEART—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Not on the tablets of stone, not on the walls of the church, but "I will write it in their hearts"—

33. *And will be their God, and they shall be My people.* You may have heard it said that Christ will not leave His people, but that His people may leave Him—but in this promise the second contingency is provided for as well as the first!

34-37. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus says the LORD, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.* What a God of infinite mercy He is!

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INTELLIGENT OBEDIENCE
NO. 3263

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God."
1 Chronicles 28:8.

IS THE LORD your God? I must put this question very pointedly to you at the onset, otherwise I shall not be speaking to you in expounding the words of my text. Were I to address the ungodly and the unconverted, and say to them, "Keep God's commandments," they would, perhaps, misunderstand such an exhortation and consider that I intend to set before them as the way of life a strict observance of the commandments. It is no such thing. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." So far as the sinner is concerned, by the law comes the knowledge of sin! The law can do nothing more for him than convince him that he needs a Savior and drive him out of himself to find in Christ what he cannot find in himself.

I am now about to address those who are saved—those who are saved through the merits of the Lord Jesus—those who have rested in Him and are now trusting in Him, and in Him, alone. These have taken God to be their God. They are in covenant relationship with Him and now, being introduced into the family of God, they become like children under parental influence and parental discipline, bound to "keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD their God."

David says, first of all, *"Keep the commandments*," that is to say, such of them as you know, such as are clear from your reading of Scripture, such as have been pressed upon your conscience—keep these. Keep them always. Ask for more grace to keep them better. Or when you feel that you have not kept them, go with holy repentance to the foot of the cross to get rid of past sin and look up for sanctifying grace that through the Holy Spirit's power, you may keep them better for the future. For, "in the keeping of them there is great reward." The path of *obedience* is a path of safety and of happiness.

But David says more than that, and it is to this I call your attention. He says, *"Keep and seek for* all the commandments of the LORD your God." There are precepts, the nature of which you have never understood, the obligation of which you have never felt—seek these out. Try to know all God's will concerning you. Keep what you do know, but wherein you are at fault through lack of knowledge, do not content yourself with ignorance any longer, but search out the matter. Read the

King's proclamations. Study the code of the King's laws. Ask Him to teach you and to make you wise in the way of His commandments, that in nothing you may be chargeable with indifference, or be guilty of neglecting the ordinances of the Most High.

It shall be my endeavor, then, for a little while, as God shall help me to command such an obedience and show you the excellence of that earnest pursuit which seeks out God's commandments.

I. Such AN OBEDIENCE IS DEEPLY SPIRITUAL.

Were I simply to do that part of the divine will which everybody else does; if, being a member of a certain Christian church, I take my cue from my fellow members, or pin myself to the sleeve of my pastor and act precisely according to the fashion which everybody else is setting, I may be merely conforming to religious usages in a mechanical, dreamy, unspiritual, unacceptable way. It may not be the worship of God at all! It may be but a physical exercise following in the rut as the cart that is dragged there by the horse. Does it profit my character that I make proof of nothing but these grooves through which I am drawn by custom? But you will see at once that when a man bestirs himself to find out what the will of the Lord is, there is an exercise of the mind at once! The spirit is then, even before any action is taken, in a state of obedience—it is bowing itself reverently before the Most High and saying to Him, "What would You have me to do?" The man who seeks to know the Lord's will is never likely to become a mere formalist. His mind will be aware. Why, some of you, I dare say, have come here a good many times and you have sat through the service and have gone away again none the better because it has grown into a regular thing with you! I have sometimes noticed this in our worship. Dissenting worship is simple enough, but yet for all that there gets to be a formality about it. If it has been the habit of people to sit during the singing of the hymn, when they have been asked to stand up, they have felt that it was a dreadful innovation—quite a departure from the old mechanism! And should a verse be given out—have you not noticed it?—with a doxology or a chorus at the end, how many have dropped into their seats before we have got to the last line, and risen up again wondering what the preacher can be doing because their minds are not awake in the service of God! We are all prone to get into that kind of routine. Sitting in the same seat, or even standing on the same platform and going though the same form of worship produces in us mechanical service. But if we seek to know the Lord's will, it is evident that in that thing, at least, we have broken through the mechanical and got into that which is spiritual—worship which God says He will accept, for, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

II. The obedience which seeks to know the Lord's will also INDICATES THE TRUEST SINCERITY.

A man who is not sincere in his obedience may conform to the regular order of that which he knows to be prescribed, but only the sincere man

will seek to find out matters he is not yet acquainted with. Which is the better servant—the man who must always have his orders written for him every morning and who at night excuses himself for the neglect of many an obvious duty because, as he says, "It was not down on the paper, sir. I have followed your instructions"—is he the better servant, or the other man who thinks after he has obeyed his orders, "What ought I to do for my master? Is there not this thing, or that thing which, though it may not be absolutely recorded or written down, yet is intended in the spirit of my instructions?" Do you not love the child who looks out for occasions and opportunities to please you? Do you not feel a satisfaction in accepting from a friend a kindness which may be almost unexpected and which manifests to you that he must have been thinking about you and has, perhaps, lain awake at night to consider how he could gratify or serve you? You feel that this is sincere friendship! So it is with your service for God. If you do only those duties which I stand here and write out to you so plainly that you cannot help seeing them, why, is there any great forwardness or fidelity of purpose in it? But if you go to that grand old book and on your knees say to your Lord and Master, "I want to do all that I can to show how my heart loves You—teach me what You would have me do," this manifests a sincerity which is indisputable!

III. Again, is not the seeking out of the divine commands A PROOF OF AN INTENSE AFFECTION?

Common affection will do what it must, but intense affection will do all it can. A vehement enthusiasm, a constraining love, such as that which Jesus Christ deserves of us, says—

"Oh, what can I do for my Savior to praise?"

"Is there an alabaster box of precious ointment that I can break, that I may anoint His head? Wherein can I be of service to any members of His family? How can I show forth the glory of His name?" The glow of affection would be always prompting us to seek here, there and everywhere to know what we can do! We are far from believing in works of supererogation. No man can ever do more than it was his duty to have done. When we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants! Still the earnest Christian, if he could, would do even more than he should. Instead of wishing to stand still and stop short on this side of the path, he would exceed both in service and in sacrifice, as Dr. Watts sings—

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

Diligent inquiry in seeking out the divine will manifests that holy intensity of affection which becomes the disciple of such a Lord as our Savior, Jesus Christ, and which I trust and pray always gleams, and shall gleam in the bosoms of many of us who have been redeemed by His precious blood!

IV. Further, this searching after the divine commandments indicates THE MATURE MANHOOD OF GRACE.

The babe in grace does that which is simply and obediently plain, but it is not to be expected that he will begin to search and pry into things which are not so clear until he has grown and had his senses exercised. At any rate, it is more excusable if the babe in grace is more ready to be led by his fellow Christian than to be on his own account a deep searcher into the divine word. But the man who is a man in Christ, having grown in grace, takes the book and he says, "My Lord, I desire to serve You to the utmost stretch of my manhood. You have been pleased to give me an understanding, not that I may cringe at the foot of the priest and lower myself into a beast of burden to be driven wherever those incarnations of evil spirits may goad me on! No, but You have made me a man and given me mind, thought, capacity—and You have put into my hands a book which I can understand, and here I am—assist me while I bow this judgment to Your sway, and teach me what Your mind is." God would have us all educated for the skies. We are here but minors. I trust, however, we have, many of us, passed our infancy! We are getting something beyond the mere first childhood of grace and now we seek to know, and to practically know, the Lord's will and mind respecting us! If you would always be babes, then sit still and have this word and that put into your mouths, forms of prayer composed for your use and unintelligible creeds compiled for you to repeat! But if you would grow into men in Christ Jesus, come to the book and keep and seek out the commands of God with full purpose of heart to obey them!

V. I KNOW THERE WILL BE A GREAT MANY EXCUSES MADE.

In these days, people do not read their Bibles much. One reason why Romanism is popular is because it allows a man to get a deputy to do his thinking for him—and to do his praying for him. But what a poor affair it is with the man who keeps his brains in somebody else's head and carries his heart in somebody else's bosom! Are there not many of you who do not read the Word of God? We stand up as Protestants and say, "The Bible, and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants!" And yet what multitudes never think of reading it! They hear a chapter read in public service and, perhaps now and then, read a chapter at home. But as to downright *study* of the word and searching out the divine meaning, I do believe that is an exercise to which many professors are totally unaccustomed! They do not engage in it regularly and constantly, nor come to it as a daily duty and a daily privilege. Indeed, their great theme is unsectarianism. Unsectarianism! That is the correct thing nowadays—unsectarianism! Which, being translated means—it does not signify which is which, whether it is right or wrong, it matters not one atom whether you obey God or obey man, whether you belong to a church which is apostate from the truth, or one that holds the truth of God! Unsectarianism, my friends, is treason to God and to God's word!

It is only the strong sectarian who can be true—I mean only the man who follows out the divine word in every jot and tittle and feels, "I must hold to this truth even if I stand alone." I mean not that we are to say, "I cannot love the Christian brother who does not see what I see." No, my brothers and sisters, I wish to push liberty of conscience further than that, so far as to feel that you have no right to judge your brother about what he sees or does not see, but that you stand solely and wholly on your own feet before God! You have there to exercise your own mind and it does not matter to you whether you belong to any one section, or whether you are a sect to yourself, as long as you can but call Him Lord and Master and keep all His word and all His way. But the giving up of this and that truth of God—denying one ordinance and compromising another, shirking some doctrines and dexterously turning the angles of other doctrines, giving up any particular practice which is clearly of God's appointment and tolerating any other practice of human device with a vindication of its harmlessness—this is nothing but flat treason against the majesty of heaven in order to win the approbation of men!

The world points its finger at the rigid Puritan and declaims against him—but the rigid Puritan is the man whom God accepts! Nor can he be too rigid in everything in which he believes the divine will is concerned. "How liberal," says one. Yes, but let a servant be liberal with his own money, not with his master's. I have no right to liberality in principle. Principles and duties are things which I have no more right to touch than I have to take pains to alter the statute law of the realm! Yes, let the canons of law be altered and Acts of Parliament be burned in the fire, but let the Word of God stand fast forever! If any man preaches any other gospel than that we have received, instead of saying, "No doubt he is an excellent, but a mistaken man," let us say with Paul, "Let him be accursed!" And until we get back the old spirit of following out the Master's mind in all things—personally, scrupulously, rigidly, our conscience keeping close to the divine mind—we shall scarcely know what true obedience is! The church greatly needs to be brought back to her true standing of obedience to her Lord and King!

VI. Taking this for granted, admitting that it is our duty to search out the divine command in all respects and to yield in nothing, whatever, you may ask, HOW ARE WE TO DISCOVER THE DIVINE MIND?

Let me say at once, *only by searching the Word of God, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit*. Brothers and sisters let me warn you against the many ways in which men have sought to discover God's will apart from His word—all foolish and some of them wicked! I have known some who have opened the book as if the passage on which they should alight at haphazard became their oracle, or if another passage of a different complexion, irrespective of the context, should open or turn up, that should guide them. Do you not know that this was an old heathen custom? The Romans, using Virgil or some other poet, as you use your

Bible, did just the same thing. When you are so doing, you are simply guilty of idolatry and might just as well go to the shrine of Delphi and consult the Pythian oracle, as thus tempt the Lord your God! We have known some cast lots to know what they should do—as if the most precarious hazard could interpret God's will which is clear and plain! I marvel how any civilized man can be so besotted as to do such things—and yet I know that this is an evil pastime and practice which lingers among some Christians!

Others judge of the divine mind by providence. But what do you mean by providence? Is it the current of the wind, the drifting of the tides, the aspect of the clouds, or the fortuitous coincidences that have arrested your attention? Such providence, you know, will guide you any way if you follow that. Jonah went to go to Tarshish and he found a ship—of course he did, but was it a providence? Yes, he might have said, "I should never have gone, but the finger of providence seemed so clear." Many people have got into prison through such providence! Your rule is not to be providence, but the command of God! Who are you that you should interpret providence? Is that providence, when a man means to rob another, that he finds the house neglected? If a man means to cheat, is it a providence that he meets some easy customer in the course of business? Yet many talk so and try to lay their sins upon the providence of God! My brothers and sisters never do this—you will either be the victims of infatuation or the perpetrators of wicked folly if you do anything of the kind.

Others, too, judge of their duty by impressions. "If I feel it impressed upon my mind," says one, "I shall do it." Does God command you to do it? This is the proper question. If He does, you should make haste, whether it is impressed upon your mind or not! But if there is no command to that effect, or rather, if it diverges from the line of God's statutes and needs apology or explanation, hold your hand, for though you have ten thousand impressions, yet must you never dare to go by them! It is a dangerous thing for us to make the whims of our brain instead of the clear precepts of God, the guide of our moral actions. "To the law and to the testimony"—this is the lamp that shows the Christian true light! Be this your chart! Be this your compass! But as to impressions, and whims, and fancies, and I know not what besides which some have taken—these are more wreckers' lights that will entice you on the rocks! Hold fast to the Word of God and nothing else! Whoever he shall be that shall guide you otherwise, close your ears to him! If at any time, through infirmity or weakness, I should teach you anything which is contrary to this book, cast it from you! Hurl it away as chaff is driven from the wheat—if it is mine and not my Master's, cast it away! Though you love me, though I may have been the means of your conversion to God, think no more of what I say than of the very strangers in the street if it is not consistent with the teachings of the Most High. Our guide is His written word, let us keep to this.

VII. MANY ARGUMENTS MIGHT BE STATED FOR SUCH OBEDIENCE AS THIS, but we shall only mention three or four of them.

Remember, beloved in the Lord, that *our duty as Christians is not to be measured by our sense of that duty or by our knowledge*. What? Is it my duty to do anything that I do not know to be my duty? Certainly it is! Do you not know that even among men in the ordinary courts of law, if you break a law of which you were not cognizant, you are still amenable to punishment? Only last week a case in point occurred. In the new Act for Regulating the Traffic in the Streets, there are clauses which are quite unknown to some of the drivers. Some of these persons were prosecuted for breaking the law. They pleaded that they did not know it and, very rightly, they were dealt with leniently—but the magistrate told them that Parliament looked upon the law as binding upon men whether they knew it or not—it was their business to know it and they were to find it out! If it could be proved that a man did not try to know the law and went on breaking it through willful ignorance, he would soon learn that the judicature would not treat him with leniency, but would rather consider it a double offense, that the man who violated the law also persistently showed contempt for the law he violated and would not search it out! There are many such professing Christians. They do not know their duty because they do not *want* to know it. If they found out such and such a commandment of the Lord to be imperative, it would be very inconvenient, therefore they walk on the other side of the road rather than face the public notice! They take care to read some other passage of Scripture. I recollect a good man, a very good man, who, whenever he came to that passage in the Acts about Philip and the eunuch, took care not to read it, for it is a very awkward passage and reads so wonderfully like believers' baptism! As he could not bear that ordinance, and did not wish to trouble his conscience about it, he passed that passage by! But was he therein excusable? Assuredly not! God's ordinances are not according to our notions of those ordinances. Either a thing is right or not! If it is right, it is right and cannot be wrong! And I sin in not being obedient to it. My conscience cannot excuse me. If my conscience errs, I therein commit two sins—first, the error of my conscience and secondly, the error against the law which I have not properly read, and have not understood as I ought to have done. The Fall spoiled our understanding so that we do not know the divine will as we should know it, but the flaw in our understanding is no excuse for the flaw in our life—otherwise all the corruptions of nature might be urged as an excuse for the corruptions of practice—which they certainly are not! Our rule, then, is not our sense of duty, nor what we think to be our duty, but this book. There it is, the whole of it, and we must come to *that* and seek to set right our sense of duty and our conscience by the dictates of the Word of God!

And recollect, Christian, that *sin is to you, if you really are what you say you are, evermore a thing of horror.* Is it not, therefore, horrible even to suspect that you may be living constantly in sinful omission and every day engaged in the commission of some action hostile to God? Would you not be alarmed if it were whispered that there was a cancer somewhere in your body and you did not know where it was, but only that it was there somewhere? Would you ever rest till you had found out where it was? And if at night it should be said that somewhere in the house there was a thief, would you say, "Well, I do not know where he is and, therefore, I am justified in going to sleep"? No, but you would search until you drove him out. If you were in a room where there was a deadly viper and you got just an inkling of its being there, would you say, "I do not know, but I am almost sorry that I ever heard about the viper. I wish somebody had left me alone"? No, but you would thank him for telling you it was there and you would never rest till you had got rid of it! So, each one of us may be doing what we think is right, but which may be wrong. We may be living each day in the neglect of something which we ought to be doing. Will we not, therefore, make it this very night one of our earnest prayers, "Lord, teach me Your commandments and give me grace to keep them! Do not allow me even one solitary day to live willingly disobedient to the will of so kind and loving a Lord"?

Beloved, *to the keeping of every command there is a reward appended, not of debt, but of grace.* In keeping His commandments there is great reward, while, on the other hand, he that knows his Master's will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes! He that knew not his Lord's will and, therefore, did not do it, was he therefore excused? No, he, too, was beaten—beaten with fewer stripes, but still beaten. There is a reward which God gives, not that we have any merit, but out of His own grace and love to those who keep close to Himself. And, dear friends, we never neglect a duty without at once suffering for it—whether we perceive the suffering or not, we are losers by the neglect. Oh, that we could walk after the perfect pattern of the life of our Lord Jesus, without flaw and in perfection! And if that is not possible, yet at any rate let us struggle after it, seeking each day for the power of the Holy Spirit to work in us that we may be conformed unto the mind of Christ. O Spirit of God, leave us not! Clay vessels as we are, You have made us vessels for honor—let us be fit for the Master's use!

The best argument, after all, that I can use with you is this—*when our Lord Jesus became a servant on earth, He did not wait for instructions, but He sought out what He could do for us.* O my brothers and sisters, all that spontaneous service of affection which He rendered to us flowed from His inmost soul with a marvelous force! He did not say, "How little can I do for these poor sinners? How little can I suffer and yet let them be saved? How little can I give and yet bring them to heaven?" No, but He emptied out the full treasure of His soul for us, bounding or limiting Himself in nothing! The infinite Savior, infinite in all that He did for us, in the

boundless affection of His heart! Let us not serve Christ after a narrower sort than this, but let us ask Him to take our whole heart, to take us as disciples into His school, to teach us to write according to His copy, to amend the errors that we make, to correct the lines wherein we have been mistaken, that we may come, day by day, nearer and nearer to the perfect copy—and make up our minds to give up the dearest thing we have seen when we find it to be wrong and to follow out the hardest practice when we know it to be right! I think that, even with regard to our doctrinal views, firmly established as we should be in the present truth of God, we should always feel this when we are in prayer—that if there is something new that we do not know, but is quite contrary to what we do know, we are ready to learn it! And if some cherished opinion which we have held all our lives, should be found to be contrary to the mind of God, let us hold ourselves ready to give up that opinion at all costs and hazards as willing, obedient and true soldiers of our great Master and Captain!

I have thus tried to address the children of God. I have done it very, very feebly. The Lord forgive my weakness!

To the ungodly there is this word. I have not spoken to you up to now because I could not lay down the actions of the living to the dead—but to you there is a word. We are bid to preach to everyone in all the world, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned." To believe is to trust the Lord Jesus. It is that which saves you! Faith alone saves. After you have believed, then come and declare your death and burial with Christ through baptism, according to His word. That will not save you—you have no right to it until you are saved—but when you are saved, then that ordinance, and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper become instructive and useful to you, but they are of no service to you until you are completely saved through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ!

The Lord give you grace to believe, and to follow in His ways, and to Him be the glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:23-39.

[Concluded from Sermon #3255, Volume 57—THE PEARL OF PATIENCE—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

Verse 23. *And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* That is what we are waiting for—"the redemption of our body"—and we shall not wait in vain for it, for Christ is the Savior of our body as well as of our soul, and the day shall come when even our bodies shall be free from pain, weakness,

weariness, sin and death. Happy day! We may well look forward to it with the loftiest anticipations.

24, 25. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* This is our present position—patiently waiting for "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ"—patiently waiting for "the manifestation of the sons of God," for "it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself make intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* There is much in this chapter about groaning and that is but natural, for it so largely concerns our present imperfect state. But, by and by, there will be—

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

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because He make intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* This explains what to many is the mystery of prayer. The Holy Spirit, being Himself God, knows the secret purposes of the divine will and, therefore, moves the saints to pray in accordance with that will—and makes their supplications effectual through His own prevailing intercession. [See Sermons #788, Volume 14—CREATION'S GROANS AND THE SAINTS' SIGHS and #1616, Volume 27—SAVED IN HOPE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org]

28. *And we know*—Paul, like John, was no agnostic! He did not even say, "We think, we imagine, we suppose." No—"we *know*"—

28. *That all things work together for good*—We must not stop there, otherwise the statement will not be true, for all things do *not* work together for good to all men, but only—

28. *To them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.* How are we to know who they are who are the called according to God's eternal purpose? The previous clause informs us, for both relate to the same individuals—"them that love God" are—"them who are the saved according to His purpose." We cannot peer into the pages of the Lamb's book of life, yet we can tell by this simple test whether our names are recorded there—do we truly love the Lord? If so, all things are working for our present and eternal good—all things visible and invisible, all things friendly and unfriendly, all things in providence and grace!

29. *For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* What an eternal honor for all believers—that they might be among the "many brethren" of Christ, God's firstborn and well beloved Son! Here, too, we see the purpose of God's foreknowledge and predestination, that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son."

30. *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.* You see that these great declarations relate to the same persons right through the whole series—"Whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate…whom He did predestinate, them He also called… them He also justified…them He also glorified." There is not a single link missing from the eternal purpose and foreknowledge of God to the everlasting glory in which the saints' bliss shall be consummated! The practical questions for each one of us to answer are just these—have I been "called" by grace out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous light? Have I been "justified" by faith and have I peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Then, being called and justified, I may rest assured that I have been predestinated and that in due time I shall be glorified!—

"There, where my blessed Jesus reigns,
In heaven's unmeasured space,
I'll spend a long eternity
In pleasure and in praise."

31, 32. *What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also give us all things?* After having given us His own Son, what is there that He can withhold from us if it is for our real good? No, He has already virtually given us all things in giving Him to us! [See Sermons #159, Volume 3—THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S BLESSEDNESS; #355, Volume 7—PORTRAITS OF CHRIST; #1043, Volume 18—GLORIOUS PREDESTINATION; #241, Volume 5—PREDESTINATION AND CALLING and #627, Volume 11—JUSTIFICATION AND GLORY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

33, 34. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is it that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also make intercession for us.* Well might the apostle ring out these confident challenges to heaven, earth and hell! As it is God that justifies, who can bring any charge against His elect? Who can condemn those for whom Christ died, for whom He has risen, and for whom He is now making intercession at the right hand of God?

35-37. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for Your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.* "All these things" have only made the saints cling the more closely to their Lord, instead of separating them from Him! Their persecutors thought they were triumphing over them, but it was the martyrs who were the victors all the while!

38, 39. *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. Paul had good reason for being persuaded that there was no separation for those for whom there was no condemnation! May we be among them by God's grace! Amen. [See Sermons #256, Volume 5—THE BELIEVER'S CHALLENGE; #2240, Volume 38—A CHALLENGE AND A SHIELD; #751, Volume 13—MORE THAN CONQUERORS and #2492, Volume 42—PAUL'S PERSUASION—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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GOD'S CARE OF ELIJAH
NO. 3264

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 7, 1864.

"And it shall be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."
1 Kings 17:4.

WHAT a mighty master of the art of prayer was Elijah the Tishbite! He was one of those who had the power to shut up heaven so that it did not rain. He did not merely prophesy, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain but according to my word," but he prayed that it might be so—so that he was not only the messenger of the drought, but in some sense, the cause of it. It was his act that stopped the bottles of heaven! It was his prevailing prayer which brought down that heavy chastisement upon the sinful people.

But perceive dear friends, that though Elias was mighty in prayer, and could prevail with God, yet he did not therefore escape from suffering—no, his very prayer in its answer, brought him into suffering. If there should be a drought throughout all the land, he himself must feel the pinch as well as the rest of the people. If the brooks are dried up, they shall be dried up for him, and if there is no corn in the land, there shall be no corn for him, unless God shall be pleased to especially interpose on his behalf. Elijah suffers, then, in the common evil. The effect of his own prayer is, as it were, to bring down the house of the Philistines upon his own head, as well as upon theirs.

Let us learn from this, dear friends, that the highest degree of grace cannot save us from affliction, no, that it even includes it! We may grow in grace until our faith never staggers. We may progress in the art of wrestling with God until we know how to grapple with the angel as Jacob did at Jabbok with, "I will not let You go except You bless me"—but the impartial hand of trial will knock at our door as well as at the door of the chief of sinners! We must still tread the path of sorrow. Still shall we have to go under the rod of the covenant and feel Christ's yoke upon our shoulders. The child of God cannot escape the rod even though he is an Elijah. He may call down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, but no fire from heaven can consume his trouble! He must bear it, he must pass through it as well as the weakest and most common of God's people! Let us, therefore, settle it in our hearts to be resigned to this. If it is the common lot of God's people, why should we repine? If the Prince, Himself, once went through the valley of humiliation, why should we

murmur at following in His footsteps? God had one Son without sin, but never a son without affliction. Let us not ask to be the first, but be content to share the position of those whose inheritance is to be ours forever in the Paradise of our God.

Tonight, and God grant that it may be for our profit, we shall talk of our text, handling it in three ways. First, you will perceive that *God is at no loss to supply the needs of His children.* When we have talked of that, I would have you notice, secondly, *that God has power to make all creatures obedient to His will.* And then thirdly, I shall ask you to notice that *there is a possibility of a creature in some way serving God and yet remaining an unclean creature*—just as the ravens fed Elijah, but were still unclean ravens, so you and I may be serviceable in the Lord's cause to some extent and yet, after all, be utter strangers to the things of Christ!

I. First, then, we certainly gather from the whole incident related concerning Elijah here, and, indeed, from the whole of the prophet's life, that GOD IS AT NO LOSS TO SUPPLY HIS SERVANTS' NEEDS.

This narrative seems to tell us, first of all, *that God's people shall always have enough.* Do they need drink in a parched land—they shall "drink of the brook." Do they need food, "I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." Elijah never had short commons. He had no luxuries—just bread, meat, and water—but these were enough. No doubt, Jezebel's priests fed much more sumptuously and many of God's servants not as well, for we read of Obadiah that he took the prophets of God and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them bread and water. Now Elijah did get on better than this for he had bread and meat while they had only bread. God, however, was not pleased to give Elijah dainties. Delicate things are not promised to the children of God—and His prophets, at any rate—should not seek after them. They that fare delicately and are clothed sumptuously are in kings' houses and are often nothing better than reeds shaken by the wind. Let us learn, then, from this, that although God will provide for the needs of His people, yet He has never promised to give them more than enough. The promise runs, "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure," but it goes no further. We are instructed each day to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," which means, "Give us a sufficiency." And, indeed, if God's inspiration had not taught us so to pray, wisdom would teach us to do it, for Agur's prayer is one which philosophy might justify as well as grace—"Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me." It is that middle path of the, "enough," which is, perhaps, the most pleasant, and certainly the most safe. "Having food and raiment let us therewith be content."—

"Let others stretch their arms like seas,
And grasp in all the shore—
Grant me the presence of Your love,
And I will ask no more."

You have, perhaps, been struggling and trying to rise in the world, and after long and arduous efforts find yourself just where you were. You did make money fast at one time, but you have lost it all again. Well, dear friends, what does this matter, after all, as long as your God is still faithful to you? He never promised you riches! He did, however, promise you that you should lack no good thing and if riches had been a good thing for you, you would have had them! Perhaps you are one of the hyssops that grow best upon the wall, or one of the ferns that flourish best down in some shady place. Too much sunlight and exposure might have been ill for you. Thank God that you have enough just now, and are a believer in Christ! Take your case before they Lord and He will command even the ravens to feed you sooner than that you shall know any serious lack. I ought to say before I leave this point that Elijah had enough, but *it did not always come to him in the nicest way*, for I do not imagine that the ravens knew how to get bread and meat always cut into nice shapes. Perhaps they snatched a rough bit of meat here and perhaps a crust of bread there—and it came in all sorts of ugly pieces—but still, there it was and it was enough! "Beggars are not to be choosers," we say, and certainly pensioners on God's bounty ought not pick holes and find fault with the Lord's providing! Whatever God gives you, be grateful for—for if too proud to take from the raven's mouth, it will be well for you to go without until your hunger consumes your pride! God promises His people enough, but not more than enough, and even that enough may not come to us in the way we would choose.

Observe again, that though the Lord can provide for His people yet *He often chooses to do it by littles and littles*. How did the ravens bring the prophet his supplies? They brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. God did not send him a great supply at once. Not bread and meat to last him for a week. There must be daily supplies. Enough for the morning meal, and enough for the evening repast, but there shall be no stock in hand. And is not this God's usual method of dealing with His people?—

"Day by day the manna fell,
Oh, to learn this lesson well."

Remember, too, the prayer which I quoted just now—"Give us this day our *daily* bread." Not, "our *weekly* bread," not, "our *monthly* bread," not "our *annual* stores"—but, "give us our daily bread." God is pleased to give some of His servants in the bulk, but there are many others who only "live from hand to mouth"—and perhaps though not best for the flesh, it is best for faith, for we are apt, when mercies come regularly, to forget from whence they flow! The first three or four times that manna fell in the wilderness, I daresay the Israelites thought it a wonderful miracle and never ceased talking of it! But after a week or two it got so common that at last they said, "Our soul loathes this light bread." If God were to send an angel to your door with bread and meat, you would think a great deal of it at first, but after a dozen times you would think it commonplace and see no miracle in it. A miracle constantly repeated

ceases to be a miracle and falls, then, into ordinary law. God changes the modes in which He sends our supplies, that we may more clearly see His hand in them and be compelled to say, "It is only Jehovah who can add, "Jireh," to His name, for the Lord alone can provide for His people."

So, then, we are not to ask for a great stock in hand. You will, none of you, have dying grace yet, as you have not yet to die. And we do not get grace for the furnace until we come to the furnace. The manna of old, you know, bred worms and stank when it was a day old, and very often treasures laid up on earth are full of moths and rust, and so God sends us, day by day, what we need, that there may be neither moth nor rust, but that we may constantly see His hand and bless His name. There shall be enough, brothers and sisters, but it shall often come by littles.

Again, our text has another thought, very prominent on its front—*the provision which God sends us may often come in the most unlikely way*. It was a very unlikely way for the prophet to receive water, to send him to a brook. Why not to Jordan? It would probably be the last river to dry up. Why send him to a brook? Above all, why to the brook Cherith, for the very name signifies "drought"! Very likely it was the first brook to dry up. Yet Elijah is sent there! And we have known the Lord supply His people by the most unlikely means, the first to dry up has been made the very last. For a year, at most, the prophet sat among the rushes, hiding all day, and the water never failed. So God sometimes uses means which we have despised and enables us "to provide things honest in the sight of all men." Then, as for Elijah's meat, it was sent by ravens, as the little hymn says—

"More likely to rob and to thieve,
Than give to the prophet his needs."

Yet these birds that feed on carrion were constrained to bring the prophet fresh meat! Strange thing, that these birds of prey should bring meat to keep alive the servant of God! Their natural propensities overruled because God commanded them. Ah, God knows how to make our enemies to minister to our good, both temporally and spiritually. Once in old Popish times, a good woman condemned to starve, was asked by the judge in derision, "Now that you are condemned to starve, what can your God do for you?" She boldly answered, "He can feed me off your table if He pleases." It so happened that the judge's wife, melted to compassion by the boldness of one of her own sex, daily abstracted a portion of her own food to give to the poor woman in prison—and so her life was prolonged. If the Lord could not feed His people anyway else, I believe He would use ravens again! But He knows how to use ravens in human guise and he will bend their wills to serve His people's needs. They who would be wolves to His sheep, He can make to act as shepherds leading them into the green pastures!

Besides, if you think of it, the ravens were unlikely to feed the prophet, for *they were as poor as the prophet was.* They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns and yet poor as the prophet, they feed him! How frequently have the poor been the best friends of the poor.

Sometimes in life, not knowing poverty, has steeled the heart, but having known and felt it, opens the heart to help others in greater need. The ravens owe their own meat, day by day, to God's providing, and yet He employs them for the supply of His servant! So, poor saints, deeply dependent on God for their humblest needs, He enables to help saints yet poorer! His prophet shall be sustained by ravens who, perhaps, have little ones that cry for their food. The Lord will provide! We know not how, but He has His own ways and methods and, as a quaint old writer said, "when it comes to the point when the Lord cannot take care of His people *under* heaven, He will take them up *into* heaven." And when there is no bread for them to eat on earth, He will take away the need of eating it and take them where they shall eat bread in the kingdom of their Father beyond the skies!

I want to mention this point, too, that this bread came in sufficient quantity, in little, but unlikely means and yet *it surely came.* Not once did Elijah miss his breakfast, not once find that the water had dried up! Until the appointed time came there it was, sure and certain! What a strange thing we are so unbelieving! It is strange, is it not, that a saint who for 40 years has trusted his Father and been upheld, should ever doubt His faithfulness to the very end? It is strange, I say, but I must confess how strangely true of myself and how cunningly old unbelief still creeps in! Oh, that wicked unbelief! That wicked unbelief! Mr. Bunyan says, "Old Mr. Unbelief was a nimble chap and could never be taken by the heels, or else the king's officers would have hanged him!" I wish he could be taken and then there would be a clear riddance of him, but he somehow manages, in spite of all our watchfulness, to escape! And we get to doubting after ten thousand proofs that there is no cause whatever for doubting! Our bread is sure. Let us write this down, both in spirituals and temporals—"The Lord will provide."

But observe, also, and then I think I must leave this point, that *Elijah got his bread and meat in the path of obedience*. He was told to go and hide himself. This was not pleasant for the prophet. I confess I should not have liked it—to go and creep into a hole in some craggy rock or lie down and conceal himself among the reeds from every passerby. Everything he had to do from morning to night was to find the most secluded spot where no one could catch a glimpse of him. And this was the hero prophet of God! I would have wanted to be preaching! I would have said, "Why, there are the people of Israel needing someone to speak to them. Why, Lord, is it that I am condemned to be dumb? Why should I be hiding away among the rushes and reeds? Now is surely the time for me to boldly witness in Your name. The heavens drop no dew and the earth is dry—now, perhaps, the hearts of men will tremble—now let your Elijah speak! Lord, give me words of power, clothe me now with salvation and help me to stir this degenerate people." Would not you have felt the same? And yet God had commanded him to hide himself! If he had gone out contrary to the divine command I am not sure that he would have

been fed—but being told to hide and, obeying, he found the path of duty and obedience was the path of divine upholding and he was fed. So, dear friends, let us take care that we abide in the path of obedience to God and He will faithfully sustain us.

Some men are lazy and will not work—God will not provide for such, for they are far away from the path of duty. "If they will not work, neither shall they eat." Some, on the other hand, put themselves by some great folly, out of a position where their bread would have been given them. Well, if they run before God's pillar of cloud or fire, and are not led of Him, they must not expect that they will have His miraculous protection, for the path of duty is the only one where God has solemnly pledged Himself to protect His children walking therein! I believe that if we wait upon the Lord, commit our ways to Him, and acknowledge Him in them all, and it is our constant endeavor to serve Him, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all other things shall be added unto us. But if we choose to run counter to God's command, we may live to know even the need of bread! David could say, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." David could say that, but I cannot—and I believe there are many Christian people who cannot say it. David gave his honest personal experience, but that is not the personal experience of all observers. If you are the child of a true servant of God and yet you turn out a vagabond, you will have to beg your bread as well as other vagabonds—it does not matter how good your mother and father may have been. If you do not walk near to God, yourself, you may have your feet yet upon the cold ground and yet have to cry for bread. If you live in profligacy or vice, or deep indolence, it will bring you, though the child of godly parents, as surely and soon to poverty as it will any other child! We must not pride ourselves, nor trust in any degree upon what our parents were. Personal faith and a personal seeking of the kingdom of God and His righteousness are the only things that will bring us sure provision—nothing short of these will avail!

I have only to remind you to remember that *God is still the same God and He that helped Elijah will help you.* No raven may come flying into your window, but He will send you bread in another way. He is just as faithful now as ever! Elijah, remember, was a man of like passions with you. God help you to exercise this faith and He will never fail you.

II. Now, for the second part of our theme we will notice, with holy admiration, that GOD HAS POWER TO MAKE ALL CREATURES OBEDIENT TO HIS WILL.

"I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." These ravens never croaked out a single objection, but did as they were bidden! Their instincts did not rebel, but they submitted absolutely to God's will, and I daresay, were quite as diligent and quite as happy in carrying the bread and meat to Elijah as they would have been if they had been taking it to their own young or feasting upon it themselves!

Observe, beloved, how *the whole world is obedient to God*. He spoke once to the great floods of water—they were deep in the caverns of the earth. He called to them. He lifted up His voice in the clouds from that great sea beyond the firmament, and deep called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts—up they sprang from the vast caverns where they slept and down they dashed, not in drops, but in terrible cataracts, and the whole earth was covered with their floods, until forty cubits upward, they prevailed over the tops of the mountains! And when God did but whisper to them and bid them go back to their resting places, where He would again set them about with bars—back they went and the waters were relieved from off the earth. The great deep knows its Master! And He has but to speak and it obeys His behests. The Red Sea of old knew the power of Moses' rod and when God commanded, the floods stood upright, as a heap, and the whole depths were congealed in the heart of the sea! Jordan, too, was driven back—the feet of the priests did but touch the edge of the stream and straightway the whole host of Israel marched through as on dry land! Nor were the floods of earth merely obedient, for celestial bodies have confessed His power, for Joshua made the sun and the moon stand still while the Lord's warriors smote their foes! Nor is it inanimate things only that admit His sway. The lions crouch at Daniel's feet, the monster fish swallows but does not destroy the wayward Jonah. Nor do great things only obey Him. The worm at God's command smote the root of Jonah's gourd, the locusts came upon Egypt and He sent all manner of flies and lice in all their quarters. Creatures, however tremendous or minute, are alike moved by the impulses of the divine will and, like an army marching under some mighty commander in strict order, battalion upon battalion, and rank upon rank they march to the conflict when God bids them! Are not even the caterpillar and the palmerworm, part of God's great host—and do not they all obey His behests?

Is it not a sad, sad, strange thing that *man is the only creature that refuses to obey his Creator?* I know that in the sense of the decree, God's will is done, and even Judas fulfils that to which he was appointed, but so far as his will is concerned, man remains a stout rebel against God! The raven, commanded to carry bread and meat, does it, but man bid to believe in Christ, and to repent of his sins, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, refuses to do it! Oh, the stubbornness of human nature! We are worse than ravens! There is no creature that in this can be compared with man. Bunyan's well-known wish, that he had been a frog or a toad rather than a man might well be the wish of us all while we are in a state of sin for they know no rebellion against God! And we are full of it, as the sea is full of salt. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Are there any here in an unregenerate state? I fear there are. If so, let those ravens rebuke you! How is it that to the God who made you, who feeds you—that to the Christ who says, "Come unto Me, you weary, and I will give you rest"—

that to that Spirit who alone can quicken you, you should be enemies and strangers? May a sense of your ingratitude fill your hearts with penitence and make you humble yourselves before God!

III. But lastly, we have in the case before us a very notable instance of how POSSIBLE IT IS FOR CREATURES TO SERVE GOD AFTER A FASHION, AND YET STILL REMAIN UNCLEAN CREATURES.

We read in the book of Leviticus that "the raven after his kind is unclean." Before these ravens brought Elijah's food they were unclean and after they had done it, they were still unclean. Elijah did not refuse the bread and meat because unclean birds brought it. No! Oh no, and I will not refuse a good and profitable saying even if the Devil spoke it! I would not prefer—I would not do it, in fact—to sit under the ministry of a man known to be evil, but if I happened to be where I heard him preach and I heard him say good things, I would not reject those good things because they came out of a raven's mouth! I would not choose to have my bread and meat from a raven, but if I knew that it was bread and meat and that God had sent it, I would eat it, even though a raven brought it. But see, too, how possible it is for us to carry bread and meat to God's servants and do some good things for His church and yet still be ravens! There may be some Sunday school teachers here who are not members of the church. I believe this will not apply to teachers in our school, but it will to many other schools. I am not clear as to whether unconverted teachers should be tolerated at all, whether it is not altogether wrong and whether David's words may not be applied to such, "Unto the wicked God says, 'What have you to do to declare My statutes?" But if you are such a teacher, dear friend, do not, I pray you, conclude that because of your teaching you, yourself, are saved! You may even be blessed in your teaching to the conversion of some of the children under your care and yet, unless you have personally trusted Christ as your Savior and been brought into vital union with Him, you may lead the children to heaven and be yourself cast out! Beware, I say, lest in your teaching you imagine yourself to be a Christian!

It is just the same with all the officers of the church. Shall I take the ministry just now? Oh, my brothers, how easy it is to preach, yes, to win souls through God's grace and yet, after all, to be a castaway! There have been authentic cases of men who have seemed to be very zealous and to burn with the pure celestial fire, who have no doubt been the means of directing others to heaven, but have not been, themselves, saved! Too many ministers are like the signposts on country roads—they hold out their hands and point the way, but never take the road themselves! They, like the post, still stand where they always did! God deliver us from being signposts on the road to heaven and not going there ourselves! The builder uses many poles that are not part of the permanent building, but as soon as the house is up, down goes the scaffolding. So God may permit us to be scaffolding for His church, and when that church is completed, He may take us down and we may be consumed in the fires of hell. Oh, may the Lord grant that this may never be so with any one of

us! Deacons and elders of churches, the same may be said of you! If bearing the vessels of the Lord you are not clean, have not been washed in the great laver of the Savior's atonement, remember that this bearing the Lord's vessels will not save you! Just as the carrying of bread and meat by the ravens did not put them in the list of clean birds, but left them still unclean.

Now this is a very solemn subject and applies to many of you now present. I do not know, but I am afraid that the worst place into which an unconverted sinner can go is into a church. While you make no profession of religion and are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, we seem to know where you are and we think you know where you are. You are evidently not on the Lord's side. But inside the church and yet not converted, though you thought you were—what a terrible evil this is! You have been seen by the elders and they have carefully questioned you. The pastor has seen you and used his best judgment and been satisfied with you. The church has heard your verbal confession of faith and been content to receive you. You have been baptized upon a profession of your faith and yet if you are not soundly converted, the most dangerous place for you is in the church! We cannot get at you. When we preach, our shots miss you. When we talk to the sinners, you say, "Ah, that is not me, I am a Christian." You are numbered, you see, with God's children—you have "a name to live," and yet you are dead! If I were sick in a hospital, I should like to have my disease correctly stated over my bed, but I should not like a card of convalescence to be there if deadly maladies were still eating out my vitals! I would not discourage your making a profession. If you love Christ, keep His commandments and declare that love! These are not the times when we can have a concealed Christianity. Profess it before men! Other men profess their infidelity readily enough. Be not ashamed of your Master, but oh, beware, beware lest you only are baptized into deeper sin, lest you eat and drink damnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body when you come to His table!

Oh, beloved, I would be very earnest with you and most earnest with those of us who occupy prominent positions in the church of God! We are so apt to think we may take our religion for granted. Take nothing for granted, my brothers and sisters—but our own possibility of self-deceit! Do not believe anything about yourselves unless you have God's approval for it. I love for myself to live upon God's naked promise. I cannot get farther than this, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." I do believe on Him! My soul does rest on Him! I have no other hope and no other confidence! There can be no erring here—if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, you are saved! Yet, remember, some make a profession of doing this who are not saved. Oh, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for His blood's sake, for His wounds' sake, *for your own soul's sake* do not deceive yourselves! If faith does not make you holy, it is not worth a gnat! If your faith does not make you hate sin and wean

you from it, it is not the faith of God's elect! We expect not sinless perfection this side the grave, but we do expect *perfection in desire*, perfection *in* intention, perfection in heart in regard to this matter! We would not tolerate sin—if we could get at it we would hew it in pieces as Samuel hewed Agag before the Lord!

O beloved, let these truths of God rest upon your minds and hearts! While there is comfort in the subject for the Christian as to providential circumstances, yet there is also a word of self-examination both to him and to the unsaved sinner with regard to spiritual matters. May the Lord bring us all to His right hand in glory everlasting, and His shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 118.

May the good Spirit, who taught the Psalmist to indite these words, help us to feel their inward meaning!

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: because His mercy endures forever.* Now, do that, dear friends. Before we read another verse let us do that. In your hearts think of the goodness and mercy of God to you—to each one as an individual—and give Him thanks now! No murmuring, no coldness of heart. Cast out everything and give God thanks at this moment. It is the least we can do. It is to our own benefit to be grateful. How can we be holy if we are deficient in that simple matter? "Oh give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good, because His mercy endures forever."

2. *Let Israel now say that His mercy endures forever.* And if there is an elect out of the elect, who live still nearer to God and are doubly consecrated to His service—

3. *Let the house of Aaron now say that His mercy endures forever.* But let not the praise be confined to these joyous ones. Let the whole church take it up!

4. *Let them now that fear the LORD say that His mercy endures forever.* You have tried it—you have proved it! The mercy of God has followed you in all your devious paths. It will follow you even to the end. "His mercy endures forever."

5. *I called upon the LORD in distress.* "I"—nothing like coming to particulars and personalities. "I."

5, 6. *The LORD answered me and set me in a large place. The LORD is on my side. I will not fear: what can man do to me?* "What is man? He is but as the dust before God. And when God is with us and takes care of us, what can man, who is as a moth, do to God's preserved ones?"

7-9. *The LORD takes my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* Now he goes on to detail his experience of trouble and of deliverance.

10. *All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.* David was a warrior. His business was to fight and he was attacked on every side by all sorts of people. He was shut in and the Lord was with Him—and he broke his way through.

11, 12. *They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns.* Thorns crackle and blaze, and then it is all over with them! So it shall be with the adversaries of the believer. "They are quenched as the fire of thorns, for in the name of the Lord will I destroy them."

12, 13. *For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. You have thrust sorely at me that I might fall.* "You"—the same great and leading name.

13,14. *But the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.* What a poet this man is! Thanksgiving is the tone of a true poet. When a man's heart gets warm and he begins to adore his God for His boundless mercy, the strain cannot grovel. Gratitude lends its wings better than the fabled Pegasus, and up the mind rises in a majesty of glory. "Jehovah is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."

15, 16. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.* He drops into triplets. This is no accident. We meet with these triplets often in the Old Testament. Why three? Why not four? Ah, you know, who can sing, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end."

17, 18. *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The LORD has chastened me sorely.* You notice David's rendering of the 13th verse. To the enemy he says, "You have thrust sorely at me, that I might fall." When he thinks it over, he says, "The chastening hand of God is in this, even in my enemy's wicked and malicious attacks. And so he reads it over again, "The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over unto death." The Roman magistrates had a bundle of rods with an axe tied up in the middle. The children felt the rod, but not the axe. "You have chastened me sorely, but You have not given me over unto death."

18-21. *But He has not given me over unto death. Open to me the gate of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: this gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise You: for You have heard me, and have become my salvation.* Another grand verse! Answers to prayer are the notes of our music. If God has heard you pray, take care that He hears you praise! Mercies for which we are not thankful will curdle into curses. Take care that you praise God when He fills you with His good things, yes, and praise Him if He does not! Bless a taking God as well as a giving God. Is He not equally God whatever He

does? Now David sings of himself, but the Spirit of God inspired him to sing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

22, 23. *The stone which the builders refused is become the head cornerstone. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.* The Jewish rulers would not have Christ. They cast Him aside as a stone which would not fit their wall, especially because He was a cornerstone. They wanted to stand as a lone solitary wall. They did not want to have the corner turned even for the Samaritan—much less for the poor Gentile. But you and I must bless God that while Christ is laid upon the wall of the Jew as a cornerstone, He turns a corner for us poor Gentiles that we may be built into the same temple of God. He has become the cornerstone.

24. *This is the day which the LORD has made.* This Sabbath day—this gospel day—"the day that Jehovah has made."

24. *We will rejoice and be glad in it.* Now, heavy hearts, try and rise to that! This is not the day of doom—this is not the day of curses. It is the day of mercy and of love. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Hosanna! Let us cry Hosanna!

25, 26. *Save now, I beseech You, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech You, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that comes in the name of the LORD.* And again Hosanna!

26, 27. *We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which has showed us light.* Blessed be His name! We were in the dark before, but He has brought light to our spirit. The light of knowledge, the light of joy, the light of delight He has brought to us.

27. *Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* Do that, beloved. Give yourself up to Christ again. Bind yourselves again—

"'Tis done; the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's—and He is mine.
High heaven that heard the solemn vow
That vow renewed this day shall hear."

Present it to your God. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords unto the horns of the altar."

28, 29. *You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt you. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever!*

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FAITH TRIED AND TRIUMPHING
NO. 3265

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."
Job 13:15.

THERE are some speeches which could not be made by ordinary men. As soon as you hear them, you feel that there is a ring about them which is by no means common. Certain expressions which have been heard and remembered could have been uttered only by great warriors, or by men who have navigated the vast ocean. Certain other still nobler expressions, because spiritual ones, could have been uttered only by those who have had to fight with spiritual foes, or have done business on the great waters of soul trouble. When you hear the expression, "If there are as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on the housetops, I will go there in God's name," you are quite certain the speaker is Martin Luther. No other than he could have said it! And just as certainly, I think, I would have felt if I had read tonight's text for the first time, that it was Job who said it and nobody else.

Job was a master sufferer. No man went deeper into grief than he—his children all dead, his wealth all swept away, his whole body covered with sore boils and blisters and the friends who pretended to comfort him, only accusing him of being a hypocrite, while his own wife bids him, "curse God, and die." He was brought lower than any and, therefore, being a man of faith, having overcome and triumphed by faith, it was like he to utter such a noble speech as that which our text brings before us. "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," is not the utterance of any ordinary commonplace believer! It is a sort of word which, we are quite sure, could only come from a triumphant Job—triumphant by victorious faith! However, I trust there are some here who could use this expression, now that another has fitted it for their lips, and I hope that all of us who have any faith at all, may have that faith so increased that yet, without boasting, we may still be able to say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."

I. In speaking upon this text I would note, first, THAT FAITH IS THE HABITUAL GRACE OF THE CHRISTIAN. To trust in God is his usual mode of life. He does not sometimes trust and sometimes cease to trust, but, "the just shall live by faith." Faith is not a grace of luxury but a grace of necessity. We must have it and if we have it not, we would not be the people of God at all! The common habit of the Christian, then, is a habit of trusting. The Christian's walk is faith and his life is faith!

Faith is to the Christian all the spiritual senses, not one, but all. The natural man has his eyes, but by faith we see Him who is invisible! The natural man has his hands and his feelings. We live not by feeling, but our faith is the hand by which we take fast hold upon eternal realities! The natural man has his ears, and they are delighted with sweet sounds, or through them the language of friendship enters his heart. Our faith is the ear through which we hear the voice of God and, sometimes, even catch stray notes from the harps of the angels! The natural man has the nostrils with which he becomes aware of sweet perfumes—and to our faith the name of Jesus is as choicest ointment poured forth! If we receive Christ as our heart's Lord, all the inlets by which we receive Him and His grace are made of the agate of faith. Gates of carbuncle, windows of agate are true faith. The light of God and the love of God come into our consciousness by our faith.

Faith, too, is with the Christian his first and his last. Faith looking to Christ is the very beginning of spiritual life! We began to live at the foot of the cross when we looked up and saw the flowing of those founts of forgiveness—the five wounds of Christ! And as faith was the first, so it will be the last. We expect to die looking for our Lord's appearing and still resting upon His finished work. And all between the alpha and the omega—all the other letters—we read them all by faith! There is no period of our life in which it is safe for us to live by feeling, not even when our enjoyments run highest. On the mountain where Christ is transfigured and where, in the midst of the glory we shall fall asleep in amazement, we cannot live by sense! Even there we can only enjoy the glory as faith shall continue to be in exercise. We must all the way through, from the first to the last, look out of ourselves and look above to the things which are seen, to grasp the things which are not seen, to be touched with the eternal hand and realize that which does not seem real to sense. This is the life of the Christian from the first to the last!

And I would add, as it is his first and last, so *faith is the Christian's highest and his lowest*. If we ever get upon the mountain summit and bask our foreheads in the sunlight of fellowship with God, we stand there only by faith! It is because our faith is strong and in active exercise that we realize the things not seen as yet, and behold the God whom mortal eyes cannot gaze upon! Our very noblest, happiest and most heavenly times are those which are the results of faith. And so in our lowest. We can only live there by faith. Have you never lain shattered and broken, crushed and destroyed, expecting something yet more terrible? And have you not felt that now in your faintness you could fall back into the Savior's arms? That now in your brokenness you could drop into His hands? That now in your abject nothingness He must be All in All to you, or else there will be an utter end to you? Oh, the faith that is as wings to us when we fly, becomes a lifebuoy to us when we sink! The faith which bears us up to the gates of heaven, also lifts us up from the very gates of hell! 'Tis our first and our last! 'Tis our highest and our lowest! It is all

the senses of our spiritual nature. We must have it and always have it. We must trust in the Lord!

The matters about which the true Christian is to trust are very many, but they are chiefly these.

We trust for the pardon of our sins to our God in Christ Jesus. The only hope that any Christian has for the forgiveness of his iniquity lies in the sacrifice presented on Calvary by the Lamb of God whom God has given for the sins of the world. If any shall ask us whether we trust that our sins are forgiven us because of our repentance, or because of a long life of active Christian service, we shall reply that we are thankful if God has given us these things, but our sole reliance is in our dear Lord and Master who was once fastened to the cross, but now sits in power in the highest heavens! Our trust for the pardon of sin in every degree and every respect lies in Christ, the Son of God—and there only! In this matter we can use the language of Job and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," for the fact is, the more fully we are slain, the more truly we trust! When we see ourselves to be utterly dead, slain by the two edged sword of the Lord, and all hope of our own self salvation to be a corpse—then it is more easy than ever to come and cast ourselves upon the Christ of God and rest there for all our salvation from the guilt of sin!

But in God *also we trust for the purification of our spirits from all the indwelling power of sin.* Some Christians do not appear to make this a matter of faith and, therefore, they do not succeed therein. You can no more conquer sin in yourself—really conquer it by your own strength—than you can remove the guilt of it by your own merits. The same Christ who is made unto us "justification" and "redemption," is also made unto us "sanctification," and we must never forget that while we wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb as to pardon, we also overcome our sins through the blood of the Lamb! The same Savior who takes away the guilt, takes away the power and the defiling power of sin. Well has Toplady put it—

"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."

Now, the true Christian can say that he trusts in God for his effectual purification and his final perfection. He does not hope to drive out one of these Canaanites by his own arm. He does not think that he shall slay one of his corruptions in his own strength. But his eyes are unto the hills from where comes his help and he believes that the eternal Spirit will, like refining fire, go through and through his soul till everything in him shall be burnt up except that which is of God—that which will endure the fire and be well pleasing in Jehovah's sight!

The matters upon which we rely upon God, then, are as far as I have yet gone, the finished work of Jesus Christ and the power that there is in Christ and in the blessed Spirit to sanctify us—spirit, soul and body.

But our trust is in God in another sense, namely, first—*we trust Him believing that He always must be just*. It does not occur to us now that God could be unjust. In the days of our flesh we used to think, if we suffered some extreme pain, or if we passed suddenly from wealth to poverty, that God had dealt very harshly with us, but now we feel that His strokes are fewer than our crimes and lighter than our guilt. And it does not occur to us in any way to impeach the justice of God, let Him do what He will. We feel that if He not only should slay us, but if He should cast us into hell forever—remembering what we are in ourselves and standing on our own footing, we could not complain against Him. This is our firm confidence, that whatever our position is, God has always dealt justly with us, that He will never deal unjustly with us and we shall never have to say of any one transaction that we have with Him, "This is not according to the rule of right."

But we go a great deal further. Having believed in Christ Jesus, and having become His children, *we trust, believing that God will never do anything to us but that which is full of love*. We are assured that His eternal love does not only come forth, now and then, that it does not only permeate and infuse itself into a few of His actions—but that all His conduct towards His children are actuated by the motive power of love. He is always love towards those who put their trust in Him. We are sure that He never gives us a pain more than is necessary and that He never lets us suffer a loss more than is necessary. "Though for a season, if necessary, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations," we know and are convinced that there *is* a necessity for it. We trust His justice and we trust His goodness.

And, more, *we trust His wisdom mingled with all this*. He has said that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and we believe it. We have had some bitters in our cup, but we still believe it. We may yet have a great many more, but we are assured that through the help of God's Spirit we shall still believe this—that come what may, expected or unexpected, in the ways of grief and sorrow, still that ultimate good shall come out of the whole! God's purpose of love shall not be thwarted, but rather shall be answered by every circumstance of our history. Therefore do we trust in God that He is just and cannot do us an unrighteous action! That He is loving and cannot do a cruel thing to us! That He is wise and loving and just—and will make all things work together for good!

In summary, *we trust Him as a child trusts its parent*, that is, for everything. There are many things about Him that we cannot understand—as there were about our parents in our childhood—but we trust Him and know that there is none like He. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." We trust Him in all that He does. We cannot understand Him, for His way is in the sea and His footsteps are not known. But we are sure that they are footsteps of holiness and they are ways of righteousness. We trust Him for all the past and all the present, yes, and for all the future, too—that future which sometimes looms

before us in the mist—and half alarms us till we are ready to shrink back from it. We gather up the skirts of our robe, again, and though we fear as we enter into the cloud, yet are we comforted with the full conviction that He who has done so well in the past, will be with us even to life's close.

Thus have I tried to show you that the whole tenor of the Christian's life is trust—that, as in the text, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."

II. Now the second point shall be that those of us who have learned to trust in God expect that OUR FAITH SHALL BE TRIED. The text holds the plain supposition that it shall be *extremely* tried. He does not say, "Though I *die*"—that would be a great trial. Death is not a pleasant thing. It is no child's play even to the strongest believer. Job does not say, "Though I die," but, "Though He slays me." That is more. He does not say, "Though He permit me to be slain," but, "Though *He slays me*—though He should seem to be so much my enemy as to turn round and kill me! Though I may not believe His action, I will believe Him—I will believe His infallible word. "Even though He slays me." It is not, "Though He makes me hunger." Or, "Though He puts me in prison, though He allows me to be mocked, though He allows me to be banned from all my friends and to live a solitary and wretched life." No, it is more than that—"Though He *slays me*." And mark, it is not, "Though He slays my children. Though He takes away my wife. Though He removes all my dear kindred." It is more than that. "Though He slays me. Though it comes right home to myself."

Ah, Job knew what He meant, for all other things had been done except the slaying of him! His children were dead and the house in which they had met was a ruin. All he had was gone—his health had gone and he could not rest by reason of the disease which was all over him—most painful and most acute. He had nothing left on earth that was worth having. He was even friendless and he was worse than wifeless, for his wife had turned against him. Yet he says there is but one thing more that can be done—and God has kept Satan back from that. He said, "Only you shall not take his life." But if the Lord chose to let loose the dog without even the link of a chain upon him—though He allows me now to lose my life itself—

"Though He slay me, I will trust,
Praise Him even from the dust—
Prove, and sing it as I prove,
His eternal gracious love."

Now, the text evidently implies that faith will be tried and tried severely. Let us think a moment about this. Has it not been always the case that if any man has had a faith beyond his fellow men, it has met with trial? If you go a step beyond the ordinary rank and file, you will be shot at for that very reason! Columbus believes that there is another part of the world undiscovered—what ridicule is heaped upon him! Galileo says the world moves—he must be put into the Inquisition—the poor old man must be forced to deny what he was quite sure was the truth. It was

dangerous in those days to know too much and to believe a little more than other people. And in spiritual things it is just the same. The world is against the true faith. The faith of God's elect is not a flower that men delight to admire and praise—it is a thing which, wherever they see it, they count as a speckled bird and they are sure to be against it! If you have faith in God, remember that this is not the world of faith, but the world of unbelief—and the darkness that is in the world will try to quench your light!

But remember that true *faith scorns trial and outlives it.* It is not worth having if it does not. If I believe in the friendship of my friend and yet it cannot bear a little trial, it is not real friendship. Perhaps in your youth, as with most of us, there was someone exceedingly dear to you. In your boyish or girlish days you would walk with some companion and you swore inseparable friendship. Ah, how many of those friendships did you make—and they were broken? Since then, perhaps, we have thought that someone with whom we took sweet counsel could never, by any possibility, betray us—but there came a test of our friendship. We were not worth as much as we once were, or we were not as much esteemed as we used to be, or there happened to be a misunderstanding—and in a little tiff, the friendship was marred. But that faith which a man has in his fellow men that is worth having will not yield so easily. No, says the man, "If you say anything to me against my friend, I do not believe you! I think there is some other way of reading it. If you speak the truth, you do not know all about it—there is something else that would change the complexion of it. And even if you were to convict him of a fault, I would still love him, for there are many virtues in him and if he did this thing, he must have made a mistake. I will defend him."

Now, transfer this from common life to faith in God. If a man says, "I trust in God," and it is all smooth sailing, and his children are about him and he has plenty upon the table, his body in full health and he has all that heart could wish—well, we will see what sort of faith that is! It is not yet proven—will the man believe his God when God begins to take away all he loves? Will he believe Him when the wife pines away with a long and painful sickness? Will he believe Him when child after child is taken to the tomb? Will he believe Him when he sees his property taken away before his eyes? Will he believe his God when he, himself, can scarcely move hand or foot upon the bed off sickness? Will he still be able to bless the name of the Lord when he is stripped of everything? If he can, then this is faith worth having! But if he cannot, then it is not the faith that is worthy of God and it is well it does give way, for *then* it may drive the man to seek the true faith which would bear these tests!

You see, then brothers and sisters, if we have faith, we must expect to have it tried by reason of faith being an unusual thing in the world and because if it would not bear trial it would not be worth having! History tells us that the best servants of God have had their trials—and why should we expect to escape? We turn over the historical pages of this book which are so full of instruction to us and we find that all the Lord's

children have had to do battle for the preservation of their faith. There is no smooth road to heaven! Steam rollers can be used for the earth, for our common roads, but you shall find flint stones on the road to glory! They have never been rolled smooth and they never will be—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Faith must and shall be tried as surely as it is the faith of God's people! And if the best of saints have been obliged to say that through much tribulation they have inherited the kingdom, we must not expect that God will change His rule in His treatment of us. I would not, however, encourage one thing which I have sometimes noticed, namely, the fear which comes into some Christians that they are not God's people because they have not been much tried. All the saints meet with trial. I know a dear friend who is suffering just now, who says that he was occasionally afflicted with a fear that he could not be a child of God because he was so long without a sickness or without a trial. Ah, you will have that case met quite soon enough! Do not run after trouble—remember troubles of our own seeking would not be genuine strokes of the rod. You may leave that in God's hands. Do not fret yourself there. Only when the trials do come to you, let this console you, that—

"Bastards may escape the rod,
Plunged in sensual vain delight!
But the true born child of God
Must not—would not, if he might!"

In our peace of soul, if God has given it to us by lot and by inheritance, some thorns and thistles must and will spring up in this present world.

Moreover, dear brothers and sisters, *the trial is greatly for our good and greatly for God's glory*. Our faith could never grow, neither could we be sure of it, if it had not been tested. They do not send steam vessels out to sea at once. Often you see on the Clyde, vessels being tried—tried on the Gairloch—before they go out to sea. And God tries us here, before we take the great ocean of judgment—before we come to the time of death. We have our trials here and we grow by our trials. Among the best mercies we have ever received are those mercies that have come to us dressed in the somber garb of mourning which have carried treasures in both their hands. God be thanked for the fire! God be thanked for the refiner's furnace and the crucible! They have been among the best things we have inherited from His mercy!

Thus I have brought out two ideas of the text. The Christian lives by faith and he expects that faith to be tried.

III. But now the next point is the main point of the text—that A TRUE FAITH, PUT ON TRIAL, WILL CERTAINLY BEAR IT. "Though He slays me." It is an extreme expression. "Though He does His worst. Though He gives the last and uttermost stroke that can be taken, yet will I believe Him. Though He slays me."

Faith will be justified to the uttermost. It is very easy to believe the creature too much. It is a common fault. It is impossible to trust the

Creator too much! To trust Him too little is one of the most usual of sins. Faith in the creature is hardly ever warranted. Faith in the Creator can be warranted, push it as far as ever you like. You know that there is a point where faith in the creature must stop. Our dearest friends can go with us only to the Jordan's brink and then they can help us no longer. But though we go through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us and we need fear no evil. Though it actually comes to the slaying and to the death, still we may trust in Him—for He cannot—He will not fail us!

Why is it that the believer is warranted in trusting in God to the very last extremity? The answer is because He is always the same God. If He is worth trusting one day, He is worth trusting another. He cannot change. His character is such that if it is infinitely worthy of my confidence today, it will be just the same in the rough weather that may come tomorrow! Could He change, then my faith in Him ought to change—but if He is always the same true, faithful, loving and tender God, ruling all things by His power—there can be no reason why my faith should make a change. I ought to trust Him, who at all times is the same!

I ought to trust Him, also, to the last, because *outward providences prove nothing to us about God*. We cannot read outward events correctly—they are written in hieroglyphics. The book of God is readable—it is written in human language! But the works of God are often unreadable—

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain.
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

We begin spelling God's works and making mischief out of them because we do not know the letters or understand the alphabet, and cannot readily know what He means. If the Lord says He loves us, do we believe it though He smites us? Do we believe that—

"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face?"

Be wise, then, and believe in the God you cannot see—not in the outward providence which you can see—for if you could see that outward providence aright as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of love as assuredly God's heart is to you if you are a believer in Him! Therefore, since the outward is no sign to us, let us, when it gathers all the black it can, still believe in Him. When it shall seem most severe and deep calls unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, let us still hope in Him, for He is the health of our countenance and our God!

Moreover, brothers and sisters, there is another cause why we should always trust in Him. To whom else can we go? We are shut up to this. When it comes to slaying, to cutting, to striking and to killing work, what can the soul do but fall into the Creator's arms? When it comes to dying, what words shall fit these lips so well as these—"Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." The course of the Christian's life is such that he

feels it more necessary to trust every day he lives. He does not get off the line of faith—he gets more into the middle of it as he feels his weakness more. And at the last, when his weakness will be more apparent, he will need faith more than ever—and he will have it! He shall be able to say, "My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Ah, I ask again—To whom should we go in our trouble but unto God? All other sources are then dried up! The world mocks us, it seems to be a howling wilderness. 'Tis only from heaven the manna can come—only from the rock, Christ Jesus, the living water can gush forth!

And there is one other word I will say before I leave this point—we may depend upon it, *God will always justify our faith if we do trust Him.* There was never one who in the long run had to say, "I was a fool to trust in God." Many have said to us, in time of trouble, "He trusted in God that He would deliver him, let Him deliver him," and they have hissed between their teeth that hideous taunt, "Where is their God now?" But God has not left the righteous to be ashamed and to be offended forever! They have had, perhaps, a blush on the cheek for a moment, for the flesh is weak, but they have not been confounded for long. Faith has come to the rescue and God has fulfilled their faith! Many a man has trusted in himself and been deceived. Many have trusted in their wealth and been disappointed. Thousands have relied on friends and have been betrayed. But blessed is the man, O Lord of hosts, who stays Himself on You! You can go beyond your friend's line and measure—you may readily expect too much of him. You can try the temper of the dearest one you have on earth and at last feel that you have tried it too much. But you can never go beyond the line of God! Your sin will rather be in limiting the Holy One of Israel! You will never open your mouth too wide for Him! You will never ask too much at His hands! You will never expect too much! You will never believe too much! Has He not, Himself, said, "I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt, open your mouth wide and I will fill it"? The wider you open it, the better! The larger your expectations, the better, for according to your faith so shall it be done unto you!

Now, in closing I would observe that if we say the text, it *will take a good deal of saying* and, if it is true, it will need the power of God, Himself, to make it true. You can stand up tonight and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." But how would it be if He took you at your word? Did you ever question yourself thus, Christian brothers and sisters? You have said, "Well, I hope I have a faith that will bear me safely into the presence of God." Did you ever put yourself in the posture of a dying man and think whether you could look death in the face? You have said, "I hope when I am weighed in the balances I shall not be found wanting." Did you ever get in the scales and try? Have you made a self-examination, an earnest praying, testing, trying of yourself? They do not send out a gun from the foundry without putting it into the proof

house to see whether it will bear the discharge of the powder. Have you ever put yourself into the proof house?

But beware, above all things, of religious boasting! Remember that God does not care for our words—it is the heart, it is the reality and truth of what we say—not the verbiage—that commends us to Him. Many a man says very boldly, "Though God should slays me, I will trust Him," and yet when God denies him a week's work, he does not trust Him! If he had a sick child, his faith would begin to waver. A little puff of wind will alter some people's faith, for heaviest the heart is in the heavy air! O for a faith that can stand the test! Seek such faith, look to the strong for strength in this matter and cry loudly unto Him who is the author and the finisher of faith, that He would strengthen it in you. Say, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief and bring me to this—that I can look anything in the face." And then say, "Let all the floods of earth, and all the outflowing from hell, and even the drenching trials that come from heaven, itself, come upon me, yet will I stay myself on the Lord, for He will not fail me, neither will He leave me! His mercy cannot depart from His chosen. He will keep to the end those who have rested in Him.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 26.

No doubt this Psalm was written by David when his cruel persecutor, Saul, the more effectually to stab at him, spread false reports concerning his character. When the wicked can use no other weapons, they always have their quivers full of slanderous reports. Let us learn, here, that the best of men must expect to be misrepresented and to have the worst of crimes laid to their charge. Let us learn, also, from the example of David, to carry our case to the highest court at once, not to meddle with the lower courts of earth, but to go at once to the court of the King's bench in heaven and there plead our cause before the eternal throne.

Verse 1. *Judge me, O LORD*—As if he turned away from all other judges, bribed and false as they had proved themselves to be in his case, and put himself on trial before God. "Judge me, O Lord—

1. *For I have walked in my integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.* He pleads two things. First the outward life and second the inward faith, which as it is the mainspring and source of the outer life of integrity, is also the more important of the two. Mark that as the case is between himself and his accusers, he pleads his life, for though we are justified before God by faith and not by works, yet before men we must be justified by our works, rather than by our faith. It is in vain for me to plead my faith when I am slandered. The only answer that can effectually shut the mouth of the adversary is to point to a blameless life. Hence in this case he not only brings his faith before his God, but he also brings the fruit of his faith. Note the inference which he draws from God's mercy to him in enabling him to walk uprightly and to trust Him—"therefore I shall not slide." He rests for the future upon his God! His

position was slippery, his enemies were always busy trying to trip up his heels, but he says—"I shall not slide."

2. *Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.* This is a wonderful verse. One would hardly dare to pray it. Here are three kinds of trial. According to the etymology of the Hebrew, the first is the trial by touch—"Examine me." The next is the trial by smell—"Prove me." And the next is the trial by fire—"Try my reins and my heart." You see how anxious he is to really have the matter decided by God. "Lord, search me through and through. You know I am not a hypocrite." Now who dares to say this but that true man of God whose soul is wholly fixed upon the Lord? The reins and the heart are mentioned because those were believed to be the seat of the affections—and when the affections are right the whole man is right. The heart is the fountain from which issue streams of life and if the fountain is pure, the streams cannot be impure—hence he asks chiefly that the examination may be directed to his reins and to his heart.

3. *For your loving-kindness is before my eyes*—Right straight before his eyes he had God's loving kindness. Some people appear to have their miseries, their sorrows, their sins before their eyes, but happy is that believer who always has God's loving-kindness before him!

Come, my brothers and sisters, forget for a little while the burden of your business cares—now for a little season let the sickness that is in your house be left in the hands of your God and let His loving kindness be before your eyes. Loving-kindness—pull the word to pieces. Remember the ancientness of it, the constancy of it, the variety of ways in which it shows itself and the lavish bounties which it bestows upon you! Do not turn your back to God's goodness, but now, right straight before you sets the loving kindness of your God!

3. *And I have walked in Your truth.* By which he may mean two things. First that he endeavored to hold fast to the truths of God both in doctrine and in practice. Or, secondly, that by God's truthfulness in giving him the promised grace, he had been enabled to walk uprightly.

4. *I have not sat with vain persons*—I never took counsel with them. They never were my choice companions.

4. *Neither will I go in with dissemblers.* He makes a vow for the future that all crafty, lying, and foolish men shall never have his companionship.

5. *I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.* By which he does not mean that he does not associate with them in any way, for we must go out of the world if we will not have communion with sinners—but he means that he did not *seek* their company, found no pleasure in it and never went in it to abet them in their evil deeds.

6. *I will wash my hands in innocence.* Pilate did this, but alas, the water was very dirty in which he washed his hands! This was an old Jewish rite when a man was found murdered—if the people in the valley

in which he was found would be free from the crime of murder, they took a heifer, slew it, and then washed their hands in water over the head of the victim. They were then clear. So here he says—"I will wash my hands in innocence."

6. *So will I compass Your altar, O LORD.* He is innocent as far as men are concerned, but he still confesses that he is a sinner, for he goes to God's altar. Perfect men need no altars. It is the sinner that needs a sacrifice. So let the saint always know that though he can plead innocence against the charges of men—yet before God his hope lies in the blood sprinkled altar of which Jesus Christ is the great High Priest!

7, 8. *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells.* I am sure many of us can say this, that when the Sabbath comes round, it is the best day of all the week! And that hour in the weeknight when we can get to the house of God—what an inexpressible relief is that! It is to us like a green oasis in the midst of the sandy desert. There are no beauties in nature and no changes to be perceived in traveling that I think can ever compensate for the loss of the constant means of grace—after all, God's house is the fairest spot on earth! Zion, I will prefer you above my chief joy! If I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning. "I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells."

9, 10. *Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.* See, he so loves God's house that he cannot bear the thought of being shut in with sinners! And this is our comfort—that if we have loved God's house on earth, we shall dwell in His house forever!

11. *But as for me, I will walk in my integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.* See again, my beloved, how in the Christian's practice, good works and faith are seen happily blended. He declares that he will walk in his integrity, but still, still note, he prays as one that is conscious of a thousand imperfections—"Redeem me and be merciful unto me." We rest on Christ, alone, but still we desire to walk in holiness with as much exactness as though our salvation depended upon our good works!

12. *My foot stands in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.*

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THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS
NO. 3266

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 28, 1864.

"An holy priesthood."
1 Peter 2:5.

IN this epistle Peter is speaking of the scattered saints in all parts of the world and, taught by the Holy Spirit, he says of them that they were "an holy priesthood." He is not talking about ministers! He is not speaking of a certain number of men who have passed through many grades of office and are, thereby, qualified to wear robes of a certain color—he is speaking of every believer and he calls every saint a member of "an holy priesthood!" Every Mary and every John, every peasant girl and every laborer that puts his hands upon the plow, every servant of God in every capacity is a member of this "holy priesthood"—at least so Peter says, and Peter was not mistaken, for he spoke as he was "moved by the Holy Spirit."

Let us, for the ten thousandth time, state our own solemn conviction that it is time for England to wake up and solemnly rebuke the priestcraft that seems rising up in our midst! No man has any right to call himself, in any exclusive sense, a priest. When I take down the Book of Common Prayer and read, "Then shall the priest say"—I shut it up again with detestation! And if it were the best human book ever printed and had no other blunder and error in it, yet if it ventured to call any class of men, priests, I would denounce it as being tainted with Roman Catholicism! Christ is the only priest who can offer sacrifice for the expiation of sin! He is "the great apostle and High Priest of our profession." But there is another priesthood—one of offering prayers and praises—and this belongs not to me because I am a minister, nor to any number of men who are called "Reverend," or "Very Reverend," or "Right Reverend," but to you as well, and to everyone else who by faith has believed in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord! If truly converted to God, a man though barely able to read his Bible, is a priest unto Him, because he has a new heart and a right spirit! He may never mount a pulpit, nor preside at a church meeting, but he may be a priest unto God! His only pulpit may be a cobbler's stall—his only platform for witnessing to Christ may be behind the counter or in the factory—but he is a priest for all that!

Or if the Lord calls a sister to Himself, she is to be silent in the church meeting, but she belongs to the divine priesthood and her prayers and

praises will go up with as much acceptance before God, through Jesus Christ, as if she were an eminent divine, or the most gifted of the saints! All God's children are priests and this is the song of all in heaven and all on earth who are truly saved—"He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever."

Now, it is on this theme of priesthood that I desire to speak tonight. And the way in which priests were made under the law of God is described for us in the 8th chapter of Leviticus. So I invite you to turn with me and look at the subject as expounded there, for surely the way in which the sons of Aaron were ordained to their earthly and temporal priesthood is richly suggestive and intentionally typical of the manner in which God calls all His people to their holy priesthood! On turning to that chapter we find that one of the first things with regard to the ordination of Aaron and his sons to their priesthood was that, THEY WERE CLEANSED. We read in Leviticus 8:6, *"and Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water."* That was one cleansing. But several times in the chapter we find that a second cleansing was theirs and that by blood! In verse 2 we find that they brought a bullock far a sin offering, and two rams, and with the blood of one of the rams, and the blood of the sin offering they were sprinkled that they might be clean before God. This powerfully teaches that every one of us aspiring to be a priest for God must first be cleansed, and that with a double purifying—

"Let the water and the blood,
From His riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse us from its guilt and power."

If we look closer into this cleaning by blood we see that Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the ram, confessing their sins. Then the ram was slain, the blood sprinkled upon the altar and the laver, and upon all the vessels of the sanctuary—and then upon Aaron and his sons. What deep instruction is here! If we are God's priests, we lay our hand upon Christ, accept Him as our substitute, trusting in that blood shed for the remission of sins! He will have no priests in His sanctuary who have not been cleansed with the blood of Christ! All service until this is experienced, is a vain oblation which He cannot accept. Go to the altar, confess your sin and lay it upon the Lamb of God—and then, but not until then—can you be a holy priest.

Moreover, the priests were afterward also washed in water. On this first occasion they were cleansed from head to foot, but on later occasions when going into the tabernacle, they needed only to wash their hands and feet. So is it with our Christian life. By the Holy Spirit's application of our Lord's merits, believers are completely cleansed and there remains neither spot nor wrinkle on their acceptance with Him. But though a man is perfectly clean who leaves his bath, yet his feet may be soiled as he goes to his room and he needs to wash them again. So you and I need to pray, "Forgive us our sins," though they have all been forgiven! We are washed, but daily defiling calls for constant cleansing.

Though every true Christian has been cleansed, as was Peter, he must not say, "You shall never wash my feet." When Jesus comes by His cleansing Word and Spirit, and girt with the towel and carrying the basin, we must be willing to let Him cleanse us—no, *beg* Him to wash our feet—that we may be clean, every whit. We need to pray, "Forgive us our sins." It is not in the least in conflict with the doctrine of a complete sanctification, or complete justification.

The priests, every one of them, were washed. They had a clear right to go into the sanctuary, yet none the less, they had to wash their hands and feet each time they entered.

So we are clean. God accepts us. We are His children and yet, day by day, we must go with the prayer to Him, "Lord cleanse me again in the Redeemer's blood: make me pure by the washing of water by the word!" So when defiling comes, His cleansing power may be proved again and again.

Well, beloved, have we ever attempted to serve God without this cleansing? If so, may we repent of our imagined righteousness as much as of our sins, for even our righteousnesses are nothing but sins until we have been washed! Do we long for this perfect cleansing? The fountain is full—the blood, the water, have the same efficacy as they ever had. "Though *your* sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Step down into this heavenly bath! Trust Christ to save you and, being cleansed by Him, you shall be forever a member of this "holy priesthood."

Referring again to Leviticus 8, we see that the second thing in the ordaining of the priesthood was THEY WERE DIVINELY CLOTHED. However clean they were, they must be suitably arrayed, or they cannot appear before the Lord. We have given to us a list of the garments and find that Aaron, as High Priest, was sumptuously clothed, but not so his sons. In the 13th verse we are told that they had coats, and belts and bonnets. Let us glance at each of these for they are packed with spiritual significance. The "*coat*" is a priestly robe. Everyone who ministered at the altar put on an ephod, a coat hanging from the shoulder, generally in one piece and woven from the top throughout, like that which the Lord Jesus wore. So every believer is to put on the imputed righteousness of Jesus given to us at our conversion!

He officiates as High Priest before the throne of God clothed in white linen, and so do all the saints—"white linen which is the righteousness of the saints," says John in the revelation. Now we have no righteousness of our own, but the voice from heaven speaks, "I counsel you, buy of Me white raiment that you may be clothed." We come to Christ just as we are and He clothes us with His righteousness, active and passive, and this is the ephod in which we minister unto God. With our Lord's righteousness clothing us, we can stand without fear before the awful searching eyes of God now and hereafter, and not fear—

"Bold shall I stand at that great day
For who anything to my charge shall lay,

While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"

Are you, beloved, robed in the righteousness of your Savior? Then come forward and officiate as His priest!

Next to the ephod, came *the belt*. In the case of Aaron we are told it was a "curious" belt. Ah, how curious, how matchless, how marvelous is the belt which encircles the loins of Christ! He is girt about the waist with a golden belt. His faithfulness, His truth, His love, His every attribute of excellency combined, make up this curious belt comprising the ephod. But every other true priest has his belt. You and I, if called to this holy office, are to have our loins girt about, standing always ready, instant to obey God's command and revel in His service. Orientals wore flowing garments and when these were loose, they could not hasten in their activities. So they used the belt to brace themselves, gathering up their robes for special labor, or conflict, or flight. So every priest of Christ must wear his belt of faithfulness. There is a wicked world always on the watch. Be careful! Be vigilant! You may be tripped up by the sin that does so easily beset us. See to it that you are well braced, so that if the enemy came suddenly you may meet him with courage, or if a message came from your Master you may run upon it with diligence.

Yet another part of the priest's clothing is called "*the bonnet*"—literally, "the turban." This, so we are told, "was for glory and for beauty." Truly our Lord has put upon His people His own glory and beauty. We are not merely acceptable, but beloved. Not passable, but admirable. Not merely not to be condemned, but full of imparted loveliness. Jesus says to every saved soul, "You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse—with one look of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." Jesus so falls in love with His own image in each saved soul, that His heart is captured. Here is "the glory and beauty" with which He has invested us. Every believer is looked upon by God as if he were Christ. Christ took your place and was cursed for you—you take Christ's place and, notwithstanding all the blemishes, all the backslidings, all the hardness you may feel within—if you are truly in Christ, you are so clothed that glory divine and beauty is yours! The priests were not only washed but clothed. My soul, what joy is this! Ponder it until it masters and enthralls you!

After the cleansing and clothing, came this to the priests, THEY WERE ANOINTED. This is mentioned more than once. Aaron had the holy oil poured upon his head until it ran down to the skirt of his garment. So Jesus was anointed of the Holy Spirit without measure. The other priests were also touched with the oil—sprinkled with it.

And you and I, if we have been both washed and clothed, must yet be anointed. Child of God, do you distinctly and intensely recognize your need of this anointing? If I have preached without the Holy Spirit I have preached in vain. If I have gone to my prayer chamber, no matter how earnest I desired to be, I have prayed in vain unless the Spirit of God has been upon me. This anointing is the Christian's supreme need! Dear Joseph Irons very often used to say as he went into the pulpit, "Oh, for

an unction from on high!" Sunday school teacher, you are a priest and this is your great need—anointing! You who preach in the streets. You who are intercessors in private for Christ. You who seek to show God in your daily life—you all need the anointing! What can we not do when the Spirit is in us? What can we do if He is withholding His presence and power? As God's priests we may—we must have a daily unction—anointing—from the Holy One!

After this, THEY WERE CONSECRATED. Here I must enlarge more than upon the last point. This setting apart to priestly function and work was very remarkable. We find that blood was taken and that Moses touched the priests with it (according to the 24th verse) first, "upon the tip of the right ear, then upon the thumbs of their right hand and then upon the great toes of their right feet. And Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about." This description is very full and suggestive. Every Christian is to be consecrated to God by blood as to his ear. That is, we are to be eager to hear God's voice, whether in His word printed or preached. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" They only recognize it because the blood is on the ear. We are to hear God's voice in providence. When there is a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, like David, we are be bestir ourselves! We are to be willing to hear even the rod and Him that has appointed it. There are many voices that the sanctified ear detects that the carnal ear has never listened to. The godly man has monitions from the Most High when the natural man catches no whisper. To always hear the "still, small voice," is the listening we should desire. So too, with regard to man, we should hear his misery and feel for it—hear his sin and pray to God for its full forgiveness as Jesus did. Yet on the other hand, there are some sounds that the ear so consecrated must not hear. We are deaf to the insinuations of suspicion, the slander of calumny, yes, to many an intended insult that otherwise might have provoked and angered us! May we always feel that as there was blood on the priest's ear, so all our reception powers are to be consecrated to God! If so, I shall feel that there are some books I cannot read, for I have blood on my ear—some songs I dare not listen to—some talk I dare not share in, for I have a consecrated ear. I am to use *that* for Him, for I am His priest.

Next in order was *the thumb*. This consecrated the hand. And as the ear stands for our receptive faculties, so the hand represents our active powers. There are some things we must not touch nor handle—some things we cannot do, in which we can have no hand, no, cannot finger. Since our hand is sanctified by the blood, all it does must be pleasing to God. I know that a common mistake is to think that you cannot serve God unless you get into a pulpit, or attend a prayer meeting. Nonsense! You can truly serve God behind the counter, in the workroom! You can serve God by digging a ditch, or clipping a hedge. I believe that God is often served by the tailor or shoemaker who is conscientious in his calling, quite as well as by bishops and archbishops, or by men of any

church in the world! At any rate if you cannot serve God in all that you do, you have need to ask to be taught the secret of the Christian life, for that secret is the consecration of everything to Jesus Christ!

You are to make your garments, vestments, your meals, sacraments, your everyday a holy day, your every hour a consecrated season unto God! Our hands, with all their manifold activities, are to be consecrated—blood marked—to Him!

After this, came *the feet*. The blood was put on the great toe of the right foot, so the feet were set apart for God. Ah, these legs of ours used to carry us to theaters! We could run fast enough the downward road with them! I recollect a man who would stand in the aisle for a long time—he said he would "serve his legs out"—they had served the devil so long, that they should bear a little hardship for his new Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! I know some of you who used to walk many miles to come to the house of God—six miles. I used to say to you that it was too far. It was not too far for you, then, but lately it has become much too far. The road has not grown longer, but you have gone backward as to your zeal! And when the zeal declines, the miles get dolefully long. But I have marked that when men and women are in a right state of mind and soul, it does not matter how far they walk, nor what they have to do for Christ—the consecrated feet can do it joyfully. If I have consecrated feet, I must not let them take me into bad company. If anybody says to you, "Can you come with me to such and such a place?" You must answer, "No! I cannot. I have feet that won't go and I cannot go without them!" And if any should say, "What is the matter with your feet?" say, "I have a foot that has blood upon it!" They will say, "Strange!" They will not understand you, but if you attempt to explain to them that the blood of your Lord Jesus Christ bought you and so, your feet—then they will understand that it cannot go anywhere except where Christ would have you go. It may mean that you will have to change your position in life—you have to move and have a choice as to where you shall go. Make that choice on the principle of having consecrated feet! Do not go where you cannot hear the pure Word of God. A Jew heard of a good business where there was much money but no synagogue—and of another where there was a synagogue though but little trade. And being a pious Jew, he chose the place with the synagogue. I am afraid that there are but few Jews who would do that today—and quite as few Christians who think first of God's house and the hearing of the gospel! Better to have a dinner of herbs and the gospel with it, than a stalled ox and not to listen to the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ! In choosing your home—in fact in everything that concerns your progress in life—act as if you had and knew you had consecrated feet!

Gathering up all, it surely teaches that a Christian is always, and everywhere, and altogether not his own, but consecrated to Christ! Not merely to be baptized, to come once a month to the Lord's Table, to take a pew and sit and look so heavenly-minded. Any hypocrite can do that! But it is the mark of a Christian to be so honest, upright, charitable,

kind, Christ like, holy, that all who see may be compelled to say, "That man differs from other men." The secret, though they may not discover it, is that while other men are but common men, where father Adam left them in the fall, this man has been found and made anew in Jesus Christ! Ear, thumb and foot all consecrated to Christ's service!

Hastily running through the rest of this chapter (Leviticus 8) we observe that *the consecration was very thorough*. There is mention made of unleavened bread. This teaches that a Christian is not to follow religion for the sake of honor, gain, or fame. None of the leaven of hypocrisy, or mere formalism is to be tolerated. We are to serve Christ for Christ's sake, and follow God because our heart is right with Him.

Again, the consecration is set forth—though I have little time to notice it—by the different parts of the victim being offered to God. You will observe that the deepest feelings of the Christian are to be with God—that the inwards and the fat of the kidneys were to be burnt upon the altar. Thus the richest and fullest emotions of the Christian's mind and heart are to belong to God, for the fat and marrow were to be burned as well. And the Christian's greatest strength is to be the Lord's, for the right shoulder was to be offered as a wave offering, and then to be consumed with fire. We are to give God our inmost thoughts, our deeper passions, our greatest strength. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You!" Some people can call loud enough to wake up a town when they are in their business, but when they come to pray you can scarcely hear them. But I would have a Christian never so much, or so fine a man as when he is serving God. Give the world, if you will, the ends of your mind, soul and strength—but give God your whole man, your inward and your outward life, every part and power and passion, strung to its greatest height and all devoted to Him!

But to conclude once more, the *Christian's consecration is to be constant.* This remarkable chapter has greatly interested me in observing that these priests were to be for one whole week associating in the tabernacle. They were not either by day or night to leave their holy work. How they found strength enough, or whether this really included absolutely necessary seasons of rest, I cannot tell. But it says that for seven days they were to serve without intermission both by day and night. So the Christian priesthood is to be perpetual! We are never to cease to serve God. You have heard of one that was so in love that he did eat, drink and sleep for such an one! So the Christian is to "do all to the glory of God." Says one, "Can this be done? Are we to follow Romish monks and get into a monastery?" No! I have no doubt they are right in shaving their heads—there is probably a great necessity for it. But unless we become demented, there is no need for us to imitate their example! The Christian is not to shut himself up and become a hermit, and think that thereby he can cultivate holiness! That is unholiness! Christian holiness is social—the light of the world, the salt of the earth. We are to be in the world, though not of it—our priesthood exercised is in the

street, the shop, the family and at the fireside—by day and night, to offer up prayers and praises and thanksgivings unto God—and so be perpetually a priest.

But what am I talking about? There are some, here, that have never yet been priests to God. What have they been doing today? Why even on God's holy day they do not serve Him but themselves! Why, sir, God has never reaped a solitary ear of grain from your field. Take care lest having lived to yourself, you die to yourself—having lived without God, you die without God and find it a tremendous thing to stand and be judged without a Savior to be your helper, or interceding priest! I say nothing to you about being a priest to God. You need a priest for yourself, first. Do not go to any man. No man has power to help your soul except to pray and plead for you. The saving, pardoning power lies only with Jesus Christ. Look away to Him! He died—trust in His sacrifice! He rose, He ascended—He is standing at God's right hand. There is life for a look at Him. Look! Trust! And you shall then be cleansed, clothed, anointed, consecrated and so serve God. But your first business is to go to Christ. Oh, may Christ come to you and save you now—and He shall have glory out of us, world without end! Amen.

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

Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not.* For this we ought to watch and strive, that we sin not.

1. *And if any man sins*—What then? Is it a hopeless case? Oh, no, far from it! It is a sad case, but there is a remedy for it! "And if any man sins"—

1, 2. *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Come you, then, to Christ for pardon, whether you are Jews or Gentiles, whether you are saints or sinners, whether you are old or young, whether you are moral or immoral, for God is both able and willing to forgive all manner of sin because of the propitiation offered by His well-beloved Son "Jesus Christ the righteous."

3. *And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* Obedience is the test of discipleship. Mere head knowledge is all in vain, and all in vain our fears unless we render a practical obedience to the commandments of Christ. We shall not only savingly know Him, but we shall "know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

4. *He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.* This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in—to say that he knows Christ, and yet to have the Holy Spirit calling him a liar because he is not keeping Christ's commandments! Again I remind you that obedience is essential to Christian discipleship. If we refuse to obey Christ's commandments, it is clear that we do not

really know the Savior at all—we are not even beginners in the school of Christ.

5. *But whoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him.* When every word of His is precious to us and when we strive to live according to His precepts, then we know that "we are in Him." This is even more than knowing that we know Him, for it is the assurance that we are united to Him by a living connection which can never be broken.

6. *He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.* [See Sermon #1732, Volume 29—IN HIM—LIKE HE IS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a walk would that be! How holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners is the man who tries to walk even as Christ walked—

"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."

7-9. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now yours. He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now.* Love is the true test of light—that light which leads us to love God, to love Christ, to love the truth of God, to love God's people, yes, and to love the whole world of men for their good—this is the love that attests the light we have to be the very light of God!

10. *He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* A loving spirit, kind, generous, forgiving, unselfish, seeking the good of others—this is one of the best proofs that our natural darkness has gone and that true spiritual light of God is within us. Some persons think very much of the doctrine of Christ, but very little of the Spirit of Christ. Let such remember that it is written, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If we do not know what it is to love, then we do not, in the Scriptural sense, know what it is to live! We are dead! Hatred is the cerement in which the dead soul is wound up, the grave clothes in which it is put away in the tomb. But love is the garment of life in which a truly quickened spirit arrays itself. The one who is full of hatred dwells in darkness, but he that loves, abides in the light. Note how love and life and light are most blessedly linked to one another.

11-13. *But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes, because that darkness has*

blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. "You are old men, and you like to think of old things. The everlasting love of God, the covenant made with Christ before the worlds were formed—these are things that are very dear to you—and you prize beyond all other, 'Him that is from the beginning.'"

13. *I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one.* "In the days of your strength, you have won the victory which no human power can ever win unaided. You have overcome that wicked one who would easily have overcome you if you had been left to fight him by yourselves."

13. *I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father.* That is all that little children need to know at first. They may not know the great mysteries that the fathers have fathomed, they may not well know some things that the young men know, but even babes in Christ know the Father and rejoice in His love!

14. *I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.* Twice, you see, John says the same thing about the fathers and he says nothing more concerning them. But truly, to "have known Him that is from the beginning is practically to know all that even the fathers need to know or can know, for this knowledge includes all other that is worth knowing!

14. *I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.* Here again John repeats his former statement concerning the young men, but he adds to it "because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you." There is a purpose in the repetition of each case—it is to emphasize the importance of the apostolic declarations.

15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* "Your affections are meant for something better than these transient and defiled things, so let not your heart's love flow out to things so soiled and base. 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.'"

15. *If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* These two things are such deadly opposites that they cannot live together! Where the love of the Father is, there cannot be the love of the world! There is no room in us for two loves. The love of the world is essentially idolatry and God will not be worshiped side by side with idols. "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Does not that text draw a very sharp distinction between those who love the Lord and those who love Him not? Remember, children of God, that this is the language of John, the apostle of love—and true love is honest, outspoken, heart searching, heart trying! Do not imagine that there is any love to your souls in the heart of the preacher who preaches smooth things and who flatters you with his, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace! No, the highest, deepest, most heaven inspired love is that which searches and tries the heart lest there should be any deception there.

16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* That devil's trinity—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—"is not of the Father, but is of the world."

17. *And the world passes away, and the lust thereof.* It is only a puff, a phantom, a bubble, a mirage which will melt away as you try to approach it! There is nothing substantial in it.

17. *But he that does the will of God abides forever.* Not, "he that does some great thing to be seen of men." Not, "he that builds a row of almshouses, or leaves a great mass of money to charity when he dies because he could not possibly carry it away with him." Not, "he that sounds a trumpet before him to let everybody know what a good man he is." Not, "he that must outdistance everybody else." But, "he that does the will of God abides forever." Obedience to the will of God is the pathway to perpetual honor and everlasting joy!

18. *Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* And now, I think, even more than when John wrote, is this the fact, for antichrists are multiplying on all sides and there are even worse evils to come than we have seen as yet! And it, therefore, behooves Christians to be upon the watch and to let this truth comfort them, that, "it is the last time." Once get through this dispensation, and the battle is ended even though the dispensation should be protracted beyond our hope and [See Sermons #811, Volume 14—UNTO YOU YOUNG MEN and #1715, Volume 29—A DESCRIPTION OF YOUNG MEN IN CHRIST—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] desire, yet, still, once get through it and it is over! This is to be the last charge of our great adversary and all his hosts. Stand fast, therefore, you soldiers of the cross, stand like rocks amidst the onslaught of the waves, and the victory shall yet be yours!

19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* The worst of men go out from among the best of men. The antichrists go out from the church of Christ. The raw material for a devil was an angel. To make a Judas, you must make him out of an apostle! May God purify His professing church since even in her own loins she breeds adversaries of the faith.

20. *But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.* The Spirit of God will teach you as you need to know. He will so instruct you that you shall know all that is for your soul's good and for His glory.

21. *I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* That which is of man's making is false, "but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

22, 23. *Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that acknowledges the Son, has the Father also.* Some pretend to honor the Father while they dishonor the Son, but this can never really be done. Jesus truly said, "I and My Father are One," so that he that denies the Son, also denies the Father.

24. *Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* As it was the truth of God that was revealed to them at the first, there was no need of a later revelation to correct the mistakes of the first, as some foolishly and falsely teach nowadays.

25. *And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life.* Let those that want them have these novelties, these constant changes. We who believe in Jesus have something far better, even the promise of eternal life!

26. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.* They would lead you astray if they could, so beware of them. "Forewarned is forearmed."

27, 28. *But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him*—How John continues to urge us to stand fast in Christ! As the Holy Spirit has taught us to trust Christ, so would He have us "abide in Him." And this is one great reason why we are to abide in Him—

28, 29. *That, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him.*

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UNDER HIS SHADOW
NO. 3267

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1911.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT A COMMUNION SERVICE AT MENTONE, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1880.

"He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."
Psalm 91:1.

I MUST confess of my short discourse, as the man did of the axe which fell into the stream, that it is borrowed. The outline of it is taken from one who will never complain of me, for to the great loss of the church on earth she has left these lower choirs to sing above. Miss Havergal, last and loveliest of our modern poets, just when her tones were most mellow and her language most sublime, has been caught up to swell the music of heaven. Her last poems are published with the title, *"Under His Shadow,"* and the preface gives the reason for the name. She said, "I should like the title to be 'Under His Shadow.' I seem to see four pictures suggested by that—under the shadow of a rock in a weary plain; under the shadow of a tree; closer still, under the shadow of His wing; nearest and closest, in the shadow of His hand. Surely that hand must be the pierced hand, that may oftentimes press us sorely, and yet evermore encircling, upholding and shadowing."

"Under His Shadow," is our winsome subject, and we will in a few words enlarge on the Scriptural plan which Miss Havergal has bequeathed to us. Our text is, "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall *abide under the shadow* of the Almighty." The shadow of God is not the occasional resort, but the constant abiding place of the saint. Here we find not only our consolation, but our habitation—not only a loved haunt, but a home. We ought never to be out of the shadow of God. It is to dwellers, not to visitors, that the Lord promises His protection. "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." And that shadow shall preserve him from nightly terror and ghostly ill, from the arrows of war and of pestilence, from death and from destruction. Guarded by omnipotence, the chosen of the Lord are always safe, for as they dwell in the holy place, hard by the mercy seat, where the blood was sprinkled of old—the pillar of fire by night, and the pillar of cloud by day, which always hang over the sanctuary—also covers them. It is not written, "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle

shall He hide me"? What better security can we desire? As the people of God, we are always under the protection of the Most High. Wherever we go, whatever we suffer, whatever may be our difficulties, temptations, trials, or perplexities, we are always "under the shadow of the Almighty." Over all who maintain their fellowship with God the most tender guardian care is extended. Their heavenly Father, Himself, interposes between them and their adversaries. The experience of the saints, albeit they are all under the shadow, yet differs as to the form in which that protection has been enjoyed by them—hence the value of the four figures which will now engage our attention.

I. We will begin with the first picture which Miss Havergal mentions, namely, THE ROCK sheltering the weary traveler.

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa 32:2).

Now, I take it that this is where we begin to know our Lord's shadow. He was at the first to us *a refuge in time of trouble.* Weary was the way and great was the heat. Our lips were parched and our souls were fainting—we sought for shelter and we found none, for we were in the wilderness of sin and condemnation—and who could bring us deliverance, or even hope? Then we cried unto the Lord in our trouble and He led us to the Rock of Ages, which of old was cleft for us. We saw our interposing Mediator coming between us and the fierce heat of justice, and we hailed the blessed screen! The Lord Jesus was unto us a covering for sin and so a cover from wrath. The sense of divine displeasure, which had beaten upon our conscience, was removed by the removal of the sin, itself, which we saw to be laid on Jesus, who in our place endured all its penalty.

The shadow of a rock is remarkably cooling, and so was the Lord Jesus eminently comforting to us. The shadow of a rock is more [See Sermons #1243, Volume 21—RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE; #2856, Volume 49—OUR HIDING PLACE and #3031, Volume 53—LANDLORD AND TENANT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] dense, more complete and more cool than any other shade—and so the peace which Jesus gives passes all understanding—there is none like it! No chance beam darts through the rock shade, nor can the heat penetrate as it will do in a measure through the foliage of a forest. Jesus is a complete shelter—and blessed are they who are "under His shadow." Let them take care that they abide there and never venture forth to answer for themselves, or to brave the accusations of Satan.

As with sin, so with sorrow of every sort—the Lord is the Rock of our refuge. No sun shall smite us, nor any heat, because we are never out of Christ! The saints know where to fly and they use their privilege—

"When troubles, like a burning sun,
Beat heavy on their head,
To Christ their mighty Rock they run,
And find a pleasing shade."

There is, however, something of awe about this great shadow. A rock is often so high as to be terrible, and we tremble in the presence of its greatness. The idea of littleness hiding behind massive greatness is well set forth, but there is no attractive thought of fellowship, or tenderness. Even so, at the first we view the Lord Jesus as our shelter from the consuming heat of well-deserved punishment and we know little more. It is most pleasant to remember that this is only one panel of the fourfold picture. Inexpressibly dear to my soul is the deep cool rock shade of my blessed Lord, as I stand in Him a sinner saved—yet there is more!

II. Our second picture, that of THE TREE, is to be found in the Song of Solomon 2:3—

"As the apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste."

Here we have not so much refuge from trouble as special rest in times of joy. The spouse is happily wandering through a forest, glancing at many trees and rejoicing in the music of the birds. One tree especially charms her—the apple with its golden fruit wins her admiration and she sits under its shadow with great delight. Such was her beloved to her, the best among the good, the fairest of the fair, the joy of her joy, the light of her delight! Such is Jesus to the believing soul.

The sweet influences of Christ are intended to give us a happy rest and we ought to avail ourselves of them. "I sat down under His shadow." This was Mary's better part, which Martha well near missed by being cumbered. That is the good old way wherein we are to walk—the way in which we find rest unto our souls. [See Sermon #1120, Volume 19—THE APPLE TREE IN THE WOODS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Papists, whose religion is all ceremonies, or all working, or all groaning, or all feeling—they have never come to a satisfying end. We may say of their religion as of the law, that it made nothing perfect. But under the gospel there is something finished—and that something is the sum and substance of our salvation and, therefore, there is rest for us, and we ought to sing, "I sat down."

Dear friends, is Christ to each one of us a place of sitting down? I do not mean a rest of idleness and self-content. God deliver us from that! But there is rest in a conscious grasp of Christ, a rest of contentment with Him as our All in All. God give us to know more of this. This shadow is also meant to yield perpetual solace, for the spouse did not merely come under it, but there she sat down as one that meant to stay. Continuance of repose and joy is purchased for us by our Lord's perfected work. Under the shadow, she found food. She had no need to leave it to find a single necessary thing, for the tree which shaded also yielded fruit! Nor did she need even to rise from her rest, but sitting still

she feasted on the delicious fruit. You who know the Lord Jesus know also what this means.

The spouse never wished to go beyond her Lord. She knew no higher life than that of sitting under the well beloved's shadow. She passed the cedar, oak and every other good tree, but the apple tree held her, and there she sat down. "Many there are that say, who will show us any good? But for us, O Lord, our heart is fixed, our heart is fixed, resting on You. We will go no further, for You are our dwelling place. We feel at home with You and sit down beneath Your shadow." Some Christians cultivate reverence at the expense of childlike love—they kneel down, but they dare not sit down. Our divine friend and lover wills not that it should be so! He would not have us stand on ceremony with Him, but come boldly unto Him—

"Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."

Let us use His sacred name as a common word, as a household word and run to Him as to a dear or familiar friend! Under His shadow we are to feel that we are at home and then He will make Himself at home to us by becoming food unto our souls, and giving spiritual refreshment to us while we rest. The spouse does not here (Song 2:3) say that she reached up to the tree to gather its fruit, but she sat down on the ground in intense delight—and the fruit came to her where she sat. It is wonderful how Christ will come down to souls that sit beneath His shadow! If we can but be at home with Christ, He will sweetly commune with us. Has He not said, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart"?

In this second form of the sacred shadow, the sense of awe gives place to that of restful delight in Christ. Have you ever figured in such a sense as the sitter beneath the grateful shade of the fruitful tree? Have you not only possessed security, but experienced delight in Christ? Have you sung—

"I sat down under His shadow,
Sat down with great delight!
His fruit was sweet unto my taste,
And pleasant to my sight"?

This is as necessary an experience as it is joyful—necessary for many uses. The joy of the Lord is our strength and it is when we delight ourselves in the Lord that we have assurance of power in prayer. Here faith develops and hope grows bright, while love shines abroad all the fragrance of her sweet spices. Oh, get you to the apple tree and find out who is fairest among the fair! Make the light of heaven the delight of your heart and then be filled with heart's ease and revel in complete contentment!

III. The third view of the one subject is—THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS—a precious word. I think the best specimen of it, for it occurs several times, is in that blessed Psalm—Psalm 63:7—*"Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice."*

Does not this set forth our Lord as our trust in hours of depression? In the Psalm now open before us, David was banished from the means of grace to a dry and thirsty land where there was no water. What is much worse, he was in a measure away from all conscious enjoyment of God. He says, "Early will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You." He sings of memories rather than of present communion with God. We also have come into this condition and have been unable to find any present comfort. "You have been my help," has been the highest note we could strike. And we have been glad to reach that. At such times, the sight of God's face has been withdrawn, but our faith has taught us to rejoice under the shadow of His wings. Light there was none—we were altogether in the shade, but it was a warm shade. We felt that God who had been near must still be near us and, therefore, we were quieted. Our God cannot change and, therefore, as He was our help, He must still be our help—our help even when He casts a shadow over us, for it must be the shadow of His own eternal wings! The metaphor is, of course, derived from the nesting of little birds under the shadow of their mother's wings and [See Sermon #2166, Volume 36—EXPERIENCE AND ASSURANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] the picture is singularly touching and comforting. The little bird is not yet able to take care of itself, so it cowers down under the mother and is there happy and safe. Disturb a hen for a moment and you will see all the little creatures huddling together—and by their chirps making a kind of song. Then they push their heads into her feathers and seem happy beyond measure in their warm abode. When we are very sick and sorely depressed. When we are worried with the care of pining children and the troubles of a needy household—and the temptations of Satan—how comforting it is to run to our God like the little chicks to the hen and hide near His heart, beneath His wings! Oh, tried ones, press closely to the loving heart of your Lord! Hide yourselves entirely beneath His wings. Here awe has disappeared and rest, itself, is enhanced by the idea of loving trust! The little birds are safe in their mother's love and we, too, are beyond measure secure and happy in the loving favor of the Lord!

IV. The last form of the shadow is that of THE HAND. And this, it seems to me, points to power and position in service. Turn to Isaiah 49:2—

"And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword. In the shadow of His hand has He hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He hid Me."

This undoubtedly refers to the Savior, for the passage proceeds—"And said unto me, you are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, says the Lord that formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the ends of the earth." Our Lord Jesus Christ was hidden away in the hand of Jehovah, to be used by Him as a polished shaft for the overthrow of His enemies and the victory of His people. Yet, inasmuch as it is declared of Christ, it is true also of all Christ's servants, since as He is, so are we, also, in this world. And to make quite sure of it, we have the same expression used in the 16th verse of the 51st chapter, where, speaking of His people, He says, "I have covered you in the shadow of My hand." Is not this an excellent minister's text? Every one of you who will speak a word for Jesus shall have a share in it! This is where those who are workers for Christ should long to be—"in the shadow of His hand"—to achieve His eternal purpose! What are any of God's servants without their Lord but weapons out of the warrior's hand, having no power to do anything? We ought to be as arrows of the Lord which He shoots at His enemies! And so great is His hand of power and so little are we as His instruments, that He hides us away in the hollow of His hand, unseen until He darts us forth! As workers, we are to be hidden away in the hand of God, or to quote the other figure, "in His quiver has He hid me"—we are to be unseen till He uses us! It is impossible for us not to be known somewhat if the Lord uses us, but we may not aim at being noticed—on the contrary, if we are as much used as the very chief of the apostles, we must truthfully add, "though I am nothing." Our desire should be that Christ should be glorified, and that self should be concealed.

Alas, there is a way of always showing self in what we do, and we are all too ready to fall into it. You can visit the poor in such a way that they will feel that his lordship or her ladyship has condescended to call upon poor Betsy. But there is another way of doing the same thing so that the tried child of God shall know that a beloved brother or a dear sister in Christ has shown a fellow feeling for her and has talked to her heart. There is a way of preaching in which a great divine has evidently displayed this vast learning and talent—and there is another way of preaching in which a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, depending upon his Lord, has spoken in his Master's name and left a rich unction behind. Within the hand of God is the place of acceptance and safety—and for service it is the place of power, as well as of concealment! God

only works with those who are in His hand, and the more we lie hidden there, the more surely will He use us before long. May the Lord do unto us according to His word, "I have put My words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of My hand." In this case we shall feel all the former emotions combined—awe that the Lord should condescend to take us into His hand. Rest and delight that He should deign to use us. Trust that out of weakness we shall now be made strong. And to this will be added an absolute assurance that the great end of our being must be answered, for that which is urged onward by the Almighty hand cannot miss its mark!

These are mere surface thoughts. The subject deserves a series of discourses. Your best course, my beloved friends, will be to enlarge upon these hints by a long personal experience of abiding under His shadow. May God the Holy Spirit lead you into it and keep you there, for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 91; 63.

A Psalm written for comfort, but it is not addressed to all mankind, neither, I venture to say, to all believers, but only those who are described in the first verse.

Verse 1. *He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* It is not every worshipper that comes there who shall be thus privileged, but those who *dwell* there, as Simeon and Anna dwelt in the temple. So there are some that abide in Christ and His words abide in them. They live near God. They receive, therefore, choicer favors than those who do but come and go. "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High." He who has learned to stand in the Holy of Holies, near the blood sprinkled mercy seat, to whom prayer is a matter of constant privilege and enjoyment—he dwells in the secret place! Such a man, living near to God, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. You know when you walk with a friend in certain positions of the sun, your friend's shadow falls upon you, but you cannot expect to have the shadow of your friend unless you are near him. We read in the Song, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." There must be nearness to get under the shadow! So there must be great access to God—great familiarity with Him—there must be something of the assurance of faith before we shall be able to grip such a word as that which follows in this Psalm. Read it again and if you have not attained to it, labor after it!

2. *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God. In Him will I trust.* Observe the sweetness of making a personal application of any passage in the word. "I will say." A general doctrine gives us little consolation till we can make a particular application of it. Oh, for faith

daring, personal faith to say, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress"! That was saying a great deal, but it was saying a great deal more when the Psalmist added, "My God." He could not say more than that! God is a refuge and a fortress to me, but He is infinitely more than that. We cannot tell what He is. Rather, we cannot tell what He is not, but we sum it all up when we say, "My God." And surely it is but natural to add, "In Him will I trust." Why, who could help it? If this God is our God, and such a God—such a refuge and such a fortress to His people—surely we must trust Him! Come, if you are troubled tonight—if you have got any doubts and fears—may the Spirit of God enable you to make this the blessed resolution of your Spirit—"My God, in Him will I trust."

3. *Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.* You cannot see it. You do not know it to be a snare. The bird does not suspect the fowler. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." If the bird knew it was a net, it would not fly into it. You do not know your temptation, young man. No, and the oldest and most experienced Christian is not aware of the traps which the fowler is setting for him. But surely He shall deliver you if you abide near Him—so near that His shadow falls on you! If you dwell in secret with Him, surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler!

3. *And from the noisome pestilence.* From the noisome pestilence of error which is the worst of pestilences because it preys upon the soul. Foul air which injures the bodily frame is bad enough, but what is that foul teaching which destroys the soul—which would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect? But surely if you live near to Him, He shall deliver you from the noisome pestilence.

4. *He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler.* It is a marvelous verse! I do not think that any devout man would have been daring enough to use such language as this if he had not been led to do so by the Holy Spirit, Himself. Where the Holy Spirit leads the way, we may safely follow. But it would have been unsafe for mere poetry's sake to talk of God's "feathers" and "wings." Yet see the condescension of God. He likens Himself here to the hen that broods her little ones! O child of God, nestle down closely under the warm breast of everlasting love, and hide yourself beneath the mighty wings of the everlasting and eternal God! So shall you be secure.

5. *You shall not be afraid of the terror by night; nor of the arrow that flies by day.*

For if this alludes to temporal dangers—

"Not a single shaft shall hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

And if there is a covert allusion here to spiritual dangers—to the darts of the wicked one and to the alarms which fill the soul when the presence of God is withdrawn—if you dwell near to God you shall know no fear of

these things, for neither death nor hell can injure the man that lives in God!

6-10. *Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that waits at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.* And it is very wonderful when men have lived near to God and have received special faith to grasp such a promise as this! How they have outlived the most deadly pestilences! I collected, some time ago, a little list of names of devout men who in the times of pestilence remained in the field to visit the sick and to attend to those who were dying—and it is marvelous that they outlived all—and their names stand now upon the catalog of fame as benefactors of the race. They had special faith given and they used that faith in trusting in God! I have already said that I do not believe that this applies to all believers, for good men die as well as bad men in days of pestilence, but there are some who dwell near to God to whom the promise comes with special power—and they have been able to do and dare for God without fear—and their faith has been abundantly rewarded.

11, 12. *For He shall give His angel charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hand, lest you dash your foot against a stone.* They get special commandment to take care of the saints of God—the angels—those unseen but swift and mighty messengers of heaven! When David had the troops paraded before him, when they were going out to fight Absalom, he gave them all a charge that they should not touch the young man, Absalom, and yet, you know, he died. But God's angels keep His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word and go when He gives them a charge of what to do! He says, "O you angels, this day watch over My people. Keep them in all their ways. Be to them as a nurse who bears up her child in her hands, and if they are likely to meet with even some minor trial, lest they should skip and sin, bear them up lest they dash their foot against a stone." Now comes a glorious promise.

13. *You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon you shall trample under feet.* God often gives victories like these to His people so that Satan and all the powers of evil are trampled down by the holy childlike confidence of the man who is resolved to serve his God!

14. *Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he has known My name.* He has no merits. He does not claim any. But he loves Me and, therefore, I love him and I will deliver him because he loves Me. Oh, love the Lord, all you saints!

Love Him more and more, for this love of yours shall bring to you a sweet reward!

15. *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.* Were there ever words fuller of consolation than these? "He shall call upon Me." Divine grace will take care to give us the spirit of prayer. "And I will answer him." Divine grace will give the answer!

15, 16. *I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation.* Now, it is not a promise to every good man that he shall live for a long period, for some among the best of men die in very early youth. But still they have had a full life, for life must not be measured by years. Oh, how much do some men pack into a little time! How much of life there may be in the man whose course is finished before he is 30 years of age and how little may some live who expand their days into 80 or 90 years! Belzoni's toad—you remember the piece of poetry into which some imaginative person has cast his diary, how once in a thousand years it crept from under a stone and winked with one eye? Well it did not live much in the course of two or three thousand years—it *existed*. But a man who is full of holy duties and earnest purposes lives long even though the time is short!

Psalm 63. A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah—

Exiled, ill at ease, hunted, exposed to danger. Yet he could sing! And some of the sweetest Psalms came out of the bitterest afflictions. God's songsters are like nightingales that reserve their sweetest music for the night. Whenever you and I come to be in the wilderness, may we refresh ourselves with such a Psalm as this.

Verse 1. *O God, You are my God.* Everything else has gone, but You are my God. There are gods of the heathen, but You, the true and real Jehovah, are my God. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to take a firm grip of God after this fashion, "O God, You are my God."

1. *Early will I seek You.* "Oh," says one, "why did he seek God if God was his?" Would you have him seek another man's God, then? No, it is because He is ours that we seek Him and desire His company. If you know God to be your God, you will not be satisfied unless you are living near Him. "Early will I seek You." I will not wait. I cannot wait. I cannot tarry. I must not tarry. Early will I seek You.

1. *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where is no water.* Thirst is one of the strongest longings of our nature. You can appease hunger for a while, but thirst is awful. There is no staying that. When it is once upon a man, he must have water or die. "My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where is no water." No means of grace. Nothing to help me. No believers round about me. I am left alone thirsting for my God. And yet it is so precious a thing, so sure a mark of grace to thirst for God anywhere, that

one may be thankful even to be in a dry and thirsty land if one possesses a true thirst after God!

2. *To see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* He had seen God in His holy place, and he longs to see Him again. They that never knew God do not want to know Him. But they that have known Him desire to know Him more and more! If you do not long for the bread of heaven, it is because you never tasted it. He that has once tasted it will sigh and hunger till he is satisfied with it.

3. *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.* "Better than life." And surely life is better than anything else. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Life is better than meat. Life is better than riches! And if the lovingkindness of God is better than life, then we have a very high price set upon it, but none too high a price. Oh, that you and I may know how sweet, how precious is the lovingkindness of God—and then we shall say that it is better than life! And because it is so, my lips shall praise You. Not only my heart, but I will do it openly. I used to speak vanity when I served vanity. Shall I not now speak out for God when I have come to serve Him? My lips shall praise You!

4. *Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name.* I will confess You. I will rejoice in You. I will work for You. I will encourage myself in You. I will lift up my hands in Your name. Are any of you cast down? Do your hands hang down? Then lift them up in God's name! Nothing else can make you strong. The name of the Lord shall be your strength.

5, 6. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips: when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.* God's people know what perfect satisfaction means. When God reveals His love to them and Christ draws near in the fullness of His grace, then they would not change places with all the kings of the earth! Not all the richest dainties that were ever served up at royal banquets are equal to the love of God. My soul, not my body, but my inmost self, my very life, shall be satisfied even as with marrow and with fatness. The Oriental's idea of luxury is to eat fat. They will eat what we cannot endure, but we, dear friends, understand the metaphor and appreciate what is meant by David. God will satisfy us with the best of the best, with marrow and fatness. He will make that satisfaction double as with marrow and fatness—and we shall be so satisfied that we shall have nothing left to do but to praise. "My mouth shall praise." Says our poet—

"All that remains for me,
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King."

He that wrote that verse knew what was meant by this, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips."

7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* That is God's logic. One likes to see "therefores" in Scripture. They are inferences drawn with great accuracy. You have *been* my helper. Well, then, You *will be* my helper and if I cannot see Your face, I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings! I know that You are there even if I cannot see You. And if I only know that You are there by the shade that You cast over me—that calming, cooling shade which dampens the ardor of my worldly spirit—if this is all that I get from You, yet in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice!

8. *My soul follows hard after You.* I am after You, my God, hard after You, following hard after You, longing for You, like a dog at the heels of his master's horse, going with all his might, following hard after You. Oh, this is a healthy condition to be in! If you cannot yet reach your God, yet if you follow hard after Him, it is well with you, for notice the next sentence—

8. *Your right hand upholds me.* No man follows after God unless God helps him to do so. It comes of the grace of God! When you are seeking God, it is because God is seeking you—and though you know it not, there is a vast amount of divine grace couched in this desire.

9, 10. *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.* Or jackals, as its name became.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Very hard work to stop it, though, for they are always breaking out in a fresh place. They have always some new lie! A shovelful of earth will do it, if nothing else will. Let everyone here who is accustomed to slander or to speak evil of his neighbor listen to this prophetic voice—"the month of them that speak lies shall be stopped." But the mouths that speak the praises of God shall go on singing forever and ever. May such mouths be ours!

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THE SAVIOR'S SILENCE
NO. 3268

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 9, 1864.

"But He answered her not a word."
Matthew 15:23.

THE diary of a physician, one would think, must necessarily be deeply interesting. What a variety of cases must come under the doctor's observation in the course of one year! And some of these must be very strange cases indeed. The details of their cures, if one could understand them, and if the doctor would only translate his hard Latin terms, might be of the greatest interest.

But you need not wish to read them, for you have here, in this gospel according to Matthew, the diary of the greatest of all physicians—Jesus Christ—who healed all manner of diseases and who met with cases of the most peculiar and eccentric kind. Our gracious Master always walked the hospital, for the whole world was that to Him and wherever He went, His supreme business here below was by touch, or look, or word to bestow healing on the soul and body. His cures were gratis—this was something to be admired, but He also journeyed to His patients! It is generous when the physician treats freely those who came crowding to his door, but our Master—the Beloved Physician—traveled to the utmost end of His all-embracing circuit that He might meet and bless all who dwelt therein. There were some who lived just over the edge and verge—just beyond the people to whom He was specially sent—and when He touched the borders of Tyre and Sidon, the Syro-Phoenician woman came and shared in the healing reserved for the Jews! This is great comfort for some of us. However sick we may be, it is Jesus Christ's [Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2841, Volume 49—PRAYER—ITS DISCOURAGEMENTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] great office to heal—it is His honor to lay hold of the sorely wounded and helpless and restore health to them. And if by reason of infirmity we cannot come to Him, He is ready to come to us! And if we will not come by reason of impenitence, such is the force of His love that He comes unasked. Oh, Jesus Christ, Master, able to heal a soul impotent or willing, and to work fresh cures by Your amazing power, come to this great crowd—far mightier than ever gathered round Bethesda's porch—and let Your healing presence remain with us tonight!

Let us now come closely to the case before us. It is quite familiar to most of us. It was that of a poor woman whose daughter was plagued and who had come to ask Christ to heal her. In a few pathetic words she uttered her passionate desire. Our Lord was usually ready to answer at

once—His generous heart overflowed with sympathy and was eager to gratify the longing soul—but on this occasion, "He answered her not a word." He went on with His preaching and other works and this needy, distracted woman was apparently ignored—"He answered her not a word." That is our topic for tonight.

We shall first, then, have a word to say on, *the silence of the Savior*. Then we shall notice in the second place, that *though He was silent, He was not unkind.* And then to finish with, in the third place, that *though the answer was delayed, this good woman was not discouraged, and not denied*. Let us think, then, on—

I. THE SAVIOR'S SILENCE. Generally, our Lord was like the father in the parable, eagerly on the lookout for the returning sinner, but here He seems distant, reserved—and when appealed to, silent! Usually the tear was waiting to weep in sympathy with those that wept, but now His eyes are strangely dry and His soul seemed not to be stirred by the mother's earnest entreaty. Generally, there was no need to ask—He looks upon distress and like the Good Samaritan is moved with pity and hastens to help! But here He is sought with tears, entreated with piteous perseverance, yet "He answered her not a word."

This is more remarkable as we remind ourselves that this woman had a distinct sense of need. There is no vagueness or cloud as to her desire. She utters most precisely the yearning of her heart. She knew what she longed for, and that intensely, and yet—yet she had no immediate answer! Is not this the case with many of you? You need a Savior, have cried to Him for months. That little room can witness the prayers and tears. And since no answer has come, you have said, "It is because I do not feel my need enough." But that may not be the real reason at all. Repentance is necessary, but much which is called by that name is not true repentance. Terrors of conscience are not repentance—though they may lead to it. And though you may never have been filled with alarm, yet if you are sorry for sin, hate sin and would be rid of it, root and branch, your repentance is genuine. The thing to be inquired of is not quantity but *quality*. For even deep repentance is not an absolute essential to salvation—

"All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him."

Your repentance may be true and your sense of need, deep, and yet you may have to wait, and wait, and still wait before His peace floods your soul.

Besides this, this poor woman *knew where to come for help*. She looked at the right door. She asked for "mercy, mercy." This was her one plea! And if we come to God with any other, we know not who we are seeking, and to whom we are speaking. This woman was deeply humbled with a sense of unworthiness, but she turned even that into an argument for the Savior's pity, for the mercy of God. I know there are some who fear that because they have not heard, "Your sins are forgiven you," that they have not come to Christ aright. No! This woman came aright and yet for the present she is kept without a word. If we come to Christ at all, we do come aright. I have often said, "There is no true coming which can be

wrong." "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him." So if God draws, He cannot draw the wrong way. Looking for the mercy of Christ, trusting the merits of His sacrificial death, then you have come and come aright to the door of mercy! And yet you may for a time not have a word to comfort you.

Yet again, this woman *had some clear idea of our Lord's character*. She calls Him, "Lord." Her first appeal is, "Have mercy." Her second, "Help me." But in both it is to the Lord she appeals. She had some idea of His deity, His omnipotence, even more than some of His disciples. Nor need this surprise us. A deep sense of need often reveals to us Christ's all sufficiency. And yet with all this insight into our Lord, "He answered her not a word." So you may know the Master, sit at the foot of His cross and view the flowing of the precious blood. Your eyes may be familiar with His marred visage, your faith may have beheld Him exalted on high, and you may have no doubt as to the might of His deity, the sympathy of His manhood and yet though saved, may have no joy of salvation! Doubtless you shall never see death, but as yet you have no exhilaration of life.

This woman, too, *had a humble but determined faith*. Our Lord admired and extolled this, for He said, "Oh, woman, great is your faith!" She had faith before her wishes were granted—and we may have faith that saves and yet have no sweet assurance. There are, I believe, multitudes who have trusted Christ, who are described by the Prophet Isaiah as, "walking in darkness, and seeing no light." Many there are who, believing, have eternal life, but have not yet entered into the peace and joy that are its fruits. They are saved. They have their title deeds, but they do not read them clearly. Heaven is theirs, but their eyesight is imperfect and so, "the mansion in the skies" is still in the land of far distances. Christ may have heard you in His heart, without having answered you in your ear! He may have filed your prayer in heaven, but for some reason He may permit you for a time to struggle without comfort and without light.

Yet once again, notwithstanding all this, she was *a soul Christ meant to bless*. There was never a question in His heart whether He would heal her daughter. He had ordained to give her what she sought—had never for an instant meant to deny it! It had always been stored for her on high. He willed once and for all that she should go away in peace. And so, wearisome nights may have been appointed for you, with strong crying and tears—but keep on, for if God has given you genuine faith, He must give you eternal salvation unless He breaks His promises—which He can never do! He must save them who come unto Him through Jesus Christ! Your business is with His command and when you have obeyed, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then, even if you weep in the dark, your tears will be for your spiritual strengthening!

This was my own case for nearly five years. If ever a soul did pray with anguish, I know I did. I could never rest. God had put the desire after His Son into my heart, and I could never rest satisfied until I had heard the Father whisper, "You are Mine." Some drops of mercy fell, but the next day they were all dried up. Sometimes I seized hold of a promise, but it

appeared to melt away in my hands. Though but a child I turned over His word, seeking for something to suit my case, but nothing would come until God's appointed day had struck—and then the darkness vanished and light came and I rejoiced in Jesus and the light which only He can give! Many who are ordained unto eternal life, are yet held back, as John Bunyan was, for many a day and even years in doubt and perplexity and trouble! "He answered her not a word." In the second place we see that—

II. THOUGH THE SAVIOR WAS SILENT, HE WAS NOT UNKIND. He had good reasons for refusing to give her a word. Here is one. It is His delight - *to put faith to the test*. Great kings have always had exploits performed before them for their pleasure. And in order to prove faith's mighty power, the Lord God even sends it upon strange errands. He delights to see the daring it can display when relying on His power. He said to it when but a stripling, "Go and cut off the giant's head!" And faith did it. He said, "Go and conquer the city and destroy it, and rush rejoicing over the ruined walls." And faith did it. Again He said, "Go, and for My sake enter the burning fiery furnace"—and faith did it and came out unscathed. "Go to the lions' den," said the king—and faith went and shut the lions' mouths! And our Lord, finding faith incarnate in this poor woman, puts it to the test. Her faith now has to struggle with the King, Himself! Be not alarmed! Jesus said, "It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." And she answered, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table." And so the King tests faith and puts the crown upon its head as He answers, "Oh, woman, great is your faith!" So with some of you—seeking Jesus, but not yet finding Him. He knows your faith but He delays comfort to let men see what that faith will do! And when that is done, He will disperse the clouds and fill your soul with rejoicing! I have no doubt the Savior did this, not for His pleasure, but for her profit. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in the youth of his faith. The Spartans would never have been a nation of conquerors if they had not been trained in the school of hardness in their childhood. They had to smart, struggle and sometimes feel the pangs of hunger, that in the day of battle they should never retreat from the strongest foe. So we may have sore temptations to meet before reaching heaven and He is hardening us. As the florist takes the plants from the hothouse into the open air to harden them, so the Lord removes us from the light and warmth of His loving countenance and hardens us so that frosts shall not wither us if they come, by and by.

The Savior, too, may have had an eye *to the onlookers*. Towards us who this day are the onlookers upon the fine exhibition of this woman's faith, surely He had a gracious purpose. Surely He did it that there might be a well of comfort and instruction to troubled souls in ages past, in this age, and in ages yet to come! Who knows? This woman was kept for a time in suspense, for your comfort, poor woman, for you, young man, with your poor despairing soul. "There," He seems to say, "in this one case I will set an example to all who do not at once get comfort, that they may see that their faith shall yet prevail. If they still believe and continue to plead until I come, then shall the answer be peace." Jesus was not unkind, even in His silence. The last point for our reverent study is this—

III. THOUGH THE ANSWER WAS DELAYED, THIS WOMAN WAS NOT DISCOURAGED NOR DENIED.

When she could not get a word, she did not go away and sulk, as some professed penitents do, but gathered more boldness. She appears to have come nearer to the Lord, for we read in the 25th verse, "then she came and worshiped Him." As if standing in the outer circle, she now pushed through the crowd and *came nearer*—but not irreverently—she came to *worship*. Herein she reads us all a lesson. If we have had no answer to our pleading, do not give up, but go nearer to Christ! Make it more solemnly the resolve of your soul that you have real dealings with Him. Some persons rest satisfied with saying a number of phrases beginning one way, and ending with, "Amen." I do not like to rise from my knees until I have had assured dealings with the Master. There are fifty words to the air, but it is the one word with the Master which effects our soul's purpose! Lay hold upon the cross. Put your fingers by faith into the print of the nails. Thrust your hand in His side and realize that He is really there! And this shall be your way of obtaining true comfort. Nor was this all. When she thus came nearer, *she cried more earnestly*. The disciples said, "Send her away, for she cries after us." But her cry came to Him with a plaintive pathos in her words. She wept. She cried such a cry as a mother wails out over her dying child! It seemed to hold in it these words, "I must have this blessing! Give it to me or I die, You Son of David! I am not one who speaks with the lips, only—my heart cries to You! Hear a woman's heart that breaks unless You speak the comfortable words to her."

Ah, cold prayers will never open the gates of heaven—you must go and knock, and knock, and knock, and knock again if you would make swing open the celestial portals! You must use the golden knocker not with an indifferent tap, but with the loud stroke of one who must get entrance, for the cold street of the everlasting storm is already falling and if shut out, there will be "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Remember how powerfully the Savior, Himself, exhorted to this in His parable of the importunate friend who needed bread for his friend who came to him after a journey, and who never rested until he secured it from his neighbor, though he roused him out of bed at midnight to obtain it! Homely is the picture, but notable is the meaning and lesson of it. You must knock, and knock, and knock, and redouble your blows—take heaven by storm—for as our Lord declared, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence," so be numbered with the violent who "take it by force." The longer you are made to wait, the more earnestly must you pray—and your prayers will yet prevail!

But I want us particularly to notice that the *longer she prayed, the shorter became the prayer*. You may generally measure the worth of prayer by this rule—the longer the worse, the shorter the better. She began, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." That is a good prayer, but the next is shorter. "Lord, help me!" It is just those prayers that win the day! It would be well if we remembered to let our words be few when we come

before the Most High. When we get intensely and solemnly earnest before God, we generally have more thoughts than words, more intensity than sentences. Some may say, "I cannot pray at all," but if God has given you desire for His mercy, you can surely pray, "Lord, help me!" That is not too long for memory or for time. "Lord, help me!" You can pray that before going to work in the morning, pray it at night, however late you may return. Some say the Lord's prayer, but I beg you not to do so if unconverted. How can you say, "Our Father," unless you are saved and belong to the family of God? What right have you to call Him, "Father," unless you have passed from death unto life? Use it when the Spirit of adoption is yours, but not until then! This is an infinitely better prayer for you, "Lord, help me!" It makes no profession but of helplessness. It confesses, "I cannot help myself. I am most unworthy and most needy. Lord, help me to repent! Break my heart for me. Help me to believe! To keep me from sin. To serve You and to be like Jesus Christ Himself." I cannot suggest a prayer shorter or more full of meaning.

It was not, however, the prayer, but her *faith* that captured the heart and commanded the blessing of the Lord! She would not let go her hold of Him and she would not take, "No," even out of His own mouth! She knew He must be true. Now, sinner, Christ has said, "He that believes on Me is not condemned." If you believe in Christ you are not condemned. And though the delays to your prayers may seem to say you are condemned, believe it is seeming only, and that He must and will keep His promise to save every sinner that trusts Him! Do not let even your conscience fill you with fear. Would to God you would say, "I will believe that Jesus Christ died for me. I will cast myself upon Him. I am black—I believe that He will wash me. I am foul and evil, but I will believe in Him to create me anew. I have nothing, but I take Christ to be my All in All. Here, tonight, I trust Him, just as I am. I trust Him to bring me where He is—to dwell with Him forever."

If God enables you to do this, depend upon it, your eternal life is sure! God help you thus to pray and believe, and before long you shall go your way and, "according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you." The Lord dismiss you with His blessing for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 15; PSALM 42.

Verse 1. *Then the scribes and Pharisees who were of Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying*— Our Lord had been busily engaged in healing the sick, and now these petty quibblers came round about Him to try and worry Him. They were a kind of mosquito swarm to Christ—had He not been a perfect man they might have worried Him.

2. *Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* "Why do Your disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?" Generally a good man is held responsible for the acts of his followers. If they cannot find fault with Christ, they will find fault with His disciples, who must have been men of admirable character when even scribes and Pharisees had no worse

charge to bring than the following—"For they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The Savior must have been gentle, indeed, to bear with such people as these! It would have given us the fidgets to have such folks round about us. Here He is, healing the sick, curing the lepers, feeding the hungry—and these people are talking about washing their hands! Oh, how many religious people there are that are occupying their time about nothing of vital importance at all, questions of washing their hands or something of that kind.

3. *But He answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* He did not deign to answer their question, but posed them with another.

4-6. *For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and he that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift to God, by whatever you might be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.* They actually taught that a man might escape the happy duty of succoring his father and mother, surely the first duty of a son, by saying, "I have dedicated so much of my goods to the temple and the worship of God that I cannot afford it." There are not many in these days that talk that way—they generally cannot afford to dedicate anything to the temple because they are keeping their father and mother! They go the other way but one way or another, men will, if possible escape from moral or religious duty. Now God loves not that we should bring one duty to Him smeared with the blood of another, and for a man to give his money to the temple which he ought to have given to his father and mother was a violation of the strict law of God, and could not possibly be acceptable to Him. Thus they made void the law of God by their traditions!

7-9. *You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.* Christ spoke very plainly to them. There is no dealing with hypocrites with kid gloves—these nettles must be boldly grasped and the Savior did so! Brothers and sisters, stick to the Scriptures in doctrine and in precept—what have you to do with modern thought, the imaginations of men, the vain thoughts of crazy brains? Hold to God's thoughts, which are as high above men's thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! One Word of God is worth a whole world full of the thoughts of men—and time shall yet show us that it is so. We have but to wait and we shall see that the thoughts of man are vanity, but the Word of God abides forever. "And He called the multitude"—one of the finest ways of rebuking the Pharisees and scribes—He seemed to turn His back on the gentlemen who knew so much!

10, 11. *And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand: that which goes into the mouth defiles not a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* Religion stands not in meats and drinks and divers washings or anything external—it lies in the

heart! It is that which comes out of the heart that is the true index of the character, not that which is done externally.

12, 13. *Then came His disciples and said unto Him, Know You that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* They stand like a grove of trees—men take shelter under their great knowledge, but God never planted them and, therefore, they shall be plucked up. And He did pluck them up without ceremony.

14. *Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* So you need not trouble to shove them in—just leave them alone, it will come to an end. There are some forms of error which Christ may denounce, but which His disciples had better leave alone—there is a ditch ready and waiting for them somewhere or other.

15-20. *Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not yet understand, that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draft? But these things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man.* By and by in the chapter we shall see thousands of people eating with unwashed hands who would not have eaten at all if it had been requisite, for them to wash their hands first, for they were in a desert place! Not but what it is well even to wash the hands and every other part of the flesh. It should be true of every Christian, "Having your bodies washed with pure water," cleanliness should always go with godliness. But this was a mere ceremonial rite, a washing of the hands whether they needed it or not for form's sake, and the Savior pours contempt upon it!

21, 22. *Then Jesus left there, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* He made a long journey to go and meet one woman! An instance of how far you and I ought to be willing to go to save a soul. "And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts." She came a little way but He had come a long way. Perhaps some sinner has come here today. Ah, Christ has come too! The woman "cried unto Him." Sinners and the Savior will meet, for the sinners are seeking Him and they will perhaps meet sooner than they expect. Perhaps she meant to have gone a long journey, but He met her and she cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David." She knew His deity—"O Lord." She knew His humanity—"The Son of David." She knew His royalty, "The Son of David." She had but one prayer, "Have mercy on me." That prayer suits me very well, too, today—is it too humble for you? I pity you then. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David." And yet her prayer was not for herself. "Have mercy on me, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Many a mother feels that the greatest mercy to herself would be salvation for her

child. How we are wrapped up in these who are the offspring of our body! How we desire their salvation! How careful we should be if they are saved! How should we pray for the children of others, that God would have mercy on mothers by healing daughters! "But He answered her not a word." You may pray, and pray acceptably, and yet not get an immediate answer.

23. *But He answered her not a word. And His disciple came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* She makes too much noise. Oh, the poor disciples! "She cries after us." That she did not—she cried after the Master, not after them! Oh, the big disciples, how large they are, and how easily troubled. "She cries after us."

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* My mission as a prophet is to Israel, not to the Gentiles just now.

25-27. *Then came she and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered, and said, It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* Splendid faith, to make it out that to heal her daughter would be, after all, to Christ nothing but to give her a lot of crumbs! She thought so much of Him—He was so great in her estimation that as much as she valued the healing of her daughter, she reckoned it to be to His Royal Majesty only as a bit of dog's food. Oh, splendid faith!

28. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Write out, sir, a blank check! She may fill it in just as she likes—there is no limit to what God will give an unlimited faith! If we limit our faith, then we limit the Holy One of Israel. "And Jesus departed from there." He had done His business. He is always on the move and never loiters.

29, 30. *And Jesus departed from there and came near unto the Sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others, and cast them down at Jesus feet; and He healed them.* What an assemblage and in the middle of a great hospital! What a sight for Him to see all these sick people carried like so many burdens and then laid down at His feet! Cannot we today, each one, bring somebody? Think of somebody, some friend of yours that is yet unsaved. Take him on your back, no, carry him in your bosom and bring him by faith and lay him down at Jesus' feet just now. Who shall it be? Think about it!

31-34. *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they gloried the God of Israel. Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way. And His disciples sais unto Him, Where shall we get so much bread in the wilderness to feed so*

great a multitude? And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have you? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And I daresay they thought, "We shall need all these ourselves!" It was noble on their part that they were willing to give away all they had—every bit of it, little fish and loaves and all—none too much for the company, and yet they parted with all at the Master's bidding.

35. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.* I think I see Him rising from the place where He sat, and saying, "Now you have been standing up and you are all hungry, sit down all of you." What a sight to see them all dropping into their places. According to Mark they fell into order by rank, by hundreds and by fifties. What a commander in chief Christ is! When He makes a banquet it is not a scramble, it is always orderly, and when there is anything very disorderly it is generally because Christ is not there—if He is there, everything seems to fit into its place.

36. *And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and broke them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.* "They did all eat and were filled." I remember a country brother putting it, "And they *did* all eat," which I think is very likely—they were very hungry, they *did* all eat—and were filled! They were ravenous, but they were not restrained.

37, 39. *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken food that was left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.* And if the women and children bore any proportion to most congregations, they would make a larger number than the men! And then comes the finish, "And He sent away the multitude." You and I, if we had done this, would have let them stay for an hour while somebody proposed and somebody else seconded a vote of thanks for this good dinner that they had had, but not He! He fed them and then He sent the multitude away and took ship and came into the coasts of Magdala. May we learn Our Lord's blessed absence of self-seeking!

Psalm 42. **Verse 1.** *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.* Hunted, hot, weary, thirsty. It must drink or die. You see the poor creature with the big tears in its eyes, with the sweat distilling from it, moving to and fro as it pants in its longing for the water, "even so does our soul long after God." I must have my God! I must die if I have not God. It is the refrain of our hymn, "Give me Christ, or else I die." It is not verbal. It is the soul that is panting. And when you grow very weary with the world and very heavy of heart—yes, and when without any trouble you are led to see the emptiness of all carnal joys—then is the time when this panting comes.

2. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Not sacraments, not sermons, but God! Not books, not even prayers, but God! Three times He puts it, "for God"—"for the living God"—"that I may come and appear before God." We could not pant after an idol or an image, but we do thirst after a living God that He would come to our living souls. We feel as if we could not live without the

living God. Is it so with you? You shall have your desire! If for a while He delays, He must come at the cry of His children.

3. *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* That is a very stinging question and the enemy knows that and he takes care to put it often to the Christian. "Where is your God." "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That was the bitterest bitter in Christ's cup. When our adversaries think that we are altogether left, and to cry, "Where is your God?" it is not amazing that we begin to weep until our tears become the salt meat of every meal. "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?"

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.* You could not help it. It is not the best thing in the world. Meditation is always good, but it needs to be done in a wise way, else we may meditate ourselves into still deeper griefs. "I pour out my soul in me."

4. *For I had gone with the multitude.* Here were memories which made him sorrowful, but yet made him hopeful.

4. *I went with them to the house of God.* Time was when I had many with me, when I did not stand alone—when they were glad of my company and I of theirs. I did not go the wrong way, but I went with them to the house of God. And the house of God is all the more delightful because of the many that go to it—

"At once they sing, at once they pray
They hear of heaven and learn the way."

4. *With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.* And I felt it to be a true holiday. There are some that turn holy days into holidays. Blessed are they that turn holidays into holy days! It is, indeed, a great solace for the heart to enjoy Christian fellowship, and to go with the many to the worship of God. But if he cannot—if his pathway is to be a lonely one, then let him still trust in God though I should not wonder that he has his grief.

5. *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted in me?* As old Master Trapp says, "David tries to talk David out of the dumps—and he does well." Here were two Davids—David that was down and David that was up, and David draws David up! So you, too, if you are a little low tonight, should let your better, godlier self-talk to yourself!

5. *Hope you in God.* If you cannot do anything else, yet hope. The New Zealanders call hope "the swimming thought," because when everything else is drowned, up comes hope at the top of the wave! You cannot drown hope.

5. *For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.* Snatch from the altars of the *future* firebrands with which to kindle the altar of today! "I shall yet praise Him." I am not always going to be low. I have hung the harp upon the willows, but I have not broken its strings. I shall take it down again. "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." If He does but look upon us—if He does but have pity upon us—let us be content with that and abide His time.

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* Is it not a blessed thing that even when he is down, he says, "Oh, my God"? He gets hold of his

God! He has lost his company, but he has not lost his God! See—"*my* soul—"*my* God." His God is as much his as his soul is his! He puts them together—"my God"—"my soul."

6. *Therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and from the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar.* Were these places where he was then wandering? He would remember God wherever he was. He would remember happier days—seasons long past when he did walk in fellowship with God. So let us remember how He kept His tryst with us in former days of sorrow—how He manifested Himself unto us as He does not to the world! He will do the same now. Let us be of good courage.

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* They are God's waves and God's billows, so he will not mind them. Our Father rules the stormiest deeps and the noisiest depths of the soul only speak as He permits them. Be of good cheer!

8, 9. *Yet the LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* He had tried his "whys" on himself. Now he comes with his "whys" to his God, and God will answer him. Our Father permits His children to plead with Him. You are permitted to say, "O God, show me why You contend with me." And He will be pleased to let you see the reason, or, if not, to give you faith enough to be satisfied without a reason.

10. *As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God?* Rather monotonous this. "Where is your God?" is all they can say. They are rather short of wit when they must always hang on to the same old taunt. If ever you hear of a new heresy, it is only an old heresy with a new soul put to it!

11. *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, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

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A FRAIL LEAF
NO. 3269

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Will You break a leaf driven to and fro?"
Job 13:25.

POOR Job! Who could have been brought lower than he? He had lost his possessions, his children, his health—he was covered with sore boils—and he was aggravated by the unkind speeches of his friends. In his deep distress he turns to God and finding no other plea so near at hand, he makes a plea out of his own distress. He compares himself to the weakest thing he could think of and then he says to God, the great and the merciful, "Will You, so glorious in power and so matchless in goodness—will You break me, who am like a poor leaf fallen from the tree, withered and dry, and driven to and fro in the wind?" Thus he draws an argument out of his own weakness. Because he is so low and insignificant and powerless, he lays hold upon the divine strength and pleads for pity!

It is a common figure he uses, that of a leaf driven to and fro. Strong gusts of wind, it may be in the autumn when the leaves hang but lightly upon the trees, send them falling in showers around us. Quite helpless to stay their own course, fluttering in the air to and fro, like winged birds that cannot steer themselves, but are guided by every fitful blast that blows upon them, at last they sink into the mire to be trodden down and forgotten. To them Job likens himself—a helpless, hopeless, worthless, weak, despised, perishing thing—and he appeals to the awful Majesty on high and he says to the God of thunder and of lightning, "Will You put out Your power to destroy me? Will You bring forth Your dread artillery to crush such an insignificant creature as I am? With all the goodness of Your great heart—for your name is God That Is Good—will You turn Your Almighty power against me? Oh, be that far from You! Out of pity upon my utter weakness and nothingness, turn away Your hands and break not a leaf that is driven to and fro!"

The apprehension is so startling, the appeal so forcible that the argument may be employed in a great many ways. How often have the sick used it, when they have been brought to so low an ebb with physical pain that life, itself, seemed worthless? Stricken with disease, stung with smart and fretted with acute pains and pangs, they feel that if the affliction continues much longer, it were better for them to die then live! They long for the shades of death, that they might find shelter there. Turning their face to the wall, they have said, "O God, as weak as I am,

will You again smite me? Shall Your hand again fall upon me? You have laid me very low. Why do You lift up Your rod again? Break not, I beseech You, a leaf that is driven to and fro!"

Not less applicable is the plea *to those who are plunged into the depths of poverty!* A man is in trouble arising from destitution. Perhaps he has been long out of work. Bread is not to be found. The children are crying, hungry, starving! The habitation has been stripped of everything which might procure a little nourishment. The poor wretch, after passing through seas of trouble, finds himself no nearer a landing place than before, but—

"Sees each day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end."

Passing through the streets he is hardly able to keep his feet from the pavement or his skin from the cold by reason of his tattered garments. Homeless and friendless, like a leaf that is driven to and fro, he says, "O God! Will You continue this much longer? Will You not be pleased to stop Your rough wind, mitigate the sharpness of the winter, ease my adversity and give me peace?"

So, too, *with those who are in trouble through bereavement*. One child has been taken away and then another. The shafts of death flew twice. Then came sickness with a threatening omen upon one that was still nearer and dearer. Still did not the desolation stay its gloomy portents. It seemed at length as though the widow would be bereft of her last and only child and then she cried, "O God! I am already broken. My heart is like a plowed field—cross plowed—till my soul is ready to despair! Will You utterly break me? Will You spare me no consolations, no props for my old age? Must I be altogether driven away before the whirlwind and find no rest?"

Perhaps it is even more harassing in cases of *mental distress* for, after all, the sharpest pangs we feel are not those of the body, nor those of the estate, but those of the mind. When the iron enters into the soul, the rust thereof is poison. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" You may be surrounded with all the comforts of life and yet be in wretchedness more gloomy than death if the spirits are depressed. You may have no outward cause whatever for sorrow and yet if the mind is dejected, the brightest sunshine will not relieve your gloom. At such a time, you may be vexed with cares, haunted with dread and scared with thoughts which distract you. You fear that your sins are not pardoned, that your past transgressions are all brought to remembrance and that punishment is being meted out to you in full measure. The threats rise up out of God's book and seem to lift sharp swords in their hands with which to smite you. Time is dreadful to you because you know it is hurrying you to eternity—and the thought of eternity stings as does an adder because you measure the future reckoning by the present distress. At such a time, when you are faint with longing, ready to despair and driven to the verge of madness, I can imagine your crying out, "O Lord God of mercy, I am as a leaf that is

driven to and fro—will You quite break me and utterly destroy me? Have compassion, and show Your favor to Your poor broken creature!"

Many a child of God may have used this, and if he has not used it yet, he may still use it. There are times when all our evidences get clouded and all our joys are fled. Though we may still cling to the cross, yet it is with a desperate grasp. God brings our sins to remembrance till our bones, as David puts it, "are sorely broken by reason of our iniquity." Then it is that, all broken, we can turn to the strong for strength and use the plea of the text, "Will You break a leaf driven to and fro?" And we shall get for our answer these comforting words, "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench."

I. THE PLEA IS SUCH AS ARISES FROM INWARD CONSCIOUSNESS.

What plea is more powerful to ourselves than that which we draw from ourselves? A man may not be sure of anything outside him, for eyes and ears may deceive—but he is always pretty well assured of anything within him, for that which he perceives in his own consciousness he is very tenacious about. Now, in this case, *Job was quite certain about his own weakness.* How could he doubt that? He looked upon his poor body covered with sores. He looked upon his friends who had perplexed and vexed him so much and he felt that he was, indeed, just like a sere leaf. I trust that many of us have been brought by God the Holy Spirit into such a humble frame of mind as to feel that, in a certain sense, this is true of us. O God, if we know ourselves right, we are *all* like withered leaves! We once thought ourselves fresh and green—we reckoned that we were as good as others, we made a fine and verdant profession—but, lo, You have been pleased to deal with us and all the fresh verdure of what we thought to be our piety—the natural piety which we thought we possessed—has faded and withered and now we are convinced that we are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags! No, the hope that we clung to as the leaf clings to the tree, we have had to give up. We are blown away from that. We were once upon the tree of good works—we seemed as if we had life and would always be happy there, but the winds have taken us away and we cannot hold on to our frail hope. We once thought that we could do everything—we now perceive that without Christ we can do nothing! We are cast forth as a branch separated from the vine—we are withered! What can a leaf do? What power has it to resist the wind? Just so we feel now—we can do nothing—even the sin that dwells in us, like the wind, carries us away and we are like the leaf in the wind, subject to its power.

O my brothers and sisters, what a great blessing it is to be made to know our own weakness! To empty the sinner of his folly, his vanity and conceit is no easy matter. Christ can easily fill him with wisdom and prudence, but to get him empty—this is the work! This is the difficulty. To make a man know that he is in himself utterly lost, ruined, and undone—this is the spirit of God's own work! We ministers cannot make a man see that, however diligently we may point it out. Only the Spirit of

God can enlighten the heart to discern it and yet, until a man does see it, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, for there are none within the pearly gates who were not once brokenhearted sinners! Who could possibly come there and sing, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," but those who once said, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great"?

While it is a confession of weakness, it is also *an acknowledgment of God's power to push that weakness to a direful conclusion*. "Will You break me?" says the text—"Lord, You can do it. In one minute You could take away hope from every one of us now in this house of prayer." Some there are who are in the house of doom, where prayer can never be answered, and where mercy's proclamation can never be heard! God could break us. It is an easy thing for Him to destroy! And more, He is not only able, but He has the right to do it if He will, for we are such worthless creatures through our disobedience that we may say, in the words of the hymn—

"If my soul were sent to hell,
Your righteous law approves it well."

When we feel this, then let us make a proper use of our own consciousness, not to despond and faint, but to arise and go to our Father! So we shall come to God and say, "You can destroy me. You may destroy me justly and I cannot resist You. I cannot save myself from Your vengeance, nor can I merit anything at Your hand. I am as weak as water and altogether as perishing a thing as a poor withered leaf—but will You destroy me? I plead for pity. Oh, have pity upon me! O God, let Your heart yearn towards me and show me Your great compassion! I have heard that You delight in mercy and as Benhadad of old, with the rope about his neck, went in unto the king and confessed that he deserved to die, so do I confess! And as the king forgave him, even so do You with me—a guilty culprit trembling in Your presence!—

"Show pity, Lord! O Lord, forgive!
Let a repenting rebel live."

II. This is also A PLEA FULL OF PITY.

Though there is weakness, yet there is also power, for weakness is, for the most part, a prevalent plea with those who are strong and good. I trust you could not see on your road home tonight a poor fainting woman, and pass her by. You could not have brought in before your presence a half starved child who could not drag its weary limbs along without feeling that you must give relief. The mere sight of weakness draws pity. As a certain town was being sacked, one of the rough soldiers is said to have spared a little child, because it said, "Please, sir, don't kill me, I am so little." The rough warrior felt the urgency of the plea. You may yourselves plead thus with God. "O God, do not destroy me! I deserve it, but oh, I am so little! Turn Your power upon some greater thing and let Your heart move with compassion towards me!"

The plea gathers force *when the weakness is confessed*. If a man shall have done you some wrong and shall come and acknowledge it, and bow

down before you and confess it, why, then, you feel that you cannot take him by the throat, but you say, "Rise, I have forgiven you!" When weakness appeals to strength for protection and confession of guilt is relied on as an argument for mercy, those who are good and strong are pretty sure to be moved with compassion.

But, best of all, going from the positive to the comparative, and from the comparative to the superlative, *how a confession of weakness touches your heart when it comes from your own child.* If your child has been chastised, has confessed his wrong and pleads with you, how you stay your hand! Or, if the child is sick and something is done to it which pains it, if while the operation is being performed he should look you in the face, and say, "Father, spare your child! I can bear no more!" you have already felt more than you can make him feel, forthwith your own tears blind you and you stay your hand. "Like as a father pities his children, even so the Lord pities them that fear Him." If you have faith to bring your weakness before God with the sense of a child towards Him, you surely must prevail. Come, them, you timid trembling children of your Father who is in Heaven, use this plea—"Will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?"

III. This PLEA IS RIGHTLY ADDRESSED.

It is addressed to God. As I thought it over, it seemed to me as if I could use it with reference to each person of the blessed Trinity in unity. Looking up to the great Father of our spirits, from whom every good and perfect gift comes down, it seemed to me that out of weakness I could say to Him, "Will You, whose name is Father, will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro? You are the God that made us—will You utterly destroy the earthen vessel which You have fashioned on Your wheel? Your name is 'Preserver of Men.' Will You annihilate us and break us into shivers? Have You not revealed Yourself as delighting in mercy? Are You not the 'Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin'? Have you not said, 'Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool'? O God, the Father of heaven, will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?"

And then, I thought I could address myself to the *blessed Son of God* who is also our brother in human flesh, and say to Him, "Will You break—O You 'faithful high priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities'—'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh'—brother of our soul, by whose stripes we are healed—will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro? No, by Your thorn crowned head and Your bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your wounds and by Your death cry, You cannot, will not, be unmerciful and unkind! Surely they who in confidence turn to You and lay hold upon You, shall find that Your strength shall be ready to help—for though Your arm is strong to smite—it is no less strong to save."

Again, it comes across me sweetly, "O blessed *Spirit*! Could You break a leaf that is driven to and fro? You are no eagle—you did descend on Christ in Jordan as a dove—your influences are soft and soothing. Your name is, 'the Comforter.' You take of the things of Christ, not to blast us, but to bless us therewith. You are not a destroying Spirit, but a quickening Spirit, not a terrifying but an enlivening Spirit—will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?"

Yes, I address You, *You triune God*, You who are so full of mercy, and love, and grace, and truth, that those who have known You best have been compelled to say, 'Oh, how great is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You! Oh, the depths of Your loving-kindness!' Is it possible that You can cast away a poor, brokenhearted trembler, a poor, fearing, doubting one who would gladly be saved, but who trembles lest he should be cast away?"

IV. THIS PLEA IS BACKED UP BY MANY CASES OF SUCCESS.

We will not give many, for we have not time, but there is one case which we will mention. There was a woman whose life was exceedingly sorrowful. She was an Eastern wife and her husband had been foolish enough to have a second mistress in the house. The woman of whom we speak, a holy woman, a woman of refined and delicate mind, a poetess, indeed, of no mean order—this poor woman, having no children was the constant butt of her rival, whose sneering spiteful remarks chaffed and chafed her. Her adversary, it is said, "vexed her sore to make her afraid." Though her husband was exceedingly kind to her, yet as with a sword that cut her bones did she continually go. She was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, her spirit being broken. Still, "she feared the Lord exceedingly," and she went up to God's house, and it was in God's house that she received what was to her, perhaps, the greatest blow of her life! If it was from her rival that she received the harshest word, it was from the high priest of God that she received this hardest blow! As she stood there praying, using no vocal sound, but her lips moving, the high priest—an easygoing soul who had brought his own family to ruin by his slackness—little knowing her grief, told her that she was drunk! Being a woman to whom the thought of such a sin was as bitter as gall, it must have smitten her as with the chill blast of death, that God's priest had said she was drunk! But, as you will all remember, the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro. There came to her a comfortable promise. Ere long that woman stood there to sing! The mercy of God had made the barren woman to rejoice and to be the joyful mother of children! The song of the virgin Mary was modeled after the song of Hannah—that memorable poem in which she sang of the Lord who had filled the hungry with good things, while the rich He had sent away empty. In that case the Lord did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro!

In later years—to take an example of another kind—there was a king who had sinned desperately, slaying God's servants with both hands. But he was taken captive by a powerful monarch and thrown into

prison—such an offensive prison that he was among thorns—in mental as well as in material darkness. Then, troubled in spirit, tossed to and fro, and without power to help himself, Manasseh sought the Lord and he found the Lord—he prayed unto the Lord and the Lord heard him! Out of the low dungeon He did not break the leaf that was driven to and fro!

Take a later case, in our Savior's time. The picture of those proud Pharisees hurrying into our Savior's presence a poor fallen woman is even now in your mind's eye. Yes, sirs, she was taken in adultery. There was no doubt of it. She was "taken in the very act," and there she stands—no, she kneels—all covered with blushes before the man who is asked to judge her! And you remember His words? He never said a word to excuse her guilt—the Savior could not and would not condone her shame! Nor would He, on the other hand, lend Himself to crush the woman who had sinned, but He said—"Where are those, your accusers? Go and sin no more!" Let His words come unto you, poor leaf, driven to and fro! Oh, if there should be such a leaf as that driven here tonight, driven in, perhaps, by stress of weather! Men despise you—from your own sex you get faint pity—but Jesus, when you appeal to Him—will not break such a leaf that is driven to and fro!

Shall I tell another story of the woman who came behind the Master, in the press, and stole a cure by touching His garment? She thought she would receive a curse, but He said—"Be you of good cheer. Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace." It was poor faith—it was very much like unbelief, but yet it was rewarded with a rich acceptance, for He will not break a leaf that is driven to and fro!

V. Once more, my text is A FAINT PLEA WHICH INVITES FULL SUCCOR.

"Will You break a leaf that is driven to and fro?" O Job! There is much wrapped up in what you have said!

He meant this—"Instead of breaking it, You will spare it; You will gather it up, You will give it life again." It is like that text, "A bruised reed He will not break." Oh, it means more than that—it means that He will heal its bruises. "A smoking flax He will not quench." That is good, but it means more! It means that He will stoop down to it and with His soft breath He will blow that smoking flax into a flame—He will not let it go out! He will preserve its heat and make something more of it. O you who are brought to the very lowest of weakness, use that weakness in pleading with God, and He will return unto you with such a fullness of blessing that you shall receive the pardon of sin! You shall be accepted through the righteousness of Christ! You shall be dear to the heart of God! You shall be filled with His Spirit and you shall be blessed with all the fullness of God!

My Lord is such an One that if a beggar asks a penny of Him, He gives him gold! And if you ask only for the pardon of sins, He will give you all the covenant blessings which He has been pleased so bounteously to

provide for the necessities of His people! Come, poor guilty one—needy, helpless, broken and bruised—come by faith and let your weakness plead with God through Jesus Christ!

VI. WE MAY USE THIS PLEA—MANY OF US WHO HAVE LONG KNOWN THE SAVIOR.

Perhaps our faith has got to be very low. O Lord, will You destroy my little faith? I know there is sin in it. To be so unbelieving as I am is no little crime, but Lord, I thank You that I have *any* faith. It is weak and trembling, but it is faith of Your own giving. Oh, break not the poor leaf that is driven to and fro!

It may be your hope is not very bright. You cannot see the golden gates, though they are very near. Well, but your hope shall not be destroyed because it is clouded. You can say, "Lord, will You destroy my hope because it is dim?" No, that He will not!

Perhaps you are conscious that you have not been as useful, lately, as you once were, but you may say, "Lord, will You destroy my usefulness because I have been laid aside, or have not done what I ought to have done in Your service?" Bring your little graces to Christ as the mothers brought their little children, and ask Him to put His hands upon them and to bless them. Bring your mustard seed to Christ and ask Him to make it grow into a tree, and He will do it! But never think that He will destroy you, or that He will destroy the works of His own hands in you!

Oh, that I could so preach as to give the comfort to you which I have felt in my own soul while musing over these words! I wish that some who feel how lost, how empty and how ruined they are, could now believe in the great and the good heart of my Lord Jesus Christ. Little do they know how glad He will be to save them. You will be glad to be saved, but He will be more glad to save you. You will be thankful to sit at the feast, but of all that come to the banquet, there is no heart as glad as the heart of the King! When the King came in to see the guests, I know there were gleams of joy in His face which were not to be found in the faces of any of the guests. He has the joy of benevolence! Perhaps you have sometimes felt a thrill of pleasure when you have done some good to your poor fellow creatures. Now, think what must be the joy of Christ, the joy of the Father and the joy of the Holy Spirit—the joy of doing good to those who do not deserve it, the joy of bestowing favors upon the wicked and the unthankful, the joy of showing that He does good because He is good—not because *you* are good, but because He is good! Thus the Lord God will leap over the mountains of your sins, your prejudices and the rivers of your iniquities, that He may come unto you and display the full glory of His loving-kindness and His tender mercy!

Oh, that some might now for the first time be drawn to Jesus, put their trust in Him and find pardon and peace!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 130:1-8; 1 JOHN 1:1-10; 2:1-2.

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* The most eminent of God's saints have been in the depths. Why, then, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying a cross? David saw the depths and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths. Learn, therefore, that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God's ear, and then God's long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth! "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Do not say, "Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends."—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be
Hear what the Lord has done for me!"

2. *LORD, hear my voice: let Your ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore—

3. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His justice to its utmost severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of men, being men at the best, are sinners even at their best!

4. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.* If there were no mercy, there would be no love in any human heart—and that would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness! Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God—that the holiest of God's saints need to be accepted on the footing of a mediator—to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.* There is a waiting of expectancy. We believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and we hold out our hands for it. There is a waiting of resignation, we know not what God may do nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace. It is a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait His own explanations and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them.

6. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break! Many a weary patient tossed upon the bed of pain has waited for the morning, saying, "Would God it were morning, for then, perhaps, I might find ease." And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning. So does David's soul watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh, there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God! I recollect that Rutherford said, "I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love

Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that—the loving of Him will be heaven enough for me." Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful—

"To those who call, how kind You are, how good to those who seek!
But what to those who find? Ah, this, nor tongue nor pen can show
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know!"

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God!

7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption and He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning sacrifice and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the throne of God! "I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed, says the Lord that dwells in Zion." May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise!

***1 John 1*—Verse 1.** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.* The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that He was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon Him, is exceedingly important and, therefore, John—(whose style, by the way, in this epistle is precisely like the style which he uses in his gospel)—John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in His eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial man, for he says—"We have heard Him"—hearing is good evidence. "Which we have seen Him with our own eyes"—certainly eyesight is good, clear evidence. "Which we have looked upon"—this is better, still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze! But still better—"which our hands have handled," for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ's bosom and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Savior! We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ's incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence!

2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).* That same eternal being who is very God of very God, and is worthy to be called essentially life, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and the apostles could say—"We beheld His glory."

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*— See how he does hammer this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death knell of every doubt!

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us.* But John, what is the value of fellowship with *you*—even you and your brethren—a parcel of poor fishermen? Who wants fellowship with you—hooted, despised, mocked and persecuted in every city—who wants fellowship with you?

3. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.* What a leap from the fisherman to the Father's throne! From the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of kings! Oh, John, we

would have fellowship with you now! We will have fellowship with your scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with you and with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ!

4. *And these things write I unto you that your joy may be full.* Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an incarnate God is revealed to us, that our joy may be full! Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full!

5. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.* Not *a* light, nor *the* light, though he is both, but that He is light! Scripture uses the term, *light*, for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness and for truth. God is light and then, in his usual style, John, who not only tells you a truth of God but always guards it, adds—"in whom is no darkness at all."

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not speak the truth.* Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God's people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears and yet they have fellowship with God! No, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the *darkness of sin*, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not speak the truth.

7. *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light*—Not to the same degree, but in the same manner—

7. *We have fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.* So you see that when we walk the best—when we walk in the light, as He is in the light—when our fellowship is of the highest order, yet still we need daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my soul—it does not say, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed," but, "cleanses." If guilt returns, His power may be proved again and again—there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall not be graciously removed by this precious blood! But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin—

8, 9. *If we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Oh, those words, and more especially that glorious word, "all"! This must include the vilest sin that ever stained human nature, the blackest grime that ever came from the black heart of man! And now John is very careful when he strikes a blow, to hit completely. He has already smitten those who say they have no sin, and now he smites those who say they did not, at one time, have any—

10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

1 John 2:1-2

Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not.* He is anxious that they should not sin. He knows they do, and that if they say they do not, they lie. Still the Christian's objective is sinless perfection, and though he will never have it till he gets to heaven, that is all the better because he will always, then, be pressing forward and never reckoning that he has attained it!

1, 2. *And if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours, only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* By which is meant, not only that Jesus Christ died for Gentiles as well as Jews, and for some of all nations, but that there is that in the atonement of Christ which might be sufficient for every creature under heaven if God had so chosen every creature! The limitation lies not in the value of the atonement, itself, but in the design and intention of the eternal God. God sent His Son to lay down His life for His sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and especially for the elect. Yet at the same time the price offered was so precious—the blood was so infinite in value—that if every man that ever lived had to be redeemed, Christ could have done it. It is this that make us bold to preach the gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the atonement, though we also know that the design of it is only for the chosen people of God!

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THE TRULY BLESSED MAN
NO. 3270

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1911.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 13, 1864.

"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly; nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD: and in His law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:1-3.

IT is an old saying and possibly a true one that every man is seeking after happiness. If it is so, then every man should read this Psalm, for this directs us where happiness is to be found in its highest degree and purest form! "Blessed," says David, "is such and such a man," and the word which he uses is, in the original, exceedingly expressive. It implies a sort of plurality of blessedness—"Blessednesses are to the man" and it is scarcely known whether the word is an adjective or a noun, as if the blessedness qualified the whole of life and was, in itself, better even than life itself! The very highest degree of happiness is blessedness, "these blessednesses," as Ainsworth says, "heaped up, one upon the other." Surely this is the very highest to which the human heart can aspire! Let us then, this evening, come with attentive hearts to consider in the light of revelation, the character of the blessed man. We will begin by considering—

I. WHO THE "BLESSED MAN" IS.

The description given of him is simply this, that *he is a man*. There are moral qualities given, but the only thing said of him, in the first place, is that he is a man. Here is something very suggestive, for he is a person *subject to the common sorrows of humanity*. If we hear of a person greatly blessed by the sense of Christ's presence and so enabled to walk in holiness and much usefulness, we cherish the delusion that he must have been better than the ordinary run of men, certainly not such an one as ourselves! Ah, but how great is the mistake! God fashions all hearts alike and if there are distinctions, *they are of divine grace*, not of being

better by nature! The most blessed man is still a man. He must suffer pain, or pine in sickness, endure losses and crosses—and yet in it all be a blessed man!

Being a man, he is also *subject to infirmities*—perhaps of a quick temper, or of a high and haughty spirit. He may be tempted to sloth or a besetting sin of another kind. Still being a man he must have some infirmity and yet, none the less is he blessed. Do not dream that the best of men are yet without fault! They will confess to you that they have—

"To wrestle hard as we do still
With sins and doubts and fears."

More than this, it appears that *he has to endure the same temptations that we have*. "The way of sinners" often crosses his path. The "seat of the scornful" is sometimes next door to his own—or even under the same roof. He is not blind—he is obliged to see the dust which struts through the street. He is not deaf—he is forced to hear the lascivious song as it floats on the midnight air. He is subject to like passions and tempted in all points as we are, and yet he is blessed! Only a man, but much more than he would have been had not God blessed him!

Observe, too, he does not hold any eminent position. It is not, "Blessed is the king, blessed is the scholar, blessed is the rich," but, "Blessed is the man." This blessedness is as attainable by the poor, the forgotten and the obscure, as by those whose names figure in history and are trumpeted by fame! It is not to the hermit who lives alone, but to the workman toiling among his fellows. Not to the man who wears a surplice and assumes the exclusive title of, "priest"—but it comes to any man, or woman in fustian, or corduroy—who loves God and seeks to obey Him. His position has nothing to do with it. His character has everything to do with it! He is a man and nothing but a man, though divine grace makes him much more.

The Psalm reveals to us, too, that in order to secure his blessedness, *he is a man needing help*. He is likened to a tree. It must drink of the rivers of water and so this man must live upon divine grace. "His way" is said to be "known to the Lord," implying that God's approval of his way brings him strength. The best of men cannot live upon themselves. Our hearts are like the fire in the interpreter's house which the enemy tried to quench, but blazed the more because a man stood behind the wall and fed the flame from a vessel of oil in his hands. His is a secret and mysterious power—the work of the Holy Spirit—who "works in us to will and do of God's good pleasure." In ourselves we are as weak as we can be, and left to ourselves would soon fall into some sin.

There is in the Psalm, however, one word which truly describes this man, and that is that *he is a righteous man*! Observe the last verse—"The Lord knows the way of the righteous." The balance of this man's nature has been readjusted by the divine scale maker. He was once all out of gear—put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—but now his judgment is rectified and in spirit and character he is a righteous man. Once he was naked and defiled, but he has been washed in the fountain filled with blood and clothed with the righteousness of Christ, a garment glittering with gold and silver threads—and all by faith!

This is the description of the "blessed man," but still I beg you to remember he is only a man. Some such were born in the lowliest paths of life, educated in the most slender fashion, yet they have been among the finest witnesses and most heroic martyrs for their Lord. The brightest spirits that now wave the palm branch and strike the golden lyres most rapturously, were but sons and daughters of Adam, like ourselves. Ezekiel, privileged to see more visions, perhaps, than any other prophet, is constantly called "son of man," as if God would keep him humble, reminding him of the hole of the pit from where he was dug. However blessed you may get, my brothers and sisters, it is still only, "Blessed is the man." So I have tried to put the ladder down to you who are beginners in the heavenly life, to show you that there is not a long step to take at first. You are a man, and the text comes to you with, "Blessed is the man!" May it be true of all of us! Now, we get following on this—

II. WHAT THE "BLESSED MAN" AVOIDS.

There is, I believe, a book published which is entitled, *What to Eat, Drink and Avoid*. I should imagine the third section to be by far the largest portion, for there are a thousand things to be avoided. Now in this Psalm it appears that the divinely blessed man avoids *the common way of ungodly persons*. The ungodly are not necessarily drunks or swearers. These are ungodly, of course, but not all ungodly persons are like they. The ungodly are just your go easy sort of people. They may go to church or chapel, or go nowhere. They are often very respectable, good neighbors, kind to the poor. They may hold public office and enter Parliament. There is no place they may not fill, for it is not considered an offense among men to be "ungodly." The tragic folly and sin of these people is that they have neglected the chief thing to be remembered, namely, that there is a God, that they are His creatures and, being His creatures, ought to live to Him. But they give God no part of their lives and He is in none of their thoughts. They will think of their neighbors, remember their friends and acquaintances. The duties of the second

table of the law of God they observe in a measure, but the first table is despised as though it had never been written!

The blessed man, however, avoids this. He sees that God, who fills all things, ought to fill His thoughts and that the great end of his being should be "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." It is chiefly here that the godly man differs from others. He does not consider first how the world regards a thing but how God looks at it. If they ask, "Is it fashionable?" he replies, "the fashion of this world passes away." "But will you gain by it?" "Ah," he says, "that is not the measuring line I carry. I am content to lose, so that I can keep my word and serve God." The first thought of the truly blessed man is how he can best glorify the name of Christ and in so doing he avoids "the counsel of the ungodly."

In the next place he avoids "*the way of sinners*." Sinners live for pleasures. The Christian has his, but they would never please the worldling, nor would the worldling's gratify his new tastes. The sinner can do a thousand things which the saint cannot do and would not if he could—and the Christian can do a thousand things of which the sinner knows nothing. Let a thing be labeled, "sin," in God's book, and though men may laugh at it, call it a mere joke, a piece of fun, a peccadillo, the godly man accepts God's labeling of it and leaves the "way of sinners" let it be ever so smoothly turfed, and grassed ever so attractively.

The true Christian shuns "*the seat of the scornful*." It makes his blood boil when he hears God's name profaned. His heart is full of horror because of the wicked who obey not God's law. Though he is told to "prove all things," he knows that a very slight test is enough for some things and he puts them quickly aside to hold fast only that which is good. Some professors like to sit near the seat of the scornful, "for argument's sake," they say. 'Twas thus that mother Eve ruined the whole world, by listening to the serpent's suggestions—and much mischief has been done in a similar way since then to Christian faith and simplicity! Ah, the further I can get from the scorner's seat, the better, and there let him sit alone! Away! Away! Away, for behold the day comes when like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the profane shall go down alive into the pit! Happy is the man who shall escape that horror by keeping far, far away. These are some of the things the truly "blessed man" avoids—and the more he avoids them, the more blessed he is!

Once more, he avoids *the very persons of sinners* except as far as he has to deal with them in civil matters and the common courtesies and duties of life. They are not his bosom friends—he would never dream of being unequally yoked with them in marriage! He shuns their company all he can, for his congenial associates are elsewhere. Their ways,

example, words, he avoids. As he would keep from plague infected places and people, so he strives to keep aloof from men who blaspheme, lest their profanity should taint and defile him. "Father," said a young fellow, "I can go into such and such company and not be hurt." The father stooped down to the fireplace and picked up a piece of coal. "There," said he to his son "take that in your hands." The son shrank from the black cinder. "Why," said the father, "it will not burn you!" "No! but it will blacken me," he replied. Ah, bad company can blacken even where it does not burn, so stay away from it! You can never retain this blessedness unless, like the man described here, you walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, you stand not in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. And now for the third truth of God here insisted on—

III. WHEREIN THE "BLESSED MAN" DELIGHTS.

"His delight is in the law of the Lord." Man must have some delight, some supreme pleasure. His heart was never meant to be a vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing. As we remarked the other night when our text was, "Then the devil left Him and, behold, angels come and ministered unto Him"—man cannot be alone, for if evil departs, [See Sermon #2236, Volume 37—PRODIGAL LOVE FOR THE PRODIGAL SON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] good will come—but if good is driven away, evil will come. If you do not fill the measure with wheat, the archenemy will fill it with chaff. If the river flows not with sparkling sweet water, it will soon reek with pestilent discharge! Take care to have something worthy to delight in! I do not know how those people go through the world who never have any sort of pure excitement, but always go moping about from the first of January to the last of December. Life must be a sorry drag to them. The sparkling eyes and the smiling face are the things God meant men to have, and they do not realize life's full beauty unless at times they possess them. Why, the Christian, above all men, should have what the world calls his, "holidays and bonfire nights"—his days of rejoicing, times of holy laughter, seasons of overflowing delight. No! I think he should strive to always have them, for we are told, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." If we take our religion as men do medicine, it is of little good to us. Some folks go to the house of God as you might suppose criminals would go be the whipping post. But I like to see people come up to the house of God with cheerful willingness, like children going home, or like those who are bound for the place—

"Where my best friends and kindred dwell,

Where God my Savior reigns!"

The true Christian has his holy delights and chief among them is his reveling in the law of the Lord, the Word of God. Of course, David had not a fourth of what we possess—it was a very little Bible, then—but it has gone on increasing like a majestic river, until it is the wondrous volume we have! We, therefore, should take ten times more delight in it than the Psalmist did. Why do Christians delight in it? Because it is God's law! *Anything* belonging to God should delight the believer! A child far from home is intensely pleased with anything that his father gave him. A letter from home is a welcome and joyous thing. Here is a letter from home telling us of our Father's grace and permitting us to read the precious secrets of His heart of love for us. We delight in it *because it comes with divine authority to us* and so brings confidence and joy to our hearts!

The other day I was reading a book in which six reasons were given why the Christian delights in God's law. First, *because of its antiquity*. Many people delight in old coins. Some will go down to the Thames and buy pieces of old iron that are rusty, under the idea that they are antiques—which they may or may not be. Ah, there is nothing so old as this book! The first writings of Hesiod fall short at least 500 years of the writings of Moses, so that that part of the blessed volume has divine antiquity about it, and is radiant with divine inspiration. Let us always delight in it!

We delight in it *because of the justice of it*. There is a law revealed in it, if perfectly carried out, no man would hurt his neighbor, but love him as he loves himself! No rank or class would press heavily upon another and each would remember, consider, try to bless the other. It is made as no human law can be made, and every person yielding to it feels it in his conscience to be just.

We prize the book, too, *because of its lofty wisdom*. There is more wisdom for the life here than anywhere else. We do not come here for astronomy, or geology, but we come here for the highest of all wisdom—the science of God—for, though Pope says—

"The proper study of mankind is man,"

we beg his pardon! A yet more proper study of mankind is God and here, in this book of God, we learn of His love to us in the person of Christ Jesus and grasp the science—heavenliest wisdom—of a crucified Redeemer!

We delight in the book, also, *because it is true*. Fiction may be read or not, as men's tastes may direct, but it is of infinite value to have a book

in which every word stands fast, when like a dream, heaven and earth shall have melted away.

Again, we delight in it because *it is pleasant*. There are sweetnesses in it better than the honey droppings from the honeycomb. When we read it, it makes the godly heart to beat at a high and glorious rate and sometimes takes him on the wings of eagles bearing him to a loftier Pisgah than Moses ever stood upon, and so helping him to see the land on the further side of Jordan—his eternal rest and heritage!

Lastly, the Christian delights in "the law of the Lord," *because it is profitable*. This book enriches with the best of wealth and stored up treasures for all eternity! Now gathering up all these reasons I want to earnestly ask each one of us here, "Do you delight in this book?" Not, do you read it—but do you read it with delight? To go to it dragged there by duty, is miserably to miss its best messages and is no evidence of true godliness. To put a sentence of it under the tongue as a sweet morsel, to grow healthy upon it when you are sick, rich upon it when poor—this is one of the truest tests of being a "blessed man"—but if you do not enjoy this, God help you to begin at the foundation! Repent of sin, seek the Savior, or otherwise where God is you can never go!

But I must hasten on to ask—

IV. WHAT OCCUPIES THE "BLESSED MAN'S" TIME?

"In His law he does meditate day and night." By day he gets little intervals of time to read it, so he steals from his nightly rest, moments in which to meditate upon it. Reading reaps the wheat, meditation threshes it, grinds it and makes it into bread. Reading is like the ox feeding—meditation is it digesting when chewing the cud. It is not only reading that does us good, but the soul inwardly feeding on it and digesting it. A preacher once told me that he had read the Bible through 20 times on his knees and had never found the doctrine of election there. Very likely not. It is a most uncomfortable position in which to read. If he had sat in an easy chair, he would have been better able to understand it. To read on one's knees is like a Popish penance! Besides, he read in the wrong way—if instead of 20 times galloping through, he had read once and pondered continually—he probably would have seen clearer than he evidently did.

It is said of some horses that they "bolt their oats." This good brother was "bolting" Holy Scripture, and so getting little nutriment out of it! The inward meditation is the thing that makes the soul rich towards God. This is the godly man's occupation. Put the spice into the mortar by reading, beat it with the pestle of meditation—so shall the sweet perfume be exhaled.

May I ask whether there are not some here who do not meditate on God's word at all? If so, then this solemn thought will seize us—if you have not the blessedness of God's word, you must inherit its curse! Let us see to it and now, beginning at the cross of Jesus Christ, study the mystery of His wounds for our sin, and then go on afterward to meditate in His law day and night.

This brings us now to the very center of the Psalm's teaching.

V. WHEREIN IS THIS MAN SO DIVINELY "BLESSED"?

Very briefly on each point. He is blessed first of all, *for life*. "He shall be like a tree." Not a dry, dead, sapless pole. His life is such that unregenerate men are strangers to it. He has been begotten again unto a living hope. The sap of God's grace is in him—he is united to Christ, his root—and because He lives and lives in him, he lives also. He has *stability*. The tree planted, well rooted in the ground. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind drives away, but the Christian's life is stable. "Solid joys and lasting pleasures" are his portion. He has, too, the *gladness of growth*. The tree remains not the sapling, but grows upward, downward, abroad, spreading its branches. So the godly man is always learning more of his heavenly Father and endeavoring to be more conformed to the image of his Lord. He has the blessing, too, of *favored position*. Planted by God, Himself—not self-sown or the foundling of the wind. If he is a servant, he believes God has put him where he should be. Poor or rich, he learns to be content for he is a tree divinely planted. He is *well sustained*. Whatever is really good for him, God has pledged Himself to give. Not a tree in the desert, but placed where the water comes rippling to his roots. He hears his Master say, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

He has yet again, *beauty in God's sight*. Beauty of an unfading kind—"his leaf, also, shall not wither." When personal beauty decays by reason of old age, and beauty of wit and learning are assailed by approaching death, still he shall be fair, in the likeness of his Master, as a young olive tree, and grow as a cedar in the court of his God! And to crown all, he has *constant prosperity*. "Whatever he does shall prosper." He may not grow rich, but he still prospers. His ships may be broken at El-Geber, but he can thank God even for that, for their breaking may help him to heavenly grace through his very tribulations—so he is content to lose his possessions if his soul is made wealthy in faith and love and sweet submission to God's will. This metaphor of the flourishing tree is a very beautiful one. See it there, always green, loaded with fruit, standing where it can never know drought. If God has taught us to delight in His law, that is our true picture and portrait. Is it ours?

But to close, here we are made to ask—

VI. WHO IS THIS BLESSED MAN'S GUARDIAN? There must be somebody who takes care of him, or he could not be so blessed as he is. Ah, "The Lord knows the way of the righteous." If you are resting in Christ for salvation, the Lord knows your way. The minister knows nothing of your trials—you half wish you might dare tell him so that he might guide and comfort. But if he knows not, the Lord knows all your way. Are you sorely depressed? Do waves of grief roll over your soul? Well, pour out your heart to God, for He knows, and knows how to help! If the Lord did not look after us in our best days, we would perish by the sunstroke of too much prosperity! And if He did not watch us in our worst days, we should be frost killed by the cruel arctic winds of adversity!

But says one, "How may I begin this way?" "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and this is the fear of the Lord—to trust your soul in the hands of God's appointed Savior and know you are safe! Say from your very heart—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You.
O Lamb of God, I come!"

If your very soul sings that, you are on the road to true blessedness and all that is in this Psalm shall be yours in life, in death and throughout eternity! May God bless you thus, for Jesus' sake. Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32.

"*A Psalm of David, Maschil*," that is to say, an instructive Psalm. I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience—either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

Verses 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Twice he says "blessed." He had felt the weight of sin. He had been sorely troubled. And now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die," he counts himself doubly blessed—blessed not the man who has never sinned, blessed is he who having sinned, is forgiven—not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered. Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew it sounds very much alike,

the sacred *kopher*, the cover which covers sin so that it is hidden even from the eyes of God, Himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man who knows that divine covering! "Blessed," says he, "is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." All along after David's sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile! You know the dodges that he had to cover up his sin—he tried to play some of his tricks on God, Himself, but he felt it was a mischievous thing to do—he was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned, he remained insensible for nine months until he received the divine rebuke, but it was not so. He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy and he was trying this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it! So he sought to make a clean breast of it and confess it before God—giving up his crooked ways and his ideas of excusing himself. And when he had done that—when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too—then he got the double blessing! "Blessed, blessed!" If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up! I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ and the free grace of God. The two things go together, guilt and guile—the two things go out of us together—when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed! Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin and yet was not right with God.

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* A wanton glance, the sin with Bathsheba—where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? Such groaning that his very bones got old as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die!

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.* God was pressing him heavily with His hand, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, "My sin is always before me." Oh, the misery of sinning to a child of God! Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin—the worldling may, but the believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper that will fill his veins with burning poison!

4. *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* When he tried to pray, it was a dried up prayer. He tried to make a Psalm but it was a dried up song. He tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God! His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer in David's country was a very droughty thing, indeed! Every human thing despaired. The grass seemed to turn to dust—it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God,

you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up and you will be like a parched, withered thing. "Selah." It was time to have a pause in the music, he was on so base a key, he had need now to tighten the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* He must come to confession—full, spontaneous, unreserved—there must be a resolution! "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD"—a firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin yourself and to tell the Lord that you see it—and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is, "I said I will confess and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." God took away the sin! Yes, the very pith and marrow of it—"the iniquity of my sin"—taking the bone away and the marrow of the bone, too. "You forgave the iniquity of my sin"—it has all gone, wholly gone! By one stroke of God's divine grace, the sinner was pardoned! "Selah"—again.

6. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* For this (because of this), and for this blessing, "shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found." The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of His mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when You may be found. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him." The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David's country—the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected. And here he says that when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God's people shall be saved. They shall come, but they shall not come near unto them. Let me read those words again. If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, He that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him."

7. *You are my hiding place.* Precious words! "You are my hiding place." Not, "You are *a* hiding place," but "You are *my* hiding place." A man who is beset by foes does not stand still and say, "Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there," but he runs to it! Beloved, run to your hiding place this evening! Each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ, run to Him now, and say—

7. *You shall preserve me from trouble, You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* David has come up to us out of the roaring to the singing! All daylong he roars, and now all daylong he sings! He sees songs everywhere! He lives in a circle of music, his heart is so glad. Well may he put another "Selah," for he has smitten the strings very joyfully and they again need tuning!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* Here the speaker is changed. "I will instruct you." "I have forgiven you." "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go." "I have prayed you back to the way, now I will teach you in the way you shall go." "I will guide you with My eyes"—your own might lead you astray. "I will guide you with My eyes." I will be on the path. I will fix My eyes upon you. "I will guide you with My eyes"

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* "Be you not as the horse," not only David, but all of you! If God will guide you, be guided. If He will teach you, be teachable. If He will be gracious to you, be gracious towards Him!

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." David had found that out—his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery! He shall have a bodyguard of mercy, God will be gracious to him, tender to him and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous." Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. "Be glad in the Lord." You may always be glad in Him! Here is an unchanging source of joy. "Rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy." Here, the man that was silent has now gone as far as shouting. Is it not enough to make him so? Twice he was blessed in the first and second verses—and now, he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been compassed about with mercy! Why, he must be glad! "Shout for joy all you that are upright in heart." God bless you in the reading of His word.

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GOD, THE CHILDREN'S TEACHER
NO. 3271

A SERMON TO CHILDREN.
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1911— THE DAY OF SPECIAL PRAYER FOR SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND OTHER WORK AMONG CHILDREN,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 2,1869.

"O God, You have taught me from my youth."
Psalm 71:17.

[SPECIAL NOTE TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, PARENTS, ETC. Mr. Spurgeon seldom preached especially to children—his sermons are all so simple that boys and girls as well as the common people heard him gladly and understood his words easily. The accompanying discourse is one of the very few delivered to a congregation of young people by the beloved preacher who has been for nearly 20 years at home with the Lord. It was preached at the Tabernacle during a series of special services in March, 1869—and it is now published in the regular weekly series at the time of special prayer for the children and young people in Sunday schools, Bible classes, Christian Endeavor Societies, etc., in the hope that all who are interested in the spiritual welfare of the young will aid in its widespread circulation among them.]

DAVID was a very great man and at the time he used these words he ruled a kingdom and wore a crown. But he needed to be taught and he tells us that he had been to school and that the wisdom he had was given to him by the great teacher who taught in that school. You who are at school now must take care that you use well the privilege you have. You will not be wise without learning. Learning does not grow up in our heart like weeds do in the fields, but it must be sown in us—as good wheat and barley must be cast into the ground if there is ever to be a harvest.

David did well in life because he had been well taught in his youth. He was one of those in whom God fulfilled that text, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." You know when boys go to school, their teacher feels very anxious that they should turn out well and be a credit to him. The teacher is very sorry when, after all his trouble, the boy becomes a dunce. But he is very happy when he sees some lad prosper in life because he says, "I trained that boy." The success of the scholar brings honor and credit to the teacher. So David speaks of God having taught him in order that he may give honor and glory to God. David feels that he owes so much to his God that he cannot help saying what he does. "Lord," he seems to say, "if I have learned anything—if I have learned how to fight giant Goliath, if I

have learned how to bear my troubles, if I have learned how to pray, if I have learned how to preach and how to be a king—I got it all from You. I was the scholar, you were the teacher, and unto Your name be all the praise." Now, I shall not keep on any longer with the preface to my sermon. It is a cold, damp night and people do not like to be kept outside the doors at such a time. We will just put our finger on the latch and get to the inside of our sermon at once.

I. As soon as we come into it, the first thing we see is THE GREAT TEACHER. Who is the teacher? David says, "You have taught me from my youth." Who taught David?

THE CHILDREN: God!

Mr. SPURGEON: Yes, that is right, God was David's teacher. He says in the text, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." I have no doubt that David had other teachers, but all the teachers he had would not have been of any practical use to him if he had not also been taught by God.

Now, if God is the teacher, we shall notice, first, that *God is an effective teacher.* David had been taught by his good mother. I know he had a godly mother, for he says, "Lord, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid." He calls his mother, God's handmaid, which shows that she was one of God's servants. I have no doubt that she took David on her knee and taught him God's word while he was but a child, for he had such a love of it afterwards that he must have had a love of it while he was yet little! After his mother, I have no doubt his father taught him. What was the name of David's father?

THE CHILDREN: Jesse!

Mr. SPURGEON: Quite right. And we believe that Jesse was also one of God's people and that he would have been sure to teach his son wisely and train him up in the way he should go. I think there was another person who taught David, namely, the Prophet Samuel. You recollect that Samuel anointed David while he was yet a youth. He poured oil on his head and told him that he would one day be a king of God's people. I feel sure that Samuel told him what God's will was and tried to train him so that he might, when he became a king, do God's good pleasure rightly. But all these teachers—his mother, his father and the prophet—could not have taught David if God had not taught him, too. You see, dear children, your teachers, though they are very good and kind, can only get at your ears—but God gets at the heart—and that is where we most need to be taught. Suppose my watch should get out of order so that it would not run and I could not get it open? All I could do in polishing up the gold outside, or cleaning the glass, would not make it run! I must take it to some watchmaker who could get at the inside and who could touch the mainspring, or clean out the wheels. Now, your teachers cannot get at that which is inside of you as they could wish, unless God helps them. But God can get at the heart, which is like the mainspring of the watch. He can get at our thoughts and feelings, which are like the wheels. I trust that you, my dear children, may be taught of God from your youth because God is an effectual teacher!

The next point is that *God is a condescending teacher.* Have you ever thought of this? The great God made yonder blue sky, the sun and the moon, and all those bright stars that we see at night. He piled up the big mountains and poured out the great seas and oceans from the hollow of His hands and He is so great that all the things in this world are just like nothing when compared to Him—and yet He stoops to teach children! He stooped to teach David. David says, "You have taught me from my youth." Would not some of you girls like to go to school if the Queen would but teach a class? I am sure that nearly all the young ladies and all the little girls in London would be tearing away to the place if the Queen would but teach a class! You would think it such a great honor to be taught by Her Majesty. Oh, but when God teaches, what a wonderful stoop of condescending love that is! He who made the world and bears all things up by His everlasting might, condescends to be a teacher of little children! "You have taught me from my youth." Perhaps you have heard of that holy man, Mr. John Eliot. He went away from all his home comforts, out among the red Indians, and spent his life in preaching to them. And when he was sick and near to death, he was lying in a hut upon a hard couch—and what do you think was the last thing he did? He had a New Testament and he was teaching a little red Indian boy his A B C, and making him spell out some simple text from God's holy word. "Oh, but," one said, "does this great missionary teach that little red faced, copper colored boy?" "Yes," replied Eliot, "I prayed to God that I might never live to be useless. So now I cannot preach, I am trying to teach Jesus Christ to this one little boy." That was very kind of him, but think of the kindness of the great God who wheels the stars along and calls them all by their names—that He should condescend to teach *us!* Dear Children, do not refuse to be taught by God! But on the contrary, let this be your resolve, "My Father, You shall be the guide of my youth." Ask the Lord to teach you, for as surely as He taught David, He is willing to teach you!

My next remark is that *God is a loving teacher.* I know you boys and girls in the Sunday school classes like to have a smiling faced teacher. You do not care to have one who is very cross and short tempered with you and inclined to give you a box on the ear! You like somebody who is very kind. I cannot tell you how kind God is to us, how patient, how compassionate, how tender. A good mother was telling her little girl a lesson over ever so many times—I think it was 19 or 20 times—and someone said, "How can you have the patience to tell the child the same thing 20 times?" "Why," she replied, "I tell her 20 times because 19 are not sufficient." Now, our God not only tells us 20 times, but twenty thousand times if necessary! "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." From our very earliest childhood, right on, God keeps teaching us with great patience, and yet some of us are so wicked or so thoughtless that we forget what He teaches us almost as soon as we hear it! And we go on to do the wrong thing which He tells us not to do, and we forget to do the right thing which He bids us do. Yet He does not strike us dead!

He still continues preaching to us, teaching us on the Sabbath and on the weekdays by His book, and by His Spirit, and by His ministers, and by our teachers, and in a thousand ways! Oh, what a kind and patient teacher the Lord our God is! But I must not keep you long on any one point.

The next truth is that *God is a wise teacher.* Have you ever thought what a wise teacher God is? I will prove to you that He is very wise, for, do you know He teaches not only men, but He can teach beasts? Did you ever see a beaver? Perhaps you did at the Zoological Gardens. Well, those beavers have flat tails and they know how to use them just like bricklayers use their trowels! And they will go and nibble away at trees, get bits of wood and go down to a river and build a house! Nobody could build such a house, so fit for beavers, as they build! They daub it, and plaster it—you would think that they had been apprenticed to be a plasterer, they do the work so well! Who taught the beavers to build a house? Why, God! And how wise He must be to teach even the animals He has created! How wise He must be to teach the beaver to build a house! But God not only teaches beasts, He also teaches fish—and I never heard of any man who could teach a fish as God does! The fishes of the sea know exactly the day of the month when they ought to begin to go round the English coast. And the herring and the mackerel come exactly to the time, though nobody rings the bell to say to them, "It is such a day of the week, and such a month of the year and you ought to swim away." When the time comes for them to go back again, away they go—and they seem to understand everything that they should do! If God can teach even the fish of the sea, what a wise teacher He must be!

It is said that many years ago, there was a very wise man who lived at Cambridge and he taught scholars Latin and Greek, and many things that seemed very strange to the people who lived there. And the news flew abroad that there was a wonderful man there who knew everything—a little about the stars and a great deal about all sorts of things! The young men all over Europe began to flock to him and that is how there came to be a University at Cambridge, for the fame of the man's learning drew those who wanted to be taught, to come and be his pupils. Now, when God can teach even the beasts and the fishes, you boys and girls and grownup people, too, ought to say, "Lord, let us be scholars in Your school!" Why, my dear friend over here, Mr. Johnson, is such a good teacher that the boys come and fill the schoolhouse! If he were a bad teacher, he would not have half the number of boys that he has. A good teacher is sure to draw pupils—and God is the best and wisest teacher. Oh, may His grace draw you to His school, that you may be able to say with David, "You have taught me from my youth"!

I have only one more point to speak upon under this head, so do not grow weary. *God is a necessary teacher.* It is really necessary that every one of us should be taught of God, for if we are not, somebody else will teach us—and that somebody else will so teach us that we shall lose our souls forever! There was a sad sight seen some years ago, I daresay the likes of it have been seen far too often. A minister called at a house and he saw a woman crying, oh, so bitterly, and she refused to be comforted!

The minister said, "My good woman, what is the matter?" She answered, "Oh, my boy, my boy, my boy!" "What, is he ill?" "Oh, no, sir, worse than that!" "Is he dead?" "Worse than that." "What is the matter?" "Oh, my boy, my boy!" "Where is he?" "Oh, sir, he is in prison—in prison for stealing—and it is all my fault!" "How is that?" he asked. "Why, I took him to the theater, and if there is any place where children can learn to do wrong, it is there!" And so she began to cry again. "I took him there and that was the first step in his ruin! And now my boy is lost." Ah, if you do not go to God to teach you, the devil will teach you! Do you know the devil has plenty of teachers? I see them on Sunday—I mean bad boys and bad girls who teach other boys and girls to do wrong—the devil can make a Sunday school teacher out of a very small boy! "Come," he says, "I'll teach you." And he teaches that boy to say bad words and to do wrong things - and then away the boy goes and teaches others! A bad boy is like a sheep that comes into the flock with a disease in it and the disease goes from one sheep to another --

"One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest."

But if we have God for our teacher, we shall not be taught to sin, but we shall be taught everything that is good.

II. But now we are going on to the second head and that is, THE LESSONS WHICH THE GREAT TEACHER TAUGHT DAVID.

One of the lessons which God taught David was to *value his soul.* We all need to be taught that lesson. We generally value our bodies and take care of them and, up to a certain point, that is right. Some of us like to look into the mirror, for we think we are rather pretty. But there is danger in that mirror as well as in others. I like to see the boys well washed and clean, and I am pleased when they keep themselves tidy. And though I do not like to see girls dressed very finely, yet it is very nice to see them neat and trim. But, after all, you know the body is only like the shell of the nut—the inside is the nut itself. It is the soul hat is the thing we ought to care about. Some time ago there was a great fire. What a noise there was in the street! Here come the engines! People are gathering together all round the house and there is a woman shouting and crying, "Oh," she says, "come and help me! Do come and help me! I want to save some of my things." She gets a bed downstairs, she brings out a box, she has secured some little trinkets and jewelry and she gets everything that she can out of the fire, and then says to herself, "Dear me, am I not fortunate in having saved so much?" The fire is burning, the house is crackling, everything is being consumed and all of a sudden the woman starts up and says, "Oh, dear! Where's my child?" The neighbors cry, "What? Did you not think of your child first?" "Oh," she replied, "what a foolish woman I've been! I have saved these paltry things and forgotten my child, my precious child!" That is like a person who cares only for his body—what he shall eat, what he shall drink, what he shall put on, and then at last, when he comes to die, he says, "Oh, dear! I have forgotten my soul and now my soul must be cast away forever into the everlasting burning that never shall be quenched." Dear children, I hope God will teach every one of you in the Sunday school to look after

the welfare of your soul and to remember that if you were to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul, all the gain would be an eternal loss!

The next lesson that God taught David was to *value the world aright.* David, I am sure, valued the world aright because he says, "There are many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift You up the light of Your countenance upon us!" And he says again, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." Young people generally think of this world. I will tell you a story and ask you a question. There was a little boy carrying a basket of peaches and he had to cross a railway. Just as he crossed it, the train came up and went right over him and crushed him to atoms. A little girl heard that story, and I do not think you could guess what question she asked, because it was such a silly question that you never would guess it, I think. Her mother said the dear little boy was all crushed to pieces by the train going over him, but the little girl was silly enough to say, "Mother, what became of the peaches?" Was not that a foolish question to ask? Now, when I hear of people dying, and I often do hear of persons who have been living without God and without Christ, and they have been said to be "worth" perhaps £20,000, or £50,000, what silly question do you think I hear people ask? They say, "How much money did he leave?" As if that was of any consequence at all compared with the other question, "What has become of his soul? Where is his immortal spirit?" The little basket of peaches that the child carried was nothing compared with the boy, himself, and all that you can ever gain in this world is nothing compared with your own self, your own real self—your soul! So I hope you will be taught by God's grace to put the world in its right place and look at it as being *nothing* compared with the saving of your soul!

Another thing that David was taught of God was *to see his sin.* I know that, in your classes, you have read the 51st Psalm. How much David talks about his sin in that Psalm! He says, "My sin is always before me." This is one of the lessons that every boy and every girl here must learn if they would enter heaven. You must learn that you are a sinner and learn it so that it makes you mourn and cry out before God. I saw, last week, in the West End of London, two soldiers, with bayonets fixed, one walking on one side of a soldier, and the other on the other side of him. And the man who was walking in the middle had a coat over his hands. I knew what that meant—he had handcuffs on his wrists. He had been deserting and he had his hands chained together, but he did not want the people to know it and, therefore, he had asked his comrades to be kind enough just to throw a cloak over his hands so that he might not look as though he was chained. I do not blame him for that. But, you know, the devil—though men are all chained by nature and are, all of them, slaves—puts something over them so that they cannot see their chains and they walk on believing that they are free, whereas they are in the worst possible bondage! One of the best lessons you can learn is to find out that you are a slave and that you need someone to set you free! To find out that your soul is sick and needs to be healed! Oh, may God's Spirit teach you that—and teach it to you in your youth!

But, better still, the next lesson that God taught David was, *where the remedy was for all his sins.* If you read the 51st Psalm, you can hear him say, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." David knew that the blood of Jesus Christ could take away his sin. I have heard, but I do not know whether it is true, that a little creature called the ichneumon, which lives in Egypt, lives by killing and eating snakes. It is a very useful little creature, for it destroys many things that would be deadly to men. But sometimes these snakes bite the ichneumon and he would die, but the story goes that there is a kind of grass growing near the river which heals snakebites—and as soon as ever the ichneumon gets bitten and feels the poison—he runs away to this little herb and nibbles at it, and gets healed directly. Whether it is true or not, you and I have been bitten by the old serpent, Satan, and there is "the plant of renown," the Lord Jesus Christ—and if we go and feed upon Him, all the wounds that sins can make will soon be healed!

Well, these were very good lessons to be learned by David. Let me remind you what they were. God taught him to value his soul, to value the world aright, to see his sin and to see the remedy for it. Another thing David learned was to live as in God's sight. How wonderfully David talks, in various parts of the Psalms, about God seeing him! When I was a boy, about the size of many of these boys that I see before me here, my father made me learn that long Psalm, the 139th in which Dr. Watts puts thus the great truth of God that God is everywhere and can see everyone—

If mounted on a morning ray
I fly beyond the Western sea,
Your swifter hand would first arrive,
And there arrest your fugitive.
Or should I try to shun Your sight
Beneath the spreading veil of light,
One glance of time, one piercing ray,
Would kindle darkness into day.
The veil of night is no disguise,
No screen from Your all searching eyes;
Your hand can seize Your foes as soon
Through midnight shades as blazing noon.
O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Wherever I rove, wherever I rest!
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there."

One other lesson David learned was this, *he learned to prepare to die.* This is one of the grandest lessons that any man can ever learn for, you know, we must all die. There was a great king who was a great warrior as well as a king. His name was Saladin and when he was very ill in his tent, he said to his generals who gathered round him, "Go and fetch the crescent banner around which my warriors have always rallied in the day of battle." So they brought it in, on a long lance, and they unfurled the colors right before him. And the dying man said, "Take off the colors, and look, there is the shroud that I have had prepared to wrap me in when I am dead. Now, put the shroud on the lance instead of the colors." And they did so. These were the last words he uttered, "Go and take that shroud on the lance, and go through every street of the city and cry

aloud, 'This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin! This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin!'" And this is what will be said of all of us, "This is all that remains of that fair girl with the beautiful hair!" "This is all that remains of that dear boy who was once so full of mirth and laughter!" "This is all that remains of that gray headed man, so wise and learned!" "This is all that remains of the merchant with all his wealth!" Or, "This is all that remains of the preacher with all his speech." Oh, to be ready, thoroughly ready, whenever the summons shall come for us to leave this world behind us and go to the better land!

III. Now the third head is about WHEN THE SCHOLAR WENT TO SCHOOL. I hope none of these boys who go to school ever go too late. "Dilly, dilly dollar," don't they say? "Ten o'clock scholar." He is always a bad scholar who comes in late. Those who go to God's school are never very good scholars if they go too late. When did David go to God's school, according to the text?

THE CHILDREN: "In his youth!"

Mr. SPURGEON: That is right—in his youth. He says, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." He went to school in his early days and that is one of the reasons why he turned out so good a scholar, because he went to school early. Why should we go to God's school early? I think we ought to do so, first, because it is such a happy school. Schools used to be very miserable places, but nowadays, I really wish I could go to school again. I went into the Borough Road School the other day, into the Repository where they sell slates, pencils, books and all such things. The person who was there said to me, "Do you want to buy any of these things?" I said, "What are they?" He opened a box, and I said, "Why, they are toys, are they not?" He answered, "No, they are not. They are used for the lessons that are taught in the kindergarten school." I said, "Why, if I were to take them home, my boys would have a game with them, for they are only toys!" "Just so," he said, "but they are what are used in the kindergarten school to make learning the same as playing, so that little children should play while they are learning." Why, I thought, if that were so, I would like to go at once! Now, those who go to God's school are made much happier than any toys can make children! He gives them real pleasure. There is a verse, I don't know how many of you know it. I will say the first line, you say the second, if you can.

Mr. SPURGEON: "'Tis religion that can give"

The CHILDREN: "Sweetest pleasures while we live!"

Mr. SPURGEON: "'Tis religion must supply"

The CHILDREN: "Solid comfort when we die!"

Another reason why boys and girls should try to get to God's school very early is *because they will not have so much to be sorry for afterwards.* Two or three times during the last fortnight I have heard good men pray in the Tabernacle, and each one has said something like this, "O God, save my dear children! Grant that they may never go into sin as I did, that they may never have so much to repent of and to weep over as I had!" That was the father of some boy here, I expect. And oh, I know if he were here tonight, he would say, "Dear boy, dear girl, do not go into sins which will afterwards cause you to weep." This story will

show you what I mean. A boy's father once said to him, "Now, John, I will tell you what I am going to do to make you look at yourself a little. Every time you do wrong, I am going to drive a nail into that post—and every time you do right, and are a good boy, I shall draw one out." "Well," John thought, "I will not have any nails in that post if I can help it." But they did get in somehow—boys will be boys and girls will be girls—and there were a lot of nails in the post! And the boy felt very sorry as he saw them, for they seemed to speak to him, and to say, "You disobeyed your father that day. You disobeyed your mother another day," and he thought he would be a good boy. So he tried with all his might and got half the nails out—and after a while, he got every nail out of the post. And what do you think he said, then? His father said to him, "You have got all the nails out, John." "Yes, Father," he said, "but there are the holes still there. There are the holes still there." Now when God's grace comes to a man who has led a wicked life from his boyhood, it pardons him and takes the nails out. "Ah," he says, "but there are the holes still there! I remember the sins I did and they have done me serious hurt, though God has forgiven me." One good man said, "I never shall forgive myself, to think that I lived so long without serving God." Get then, dear children, to God's school early, that you may not have the holes in the post, nor have so much to be sorry for in your later life!

Another reason why I would have boys and girls go to God's school early is *because it will make them most useful.* A man cannot be very greatly useful who has only the end of his life to use for God. The tree that has been transplanted very lately cannot be expected to bear much fruit. But a tree that was put into the soil when but a cutting and that has continued to grow there, year after year, is more likely to become a good fruit bearing tree.

One other reason why I would have you go to God's school soon is that *you will die soon.* Even if you live long, life will be very short. Oh, that God's mercy would take you into God's school now, even tonight, that you may be able to say with David, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." Let this be your cry—

"Soon as my youthful lips can speak
Their feeble prayer to Thee,
O let my heart Your favor seek;
Good Lord, remember me!"

IV. Now the last thing and this is the most important of all tonight, and it will not take many minutes to tell you about it. The last thing is this. David said, "God, You have taught me from my youth." But David is now dead. I wonder whether there are some here tonight who can say the same as he did? I hope there are many. So the last head is, THE SCHOLAR—WHERE IS HE? THE SCHOLAR—WHERE IS SHE?

Pass those questions all-round the building and I hope there are many who will be able to say, "O God, You have taught me"—Mary, Jane, Thomas, William—"You have taught me from my youth." I do not suppose you could make much of a speech tonight if you were on this platform, but do you know, if I could have my choice between being able to speak as well as Mr. Gladstone, who spoke so grandly last night, or

only be able to say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth"—if I could only have one of the two—I would certainly choose the latter! There is more music in that sentence than in all the eloquence of the greatest orator!

I shall now ask a question or two, and then I shall have done. All the children here believe that when we have gone from this life, we shall go into another world. And you are all hoping, I am sure, that when you die, you will go to that happy land of which we sometimes sing—

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day!
Oh, how they sweetly sing,
Worthy is our Savior King,
Loud let His praises ring,
Praise, praise forever!
Come to this happy land,
Come, come away—
Why will you doubting stand?
Why still delay?
Oh, we shall happy be
When from sin and sorrow free
Lord, we shall live with Thee,
Blest, blest forever!
Bright in that happy land
Beams every eye!
Kept by a Father's hand,
Love cannot die.
On then to glory run,
Be a crown, and kingdom, won—
And bright above the sun,
Reign, reign forever."

May we have that crown and kingdom! That is what we are looking for. A little girl came home one Sunday and asked her mother a question. Little boys and girls will sometimes ask questions which cannot be very easily answered. She said, "Mother, do you believe what teacher told me today?" "What's that, dear?" "Why, she said that we are only going to stay in this world for a little while, and that we are going to another world. Do you believe it, Mother?" "Oh, yes, my dear, of course I do—the Bible says so!" "Then, Mother, you know aunt Eliza is going to Australia?" "Yes, what about that?" "She is getting ready, is she not?" "Yes, she is packing up her trunks and getting ready." "Then, Mother, if you are going into another world, why don't you get ready, too?" A very proper question for a child to put, and a very proper question for me to put to you here! If you are going to another world, dear children, may God's Holy Spirit help you to get ready to go!

Dear children, I hope you will be scholars who will learn that *the next world is the one for us to look for.*

This world is but a very poor thing at the best. A great man, a very rich man and a mighty emperor, invited a friend of his youth to come and stay with him. And this friend, when he entered into the palace, was quite dazzled by the marble, ivory, gold, silver and gems on every side,

and he said to the great man, "How happy you must be with all this wealth! I never saw such a palace, nor such servants in livery, nor such gardens!" "Ah," said the other, "I will, one of these evenings, tell you what I think of all I have." So, one evening, a servant brought to this gentleman, on a golden dish, an apple so lovely that it seemed as if such an apple never grew! It was, as we sometimes say, like wax, perfect. He took it off the golden dish but put it back again, and the servant took a knife and cut it down the middle—and inside it was full of black dust and a great worm dropped out of it! The emperor said nothing, but looked at his friend, and his friend knew that he meant, "That is like my life—all outside looks very beautiful, but inside there is a worm." Now, in all the joy that this world ever gives to us there is a worm! The only apples that have no worms grow only in Paradise, and there, dear children, if God shall teach us, we shall sit and pluck new fruit from the celestial tree. Let us go there and leave this poor world behind, seeking a better rest, where immortal fruits grow!

A gentleman bought a pear tree, and planted it in his garden. The first year it did not have any pears on it, but the second year there was a good show of bloom and after a while there was one little pear. So the gentleman said to his wife, "Now we shall know whether that really is as good a pear tree as the gardener told me it would be." To his children he said, "Now, mind none of you touch that pear, for I am very particular to know about it—to see whether it is worthwhile to keep the tree." One of his little boys was very fond of pears and he watched that pear and saw it grow. It kept on growing and his father said to him, "Now, John, I know you will not touch that pear. You may have any of the other fruit in the garden, but you must not touch that pear." John said, "No, Father." Yet, somehow, as that pear began to swell and get ripe, John's mouth watered after that particular pear and he thought, "Oh, I should like to eat it!" He passed close by it, sometimes, but he did not touch it. At last, one night, a beautiful, bright, moonlight night, as he lay in bed, he looked out of the window and he could see the pear tree down in the garden, and he thought, "Father won't know I took the pear—he'll never think I would go out at night. I'll put on my slippers—it's a nice moonlight night—and I'll slip down and get that pear."

He went downstairs, though he hardly liked being out alone at night and, opening the back door, he went out into the garden and stood underneath the tree. He was getting on his tiptoes to reach the pear, when, between the leaves, a ray of light came right straight into his eyes. It was the gleam of a star and that star seemed to be watching him! And at the same moment that ray of light came through the leaves from that particular star, his heart seemed to say the four words which he said were the best words he ever heard, for they were, all his life long, a blessing to him—"You, God, see me." Down he went on to his feet, no more on his tiptoes, glided upstairs, took off his slippers and went to bed, so thankful to think that the star had looked at him and saved him from doing wrong! It seemed to be like God's light looking right through

the trees and the text seemed to be God's word reminding him how wrongly he was acting!

Now, he who goes to God's school, and has learned to live as in God's sight, has learned one of the best lessons that ever could be taught him. I hope that none of us here, whether men, or women, or boys, or girls, will ever be satisfied till, in everything, we act as in God's sight! Nobody would cheat in the shops, then! Nobody would tell a lie, then, if they knew that God was always looking upon them!

One other thing and I will finish. I think some dear boys and girls ought to be very earnest just now, and ask the Lord to take them into His school because *there are many who are very anxious about them.* There was once a boy of the name of Stoddart, and he was a very bad boy, or rather, he was a very bad young man. One night his pastor met him outside a little chapel into which several people were going. The young man said, in a joking, saucy, naughty tone, "What are you doing?" And the minister, who was an old man, turned round and said, "Young man, this is what we are doing—your mother asked us to meet tonight and pray for you." Young Stoddart walked away and said, "Then, if these people are praying about me, it's high time I should pray for myself!" And before the meeting was over, in he crept and you cannot tell the joy there was when he came in to say he thanked them for praying for him—and desired to pray for himself! He became a famous preacher in America and brought many souls to Christ—and was the man who preached a sermon at the chapel where afterwards Jonathan Edwards became a minister of Christ, and was the means of a great revival of religion!

Now we are praying for you! And John, and Mary, and William, and James, I want you to say, as this young man did, "Then it is high time we should pray for ourselves." God bless everyone of you, and bless you tonight, for Jesus Christ's sake!

And I must say just this one sentence or so. The way to go to God's school is this—Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, died on the cross to open the door into that great school. And if any of you, my dear young friends, will trust in Jesus Christ to save you, because He died for sinners, you are then inside His school and you shall be taught and trained. And as I told you about the little ichneumon that ate the grass and was healed, so shall you have all your sins forgiven and your soul wounds healed—and you shall go on your way rejoicing!

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HOW TO BECOME FULL OF JOY
NO. 3272

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1865.

"And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full."
1 John 1:4.

IT is a wonderful proof of our Savior's deep attachment to His people that having made their salvation sure, He is also anxious concerning their present state of mind. He wishes that His people should be not only safe, but happy—that they should not be merely saved, but that they should rejoice in His salvation! It does not delight your Master for you to bow your heads as does the bulrush, or for you to go mourning all your days. He would have you rejoice, for again and again by His apostles does He exhort you to rejoice in Him. We will go at once to our text. Let our first point be—

I. A CHRISTIAN'S JOY NEEDS LOOKING AFTER. If it were not so, our text would not have been written, for we would not have had John writing to promote what would stand and progress well enough of itself. John seems to put the whole of the apostolic band with himself into the verse when he says, "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full," as if their joy would not be full unless inspired apostles should be commissioned of God to write in order to promote it. The Christian's joy needs looking after.

I do not doubt but that you have the proofs of this in yourselves, in your *eternal circumstances*. You cannot always rejoice, because although your treasure is not of this world, yet sometimes your affliction is here. Poverty is sometimes too heavy a cross for you to sing under it. Sickness casts you on a bed upon which you have not as yet learned to rejoice. There will be losses in business, disappointment of fond hopes. The forsaking of friends, the cruelty of foes and any of these may prove the winter nights and nip the green leaves of your joys and make them fade and fall from your bough. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a necessity that you should be, "in heaviness through manifold temptations." None of us, I suppose, are so perfectly happy as to be without some external trials and our joy will, therefore, need to be looked after lest these floods should come in and quench it. We shall need,

indeed, to cry to Him who alone can keep the flame burning, to trim our lamps and supply them with fresh oil.

I suppose, too, that you have *that within* which makes you feel that it is no easy matter to maintain perpetual joy. If you have not, I have. Sometimes there will come deep depressions of heart—you can scarcely tell why. That strong wing on which once you could mount as an eagle, will seem to flap the air in vain. That heart of yours which once flew upwards as the lark rising from amidst the dew will lie cold and heavy as a stone on the earth. You will find it hard, indeed, to rejoice. Besetting sins, too, will cripple your holy mirth so that when, like David before the ark, you, too, would dance for very joy, internal corruptions will make it almost impossible! Beloved, it is not easy to fight evil in our own souls and to sing at the same time. Christian soldiers we know, ought to do it and march to battle with songs of triumph, nerving their spirits to deeds of desperate valor, but oh, how often the garment rolled in dust and blood compels them to stay for a while the shout of certain victory. Trials from within—from Satan's suggestions, from the uprising of the black fountains of corruption—are not easy to bear and we have reason enough, if our joy is to remain full, to be guarded and strengthened by a power not our own, even from God Himself!

And yet, have we not learned, beloved in Jesus Christ, how exceedingly necessary it is that our joy should be full? When that joy is full, we are more than a match for all the devils of hell! But when it is weak and low, then we tremble and, like Peter, can be vanquished by a pert little maid! When our joy in the Lord is at its fullest, we can bear that the fig tree should not blossom, and that the herd should be cut off from the stall, and the flocks from the fields—but how heavy our trials become when that joy has fled! When we can see the Savior 's face without a veil between, then temptation has no power over us, for all the glittering gems that sin can offer by way of pleasure are eclipsed in tender brilliance and divine attraction by the heavenly pearl of joy in the dear Savior which we possess! Than we can sing with intense truthfulness—

> "***I would not change my blest estate***
> ***For all the world calls good or great!***
> ***And while my faith can keep her hold***
> ***I envy not the sinners gold."***

Thus the Christian, by his holy joy outbraves temptation and is strong to endure. Why, Christian, you can do *anything* when the joy of the Lord is within you! Like a roe, or a young hart, you leap over mountains and make them as stepping stones across the brook! The heaviest tempest that can lower over you cannot chill or dismay your courage, for your strong wings pierce it and mount above it all into the clear blue sky of

fellowship with your God! But when this joy is gone, then we grow weak, and—

"Like Samson when his hair was lost
Meet the Philistines to our cost."

We become victims to temptation and if we do not yield to it, yet it harasses us and robs us of the power with which we once glorified God. The Christian's joy, then, needs looking after. If any of you have lost that joy of the Lord, I pray you do not think that your loss is a small one. I have heard of a minister who once said that a Christian lost nothing by his sin—and then he added—"except his joy." Well, what else would you have him lose? Is not that quite enough? To lose the light of my Father's countenance, to lose my full assurance of my interest in Christ—is to lose my best and purest delight—and is this not a loss quite great enough? Let us walk prayerfully, let us walk carefully so that we may possess unbroken peace and joy to the fullest. Let none of us sit down in misery and be content to be there! There is such a thing as becoming habituated to melancholy. My own tendency is sometimes to get into that state of mind, but, by the grace of God, I shake it off, for I know it will not do. If we once begin to give way to this foolishness, we shall soon forge chains for ourselves that we cannot easily break. Take down your harp from the willow, believer! Do not let your fingers neglect the well-known strings. Come, let us be happy and joyful! If we have looked sad for a while, let us now be brightened by thoughts of Christ! At any rate, let us not be satisfied until we have shaken off this lethargy and misery, and have once again come into the proper and healthy state in which a child of God should always be found, namely, a state of spiritual joy!

II. Again, A CHRISTIAN'S JOY LIES MAINLY IN REVEALED THINGS. If this were not so, it would not find its fitting sustenance in inspired words. If the Christian's joy consisted in the wine vat, the feast, or his riches, John would not have written as he does—then it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance and that God should prosper trade and send to the merchant all that his heart could wish. But the Christian's deepest and best joy does not depend on these things. They cannot satisfy his nobler nature. He thanks God for all earthly joys, but he cannot feast his soul upon them—he needs something better. When John writes, "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full," there is nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ, from which I infer that everything revealed to us in the Scriptures has for its supreme purpose the filling up of the believer's joy!

But what is the Scripture's great theme? Is it not, first and foremost, concerning Christ Jesus? Take this book and distil it into one word—and that one word will be Jesus! The book, itself, is but the body of Christ and we may look upon all its pages as the swaddling bands of the infant

Savior, for if we unroll the Scripture, we come upon Jesus Christ Himself. Now, beloved, does not Jesus Christ make your joy full? I trust we do not sing a lie when we sometimes say in our song—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far Your face to see,
And in Your presence rest."

Jesus—man, yet God. Jesus—allied to us in ties of blood—oh, here is a reason for holy mirth! Here is Christmas all the year round! There is great joy to us in His nativity, for by it man has been taken by God into union with Himself! Jesus the Savior! Here is death to the groans of pain—an end to the moans of despair! He comes to break the bars of brass and to cut the gates of iron in sunder—

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease,
'Tis music in the sinner's ears:
'Tis life, 'tis health, 'tis peace!"

Scripture, surely, has well taken its cue, for it makes us joyful! It has done well to make Christ its head and front.

The same is true of all that is written in this book. Let me divide it into three parts—doctrinal, experimental and practical. All these are written that our joy may be full.

I think I could prove, if there were time, that all the doctrines have a tendency, when properly understood and received, to foster Christian joy. Let me mention one or two of them. There is that ancient, much abused, but most delightful doctrine of election—that before all worlds Jesus chose His people and looked with eyes of infinite love upon them, as He saw them in the glass of futurity. What? Christian! Can you believe yourself "loved with an everlasting love" and not rejoice?

Surely it was the doctrine of election that made David dance before the ark. He told Michal when she sneered at him, "I danced before the Lord that chose me before your father Saul." Surely to be chosen of God, to be selected from the mass of mankind and made the favorites of the heart of deity—surely this ought to make us, in our very worst and dullest moments, sing for joy! Then there are the other doctrines which, like living waters, flow from this sacred and hidden fountain. Take, for instance, that of *redemption*—bought with a price, a price whose efficacy is not questionable—bought so that now we are Jesus' property, never to be lost! Bought not with that general redemption which holds before the sinner's eyes something, somewhere in the clouds, which may or may not be—but bought with an *effectual* redemption which saves every blood bought soul because He has power to save to the uttermost all who come to Him! Oh, here is an occasion for song!—

"Jesus bought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God!

He to save my soul from danger
Bought me with His precious blood!"

Can you see the blood mark on yourself, and not, rejoice, O Christian? Surely your joy ought to be full, indeed!

Once again, think of the doctrine of justification, namely that through faith in Christ's redemption every believer is "accepted in the Beloved," and stands, clad in Jesus' righteousness, as fair in God's sight as if he had never sinned—why, surely, here is a theme again for overflowing joy!

Take the doctrine of communion—that we are one with Jesus Christ—

"By eternal union one!"

Members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—what? Not sing after this? How sweet the music ought to be where this is the theme! And then to mention but one where there are so many handfuls of pearls—there is the doctrine of eternal preservation and glory. You are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"! You shall be with Him where He is, you shall behold His glory! "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Ah, can you think of this and go up in spirit to the throne where Christ has made you sit in His own person and not begin the song that shall have no end? Truly, I need but remind you of these truths of God! You can think them out for yourselves—every doctrine to the Christian is a source of joy!

Again, the Scripture is given to us to produce in us experiences, every one of which is meant to promote our joy. "Why," says one, "all Christian experience is not joyful!" I grant you that, but remember that all a Christian's experience is not *Christian* experience. Christians experience a great deal because they are not such Christians as they ought to be. Beloved, there is a mourning which comes from the Spirit of God, but it is a joyous mourning, if I may use so strange a phrase.

Sorrow for sin is a sweet sorrow, do not desire to escape it! I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that his only regret in going to heaven would be that he could no more repent. True evangelical repentance is food to the saintly soul! I do not know, beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when I am weeping for sin at the foot of the cross, for that is the safest place in which I can stand. I like that verse—

"Dissolved by Your goodness,
I fall to the ground
And weep to the praise of the mercy
I've found."

Remember, too, that though with regard to things of this world you may have sore trial, in every drop of bitterness your Father puts in your cup there is a whole sea of sweetness beneath. Trials wean us from the world and surely that is a most blessed thing! Oh, to come to Christ and find my all in Him! If we had no idols in children, friends, wealth, ourselves, we would not need half the trials we have! Foolish loves make

rods for foolish backs! God save us from this, and when He does, though the means may seem to be severe, they are intended to intensify our joy by destroying the cause of our worst sorrows. But beyond all this, there is much of a true Christian's experience that is, and must be, all joy. To have faith in Christ, to rest in Him, is not that joy? To stand here and sing from one's heart—

"I know that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power
What I've committed to His hands,
'Till the decisive hour."

Is not that joy? Or even that humble note—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling."

Why that has the germ of heaven in it!

Hope, too, is part of the Christian's experience, and what a fountain of joy is there!—

This is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil. But above all things, and this is what is chiefly meant in the text, the experience of Christian fellowship is greatly promotive of Christian joy. John truly says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you, also, may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." This is the golden center of the target. Fellowship with Christ is the fountain of joy. Other joys may help to fill it, but this fills of itself, alone, up to the very brim, of fullness of joy. Have you not felt it? I know you have—when you could have had no more joy, for you were full. A fullness of joy is all sorts of blessing. If I were to so fill a glass with water that the gentlest touch would make it run over, that would be a picture of the joy the Christian sometimes has and should more constantly possess. When such is known, He is—

"Rich to all intents of bliss
Since you O God, are mine!"

It is not every man who can go home tonight and say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none that I desire on earth compared with You! I have You and, therefore, I need no more." Go you, who crave for joy, and traverse the wide world round in the vain search for it—my soul shall sit down at the foot of the cross and say, "I have found it here!" Go you, like the swallows that cross the purple seas to find another summer, now that yours is over, but my soul shall abide where it is and find no chilling winter her joys to mar! At the cross our sun is at its solstice and stands still forever, never moving, without parallax, or shadows of a tropic—always the same—bright, full and glorious!

But I said that the Bible was also full of practicality. I can only say a brief word or two on that point. Every precept and command of the Word

of God is meant to help our happiness. "Do yourself no harm," is the very essence and law of all the Ten Commandments. It is love speaking in the imperative mood, saying "You shall not"—but all for our good. It is God's way of saying, "Don't touch the fire or you will be burned. Don't do that which will injure, hurt or destroy your joy of soul!" God never denies His children anything that is really for their good. His commands are freedom's rules, never fetters to the loving Christian. Let us think of one or two. "Love one another," that is the first. Well now, when are you happiest? When you feel bitter, spiteful and resentful towards others, or when you feel charity towards the sinful and unworthy, and deep love towards your fellow servants? I know, at any rate, when I feel happiest. There are some persons who seem to have been reared on vinegar—who wherever they go, see some defeat—and where this cannot be discovered will insinuate, "Ah, well, but we do not know what they do in secret." Or, "we do not know their motives." But those who love one another can see much to rejoice in everywhere.

Again, we are told in the Scripture to serve the Lord with diligence, and is it not the diligent soul that is made fat? It is the do nothing people, generally, who say—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this!
That yields us no supplies."

Indeed it ought to be a wretched land to lazy people! "They who will not work, neither should they eat." And this refers even more to spiritual sustenance than to material food! If in the winter you complain of the cold, get to the plow and you will soon glow with warmth! But sit down to moan and complain and blow on your blue fingers, you shall feel the cold more and more! Holy activity is the mother of holy joy!

Growth in grace, too, is a fountain of true delight. Never is a believer happier than when he grows in grace. To stand still, to contract one's self—it is like forcing a Chinese foot into a Chinese shoe—it is torture to the understanding! But to have a mind capable of always learning. To sometimes be able to admit, "I was wrong." To know you know more today than yesterday because the Spirit has been teaching you, why this is joy! This is pure delight and such as God would have us know! So I venture to repeat that all the writings of Scripture—doctrinal, experimental, or practical—all have for their objective that which John declares in these words, "that your joy may be full."

Upon the next point we must be very brief, but strive to be very practical. We have shown that the Christian's joy needs looking after, and that it is chiefly fed and maintained upon the things revealed in the Scriptures. If this is so, then—

III. LET US CONSTANTLY READ THE SCRIPTURES! Let us read them, I would say, *in preference to other books*. There is a great deal of reading, nowadays, and a great deal of that is a kind of chaff cutting and nothing

more. Why, even in religious newspapers and magazines they cannot command readers and make them pay, so they say, unless they include a religious novel! People's minds must be in a strange state when they can relish nothing but these whipped creams and juvenile syllabubs. If they were robust and healthy, with a good appetite for divine things, they would demand something far more solid and satisfying. You will never grow sturdy men and women on such poor stuff as that—you may rear lackadaisical imitations, but the thinking soul with something in it, the Christian woman who serves God and is a true helper to the Christian ministry; the young man who is fired with the longing to proclaim Christ and win souls to Him—must have stronger nutriments than that which modern religious journalism ladles out so plentifully! Oh, my brothers and sisters, read the Bible! Read the Bible and these things that enfeeble will lose all their attraction for you!

If the worldling must have these things, let him. But if you have a soul that is above rubbish and has been accustomed to live on great, solid and substantial truths of God, you scarcely need that I should say, "Search the Scriptures diligently and your joy shall spread and deepen!" Be this your happy confession—

"Lord, I have made Your word my choice,
My lasting heritage.
There shall my noblest powers rejoice
My warmest thoughts engage."

We say further, *prefer the Scriptures even to all religious book*s. We say this of the best book and sermons. We do our best to teach you God's truth, but we are like goldbeaters—we get a little bit of the truth of God and we hammer it out so thin. Some of us are mighty hands at this and can make a tiny fragment of the golden truth of God cover an acre of talk! But the best of us—those who really do seek to bring out the doctrines of grace and love, are but poor workers at it. Read the Bible more and do not care so much about us. If my sermons kept people from reading the Bible for themselves, I would like to see the whole stock in a blaze and burned to ashes! But if they serve as fingerposts, pointing to the Scriptures and saying, "Read this, and this, and this," then I am thankful to have printed them. But if they keep you from your Bibles, burn them, burn them, burn them! Do not let them overlay the Scriptures, but lie beneath them, for that is their proper place. Keep you first to God's revealed word.

Let me here say that when you read the Bible, remember there are several ways of doing it. There is the superficial reading—being satisfied with the mere letter of it. There is, however, a diving into it, a going deep down into the soul of it! Read it in natural *section*s. What would Milton's *Paradise Lost* be if you only read one line a day and began at the middle and went back to the first line? You would never understand His

meaning! Read the Bible through. Read John's gospel—not a bit of John and then a snippet of Mark—but read John through and find out what John is at. Remember that Matthew—though he speaks of the same Savior as Mark—yet he does it not in the same style, nor for the same purpose as he. There is a very distinct purpose in each gospel. Matthew tells of Jesus, the King—the parables he records all hold references to the King. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened." Mark shows us Christ as the servant devoted and tireless in His activity of loving toil. Luke as the man Christ Jesus, full of human tenderness and sympathy, and his parables begin, "A certain man." John reveals to us Christ in His true deity and Godhead—and gloriously does he preface it, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Get hold of what the various books mean and may the Holy Spirit show you the aim of each writer—the one book, and that studied, not scampered through—and you shall stand firm where others fall. And now, lastly, if the Scriptures are intended to bring joy to believers, the question comes up—

IV. ARE WE ALL BELIEVERS? IS THE BOOK A SOURCE OF JOY TO US? There are significant pronouns—"we"—"you"—"your." Who is that? Is that you? Does it come to you and make your joy full? If you do not know or much care about it, then it does not speak to you. If you find plenty of joy elsewhere and it does not speak to you, it will not force itself and intrude upon you. It gives you no joy because you have enough elsewhere. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." But others of you long for this joy! You are uneasy, unsatisfied, cannot find a tree in which to build your nest. Oh, dear friend! I am so glad! May you grow weary and heavy laden of spirit, for then I have a whisper for you—Jesus Christ came to call such to Him! Yes, the world may have spurned and scorned you, but Jesus will receive you! Your companions say you are mopish and miserable—come to Him and He will warmly welcome you! He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—

"Weary souls that wander wide
From the central source of bliss,
Turn to Jesus crucified—
Look to His dear wounds and live!"

Oh, if you are sick of the world, come to my Master! May God the Holy Spirit sanctify this sickness and bring you to Jesus because you have nowhere else to go. Jesus will not spurn even the devil's castaways! The sweepings of humanity who have gone so far that their friends reject them, Jesus Christ will accept and bless!

May He accept me! May He accept you! And then in Him our joy shall be full!

The Lord bless you ever more! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:15-31.

Verse 15. *If you love Me, keep My commandments.* We cannot expect the Holy Spirit to dwell with us unless we are obedient to the commands of Christ. Our Savior here tells us much about the Spirit of truth, but He begins with this test of our love to Him, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

16. *And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.* Not a different Comforter, but *the* Comforter who is now with us, is of the same nature and works after the same manner as the Lord Jesus, Himself, who was our first Advocate, Helper, Paraclete, Comforter! I give you these four words instead of one because they are all wrapped up in the original word, "Paraclete"—that He may abide with you forever and ever. The Lord Jesus could not abide with us forever—it was expedient for Him that He should go to heaven to prepare a place for us. But the Holy Spirit will not go. He will remain in this dispensation even to the end of it—"That He may abide with you forever."

17. *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* The world knows nothing about the Holy Spirit—it can hear the gospel, it can hear the outward Word of God—but the living, mystic, inward Spirit, the world knows nothing of.

18, 19. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* "While I am away, the Holy Spirit shall be your Comforter. You shall not be like orphans without father or friend." Jesus will come a second time. This is our joyful hope, but meanwhile, while He is away, we are not without a Comforter. "Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more." What a wonderful thing! The children of God always see Jesus spiritually. "But you see Me: because I live, you shall live also." There is life in a look and our continued sight of Christ brings us continued life through Christ! Because He lives, there is a loving, living, lasting union between us and Christ.

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* Three wonderful unions! Christ in the Father, His people in Christ, Christ in His people! If you are instructed of the Lord, you will understand this text. This is such knowledge as the universities cannot teach! It is such knowledge as the most learned doctors cannot attain to by themselves. Only the Spirit of God can teach us these things.

21. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him,*

and will manifest Myself to him. He must have obedience. Christ cannot come and comfortably manifest Himself to those who are living out of order and disregarding His words. Take heed, children of God, of disobedience! It is a discipline of the divine family that if we disobey, we shall lose the comfortable presence of our Lord. "I will manifest Myself to him."

22, 23. *Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Christ and His Father dwell with obedient people! "We will dwell with him, and make our abode with him." Oh, that we might carefully watch our thoughts, our words, our acts, lest we grieve our Lord! He will manifest Himself to us when we yield ourselves to Him. When we obey His will, it will be His will to honor us with His constant presence!

24. *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings.* There is much talk of loyalty to Christ, but the teachings of Christ are despised. The teachings of His apostles are the teachings of Christ. They are but a prolongation and exposition of what Christ taught. In rejecting them we reject Christ. He will not have it that we can be loyal to Him and yet refuse His teaching.

24. *And the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.* It is a wonderful denial of originality on the part of Christ. If anybody could have spoken his own word, it was surely the Christ of God! But He was a messenger, and He delivered His message. Now, if it is so with Christ, how much more so with us who are very inferior messengers? We ought to be very careful that we do not deliver our own thoughts, or suggestions, excogitations and philosophies. "The word which you hear is not mine," (that I can most emphatically say), "but the Father's who sent Me." You see, when we deliver a message which is not ours, but the Father's, we feel safe about it. We feel sure of its success, whereas, if we were the makers of it, we would often question whether we had not told you falsely—but if we can fall back upon the Word of God, and prove it from what the Father has said, then do we feel we are no longer responsible.

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.* That is the teaching. The Holy Spirit does not reveal anything fresh to us. He brings to our remembrance what has already been said and written in the inspired word. Whereas the book conveys to us the outward sense, the Holy Spirit conveys to us the inner meaning. Not the embodiment of the truth of God

you have in this book, but the truth, itself, dealing with the conscience, and heart, and spirit must be laid home by the author of the book, by the Holy Spirit, Himself!

27. *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.* Have you got it, brothers and sisters? Are you at peace at this moment? "I am very much troubled," says one. Well, you are to have tribulation here, but you are to have peace with it. In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace. If you have got the bitter herbs, do not be satisfied with bitter herbs—ask for the Paschal Lamb.

27. *Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* Come, tell your trouble to your Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to exercise the office of Comforter upon you now at this very moment.

28. *You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.* The Lord Jesus had taken a subordinate place. He had become the servant of the Father, the messenger for the Father, but He was going back to reassume His glory. That ought to be a subject of joy to us! Let us bless Jesus that He is not here. If He were here in His former state He would be in His humiliation—but now He has gone to His glory. Let us rejoice in this!

29. *And now I have told you before it came to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe.* Jesus warned His disciples of all that was to happen in His death and in His departure. I believe that the Spirit of God often gives inward warnings to God's people of troubles that are to come—monitions so that they may be prepared for the trouble when it comes and may feel as if He had told them before it came to pass.

30. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me.* He would have very few words for He was going to the bloody sweat and scourging and death—His words might well be few, for His actions would speak more loudly than words!

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, Let us go from here.* And they left the supper table to go to the garden, the garden of His agony! Let us be willing to go wherever God calls us.

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A SERMON TO MINISTERS AND OTHER TRIED BELIEVERS
NO. 3273

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DURING THE SUMMER OF 1881.

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."
1 Peter 5:7.

THIS season of depression in trade has brought great care to many a house and heart, especially to village pastors and their flocks. Their troubles have been heavy and I am afraid their cares have not been light. Few have escaped the pinch of these hard times—the most prosperous have to watch the ebbing tide and ask—How long shall these things be? The subject will be seasonable to us all.

A very good preface to any sermon is the connection—let us look at the passage before us. The verse preceding it is, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." If we are truly humble, we shall cast our care upon God and, by that process, our joy will be exalted! We are slow to submit to the hand of God and oftentimes our care is fretful rebellion against our heavenly Father's will. We determine to carve for ourselves, and so we cut our fingers! I saw upon a cart only yesterday the name of a tradesman who calls himself, "universal provider"—do we not aspire to some such office? There *is* an universal provider—and if we are humble under His hand, we shall leave our matter in His hands. Oh, for more humility, for then shall we have more tranquility! Pride begets anxiety—true humility gives birth to patience.

The verse which follows our text is this—"Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour." Cast your care upon God because you need all your powers of thought to battle with the great enemy. He hopes to devour you by care. Cast all your care upon God, for if you are worried you cannot be sober or watchful. Satan rides on the back of carnal care and so obtains entrance into the soul. If he can distract our minds from the peace of faith by temporal cares, he will get an advantage over us.

The preface allowed of expansion, but I have compressed it with stern economy of time. I must condense with equal rigor all through my discourse. We will first expound the text and then enforce it.

I. First, let us EXPOUND THE TEXT—"Casting all your *care* upon Him, for He *cares* for you."

It is noteworthy that in the Greek, the two words for, "care," are different. Hence the Revised Version reads, "Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you." The care which you are to cast upon God is wearing you out and you are to cast it upon God because, in quite another sense, "He cares for you." The word used in reference to God is applied to caring for the poor and in another place to the watchfulness of a shepherd. Our anxiety and God's care are two very different things. His care, though tender and comprehensive, causes no anxiety to Him, for His great mind is more than equal to the task. But our care ferments within us and threatens the destruction of our narrow souls. You are to cast your care, which is folly, upon the Lord, for He exercises a care which is wisdom! Care to us is exhausting, but God is all sufficient. Care to us is sinful, but God's care of us is holy. Care distracts us from service, but the divine mind does not forget one thing while remembering another!

If our care is to be cast upon God, we are hereby led to make a distinction, for there is a care which we could not dare to cast upon God—it would be blasphemy to attempt it! Anxiety to grow rich—can we impart that to God? Anxiety to be famous, to live in luxury, to avenge an injury, to magnify myself—can I ask the Most High to bear such an anxiety for me? If any of you are vexed with such care, I charge you to fling it off, for it is like the poisoned tunic of Hercules, and unless you can tear it away, it will burn into your very soul! All cares of covetousness, anger, pride, ambition and willfulness must be cast to the winds—it would be criminal to dream of casting them upon God! Do not pray about them, except that God will redeem you from them. Let your desires be kept within a narrow circle and your anxieties will be lessened at a stroke.

"Casting," says the apostle. He does not say "laying all your care upon Him," but he uses a much more energetic word. You have to cast the load upon the Lord—the act will require effort. It is no child's play to cast all our care upon our Lord when there are six little children, shoes worn out, cupboard empty, purse bare and the deacons talking of reducing the scanty salary! Here is a work worthy of faith—you will have to lift with all your soul before the burden can be shifted and the anxiety cast upon the Lord! That effort, however, will not be half as exhausting as the effort of carrying your load yourself. Oh, the burden of watching and waiting for help which never comes! Depending on the help of man who is altogether

vanity! Oh, the weariness of carrying a heartbreaking anxiety and yet standing up to preach! We have all seen statues of Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders, but we can hardly conceive of his preaching in that attitude! It would be better to make one tremendous effort and have done with it, rather than groan under a perpetual weight. If the fox is eating into our heart, let us pluck it from our bosom and kill it at once!

Note, next, the words, *"upon Him."* You may tell your griefs to others to gain their sympathy, for we are bid to bear one another's burdens. You may ask friends to help you and so exercise your humility, but let your requests to man be ever in subordination to your waiting upon God! Some have obtained their full share of human help by much begging from their fellow Christians, but it is a nobler thing to make known your requests unto God! But somehow, those who beg only of God are wondrously sustained where others fail! What a pleasant story is that in which we recount the loving-kindness of the Lord and tell how "this poor man cried and the Lord heard him." Quiet, patient believers have come under my notice who have carried their cross in silence, waiting alone upon the Lord. How they endured their trial, I cannot tell, save that "they endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." But their necessity became known, it leaked out, they knew not how, and they were helped—and helped better than they would have been if their appeal had been to man! I am condemning no appeal to our fellow believers! Many are willing to help, but they cannot do so if the need is unknown—but do not place anyone in the office and throne of the great God who alone is the caretaker and burden bearer of His people! I am afraid that, sometimes, in our care not to alienate this great man who does so much for the cause, or that excellent lady who takes half a dozen sittings in the chapel, we may grieve the Lord and lose our true helper. Cease, then, from man and cast all your care upon God—and upon Him only!

Certain courses of action are the very reverse of casting all your care upon God, and one is *indifference*. Whatever virtue there may be in stoicism, it is unknown to the true child of God. "I don't care," may be an appropriate expression for an atheist to use, but it is not suitable for a Christian! It may sound well and the man who utters the defiant words may think himself some great one, but it is an evil utterance for all that. I am afraid some brothers' "I don't care," is very sinful, for they get into debt and don't care. They break their promises and engagements and don't care. Brothers, such men ought to care! Every man is bound to care about his life duties and the claims of his family. He that cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen! Casting care upon God is the very reverse of reckless and inconsiderateness!

It is not casting care upon God *when a man does that which is wrong in order to clear himself.* Yet this is too often tried. Under pressure, some men do very unjustifiable things. We ought to be slow to condemn since we ourselves also may yet be tempted in the same way and may err in like manner. Still, faith ought to be able to win every battle. He who compromises truth to avoid pecuniary loss is hewing out a broken cistern for himself. He who borrows when he knows he cannot pay; he who enters into wild speculations to increase his income; and he who does anything that is ungodly in order to turn a penny is not casting his care upon God! An act of disobedience is a rejection of God's help so that we may help ourselves. He who does the right thing at all hazards practically casts his care upon the Lord. Acts are with us, but their consequences are with God! Our main care should be to please God—and all other care we may safely leave to Him.

How, then, are we to cast all our care upon God? Two things need to be done. It is a heavy load that is to be cast upon God and it requires the hand of prayer and the hand of faith to make the transfer. Prayer tells God what the care is and asks God to help, while faith believes that God can and will do it. Prayer spreads the letter of trouble and grief before the Lord and opens all its budget. And then faith cries, "I believe that God cares, and cares for me! I believe that He will bring me out of my distress and make it promote His own glory."

When you have thus lifted your care into its true position and cast it upon God, take heed that you do not pick it up again. Many a time have I gone to God and have relieved my care by believing prayer—but I am ashamed to confess that after a little time, I have found myself burdened again with those very anxieties which I thought I had given up! Is it wise to put our feet into fetters which have once been broken off? My brothers, there is a more excellent way—a way which I have tried and proved. I have at times been perplexed with difficulties. I have tried my best with them and I have utterly failed. And then I have gone with the perplexity to the throne of God and placed the whole case in the Lord's hands, solemnly resolving never to trouble myself about the aforesaid matters any more, whatever might happen. I was quite incapable of further action in the matter and so I washed my hands of the whole concern and left it with God. Some of these cares I have never seen again—they melted like hoar frost in the morning sun—and in their place I have found a blessing lying on the ground. Other troubles have remained in fact but not in effect, for I have consented to the yoke and it has never galled my shoulder again. Brethren, let the dead bury their dead, and let us follow Jesus! Henceforth let us leave worldlings to fret and fume over the cares of this life—as for us, let our conversation be in

heaven, and let us carefully abstain from carelessness, being anxious only to end anxiety by a childlike confidence in God!

II. Accept this little contribution towards an exposition, and let us now proceed to ENFORCE THE TEXT. I will give you certain reasons, and then *the* reason why you should cast all your care upon God.

First, *the ever blessed One commands you to do it.* We need no other reason. The precept is akin to the gospel command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a blessed privilege and it is also a command. He who bids us cease from idolatry, also bids us cease from care. The law of Sabbath keeping is not more divine than that of resting in the Lord. He whom we call Master and Lord bids us take no anxious thought—His bidding has all the authority of law. Say to yourself, my anxious brother, "I may roll my burden upon the Lord, for He bids me do so." If you do not trust in God, you will be distinctly sinful—you are as much commanded to trust as to love.

Next, cast all your cares on God *because you will have matters enough to think of even then!* There are sacred cares which the Lord will lay upon you because you have cast your care upon Him. When He has broken your painful yoke, you will have His easy yoke to bear. There is the care to love and serve Him better, the care to understand His word, the care to preach it to His people, the care to experience His fellowship, the care to walk so that you shall not vex the Holy Spirit. Such hallowed cares will always be with you and will increase as you grow in grace. In a sense, we may cast even these upon God, looking for His Holy Spirit to help us, for it is He that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure—yet not without our care and zeal does He operate upon us—and this is one reason why you are not to allow lower ends and designs to inundate your mind. Your spirit has another vineyard to keep, another capital to put out to interest, another Master to please and it cannot afford to yield its thought to meaner pursuits. Ministers are shepherds and must care for the sheep! "The hireling flee because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep." But you have the care of churches laid upon you daily, and it is peculiarly necessary that you should not be occupied with carnal care.

And, next, you must cast your care upon God, *because you have God's business to do.* It is a dangerous thing for a merchant to employ a man who has a business of his own, because sooner or later the master's business will suffer, or else the man's own concern will die out. "No man that wars," says Paul, "entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier." There is sure to be a clashing of interests when a brother goes into business, unless he does it as Paul did—that he may not be chargeable to the church—for then he attains to double honor. Paul carried his needle and thread with

him wherever he went, for everybody had a tent in those days, and he was ready for work at any moment either upon small family tents, or tents to cover a great assembly. When he had finished preaching, he could turn to mending tents and so earn his own living and preach the gospel freely. Paul did not make his preaching a stalking horse to his trade, but he made his handicraft a packhorse to his ministry, so that he could say, "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." That is a very different thing from a minister deserting his charge to make a larger income by some other calling. The less we have to do with other business the better, for all our care is needed by the church.

Queen Elizabeth bade a notable merchant in the City of London go to the Continent on royal business. "Please, Your Majesty, he said, "who will attend to my business while I am away?" The queen replied, 'If you will go abroad and see to my business, I will see to your business." I will be bound to say that it would not suffer if such a queen took it in hand! Just so the Lord says to us, "You attend to My work and I will take care of you and your wife and children." The Lord pledges Himself to do it—bread shall be given us, our water shall be sure! The testimony of many among you will bear me out in this. I come of a line of preachers and though some of them have had to endure straitened circumstances, yet none of them were forsaken, nor have their seed been seen begging bread. The Lord has cared for us and we have lacked nothing.

You ought to do it not only for this reason, but because *it is such a great privilege to be able to cast your care upon God*. If I am plunged in a lawsuit and some eminent lawyer would offer to undertake it all, out of love to me, how glad I would be! I would worry no longer. I would say to all who troubled me on the matter, "You must go to my solicitor. I know nothing about the matter." Do this to your cunning enemy, the devil, who is always glad to see you anxious and fretful. Let us say to him, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you." What a file that is for the old viper to break his teeth upon! Chosen! CHOSEN! And if chosen, shall we not be cared for?

Let me add that you ministers ought to cast all your care upon God *because it will be such a good example for your hearers*. Our people learn much from our conduct. And if they see us fretting, they will be certain to do the same. You preach faith, do you not? How sad it will be for you to be convicted of unbelief! Our own words may condemn us if we are anxious. Once when I was unduly depressed, my good wife said to me, "I have a book here which I should like to read to you." It did me good to hear her read, but I felt myself rebuked by every word! I half suspected what was coming when she said, "That is your own, remember?" She had been giving the doctor some of his own medicine! What a many things

you have said, my brothers that will condemn you if you do not trust God! Is it, after all, mere talk? Did you mean what you said and is it true? Or have you merely been repeating official dogmas in which you have no personal confidence? Is the providence of God a myth, or a living, bright reality? "Here," said a quack in the market, "is a medicine that will cure coughs, colds, consumptions [the fellow coughed horribly at this point]. It is of such efficacy that it would almost restore the dead. [Here he coughed again.] Nobody need remain a sufferer—he has only to buy a box of the pills" [here the quack's own cough prevented him from speaking.] Ah, laugh on, laugh on, brothers, only find that nobody laughs at you for doubting while you extol faith! We must show in ourselves that faith in our God is a healing medicine, or man will not believe us! We shall make Christ, Himself, seem to be a pretender unless we practically prove that we have been healed by Him. Let your people see in you what comes of trusting Christ! Let them see what cheerfulness, what hopefulness, what buoyancy of spirit come to those who trust Christ and cast all their cares upon Him!

But the reason of reasons is that contained in our text, *"He cares for you."* After all, what a small matter it must be to God to care for us, since He provides for the commissariat of the universe, the feeding of the cattle on a thousand hills and the wild beasts of the plains! Think of those myriads of fish, those armies of birds, those enormous multitudes of insects! What a God must He be who cares for all! Compared with the demands of all these, our little needs are soon supplied. We need but little and that little is scarcely a crumb from the table of the Lord our God. Surely if God says, "I will care for you," we need not give another thought except to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." It does not need two of us for this small matter, and certainly not two when One is infinite in wisdom and power! Even if we were wise, the Lord would not need our help. With whom took He counsel and who instructed Him when He created the earth, piled the mountains and spanned the sky? Let us, therefore, stand still and see the salvation of God! The Lord thinks about us, plans for us, arranges for us, studies to make things right for us—these are poor words with which to describe His care, for He does more than that—He loves us. That great, boundless, mighty heart loves us! This is fit matter for a heavenly song! Because He has set His love upon us, we can surely cast our care upon Him. He has given us Christ—will He not give us bread? See, He has called us to be His sons— will He starve His children? See what He is preparing for us in heaven—will He not enable us to bear the burdens of this present life? We dishonor God when we suspect His tenderness and

generosity! We can only magnify Him by a calm faith which leans upon His word.

There, dear brothers, there is my word from the Master for you. I should like to have hammered out that little grain of gold so that you might have gilded your lives with it, but please do it for yourselves. Now will you carry your cares away, or will you bow your heads in silent prayer and throw them all off? Holy Spirit, the Comforter, lighten our darkness, we beseech You!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 1; 2:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.* I would again remind you, as I have often done before, that the Apostle Paul, when he is writing to a minister, invariably begins his epistle with the triple greeting, "Grace, mercy, and peace," but when he is writing to a church, he commences with the double benediction, "Grace and peace." You will find that this is his wish for the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians, "Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." This is also his form of greeting to Philemon, who was a private Christian, not a minister. But when the apostle is writing to Timothy and Titus, his own sons in the faith, and his fellow ministers of the gospel, he says, "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." It seems as though, guided by the Holy Spirit, he thought that the office of the Christian ministry is of so weighty and responsible a character that the man who rightly fills that honorable position not only needs the grace and peace that are necessary for all believers, but that he must in addition have a special supply of mercy. And truly, no one needs mercy more than the preacher of mercy! Note, too, that the "Grace, mercy, and peace" are to come "from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Father and Son are united in the gracious act of bestowing "Grace, mercy, and peace." The Father is the great eternal fountain of all these blessings, but the Son is the divinely appointed channel through whom they flow down to us!

3. *I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day.* Thank God that Paul had such a sympathetic spirit and that Timothy's needs so continually rose before his supplicating eye—and that Paul was able to pray for Timothy, not with anxiety, not in doubtfulness—but with thankfulness. Oh, that all young Christians

might be such consistent Christians that those who have brought them to Christ might always be able to pray for them with thankfulness!

4. *Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy.* I suppose that Timothy was very tenderhearted and that he had been grieved because of Paul's many afflictions. And on his part, the apostle greatly missed his dearly beloved son in the faith. In the latter part of this epistle, Paul writes, "Do your diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." And again, "Do your diligence to come before winter." Looking forward to his impending martyrdom, Paul longed for the companionship of the one who was so specially dear to him.

5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in you, also.* Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. The "grandmother Lois" and the "mother Eunice" had the true grace of saving faith dwelling in them, and Paul was persuaded that it dwelt in the son and grandson Timothy.

6. *Therefore I put you in remembrance.* Paul had been speaking of his own remembrance of Timothy and of Timothy's faith, and now he says, "Therefore I put you in remembrance—

6. *That you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.* [See Sermon #1080, Volume18—OUR GIFTS AND HOW TO USE THEM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The best of fires sometimes need stirring and the best gift of God, even the sacred fire of the Holy Spirit, may sometimes burn low in the heart so that we have need to stir up the gift of God that is within us. There are some brothers, also, who have more God given gifts within them than they know of. They have never searched for them, so they allow them to lie hidden away unobserved and useless. We have need to stir up our gifts as well as our graces and to use to God's glory all the powers with which He has entrusted us.

7. *For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* What a gift this is to all who can truly say with Paul, "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind!"

8. *Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*—There is need to say this today, for many are becoming "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," that old fashioned gospel which Paul received by direct revelation from his Lord, and for which he laid down his life. It is fashionable, nowadays, to put on the ruffles of modern philosophy rather than to be robed in the snow white garment of the truth of God. Paul

says to Timothy, "Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord"—

8, 9. *Nor of me, His prisoner: but be you partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling.* Salvation comes first, and calling afterwards—at least, so it is in the great plan of redemption. We are saved by the death of Christ before we are effectually called by His grace. The great work of our salvation was worked for us on Calvary and now we are made to know and to partake of that salvation by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel!

9. *Not according to our work, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* What a blessed doctrine this is! Some people cannot endure even to hear or read of it, but it is full of comfort and joy for the Spirit taught people of God! God's grace was "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began [See Sermon #703, Volume 12—SALVATION ALTOGETHER BY GRACE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]—

10, 11. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.* How Paul gloried in this triple divine appointment! He commenced this epistle by writing, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God," and here he says of the gospel, "whereunto I am appointed a preacher." I see that some tradesmen put up a notice over their shops stating that they are so and so "by appointment to Her Majesty," but Paul had the highest honor under heaven in being "appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles."

12. *For which cause I also suffer these things.* And I expect that his eyes glanced round on the walls of his dungeon, and that he rattled the chains that bound his hands to those of the soldiers who had him in their charge.

12-15. *Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for 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. Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. What good thing which was committed unto you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us. This you know, that all they which are in Asia have turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.* Probably these were leaders who ought to have acted differently and to have stuck by the apostle. But when he was in prison and likely to be put to death by Nero, many who had been his former companions forsook him, and were ashamed to acknowledge him—for which we also are ashamed of

them. It is the same, now—if the servant of God shall fall into the disfavor of the great ones of the earth, many will be ashamed of him. Paul mentions these who turned away from him, for their unfaithfulness evidently grieved him sorely. But he also mentions another case of quite a different sort—

16, 17. *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.* He did not know exactly where the apostle was—in which prison he was confined—but he went from place to place until at last he lighted upon him! And then he was not ashamed to be seen ministering to the poor chained prisoner. We read of various corporations spending a great deal of money in buying chains of office for their mayors, but this chain, worn by the apostle in his prison cell at Rome, was far more valuable than any of them. What an eternal honor it will be to him, and how sad it is that anyone should have been ashamed of his fetters when he was so bravely suffering for Christ's sake! There was more value in those chains on Paul's wrists than in all the chains that were ever worn on the necks of the great ones of this world!

18. *The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.* I have no doubt he came to Paul and talked with him and probably sang with him, and prayed with him. He often refreshed the apostle in Rome. And then Paul added—

18. *And in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, you know very well.* This happy Onesiphorus was a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who loved to minister to the apostle when he was in suffering and sorrow.

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Verses 1, 2. *You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* This is the true apostolic succession—one minister brings another to Christ and then charges that other to train other preachers and teachers to carry on the blessed work of evangelization!

3, 4. *You, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.* The man who has given himself wholly to the service of Christ must not undertake any other business that would prevent his giving his whole strength to his Master's work.

5-8. *And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that labors must be first*

partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to My gospel. [See Sermon #1653, Volume 28—THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the glorious temple of truth, the keystone of the arch of revelation. Paul tells us, in that great chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, how hopeless our case would be if Christ was not "raised from the dead." But he also proves most conclusively that he was raised "the third day, according to the Scriptures."

9. *Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.* [See Sermons #1998, Volume 33—NOT BOUND YET and #1453, Volume 25—ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS UNAFFECTED BY HUMAN UNBELIEF—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Thank God that it is not yet bound though many have tried to fetter it! When they think that they have manacled it, it breaks loose again and so it always will. However low this heavenly fire may burn, it soon blazes up again and so it shall to the world's end. immortal as the Christ who is the sum and substance of it is the everlasting gospel of the blessed God!

10-13. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.*—Blessed truth, God grant us the grace to mediate upon it until we also shall become faithful to Him and to His truth!

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SICKNESS AND PRAYER, HEALING AND PRAISE
NO. 3274

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 20, 1865.

"Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing" Psalm 107:17-22.

WHEN a person is very ill, one of the greatest kindnesses that you can show to him is to tell him how you felt under a similar affliction, to what physician you resorted, what remedies he prescribed, through what processes you passed, what were the symptoms connected with your recovery and how long you have been able to rejoice over the cure which has been worked in you. This kind of practical, experimental talk will be far more valuable to him than any doctor's opinions that you may read to him out of a book of medicine. Tell the sufferer what your experience has been and you will generally find that he will attach more importance to that than to any theory which you may propound to him, however well you may support that theory by argument!

I propose, this evening, as God shall enable me, to give you some of my experience. Indeed, I think that what I shall have to say will describe the experience of most of those who have been led to understand their state as spiritually sick, and who have been guided to the Great Physician and have found out how He works a complete and permanent cure. I have no doubt that this Psalm refers to actual bodily sickness and that it teaches us that we ought to praise the Lord very heartily whenever we are restored from any illness. It is no small mercy to have life preserved and health restored, especially if the end of life would be to us the beginning of eternal death and that our soul, when separated from the body, would have no "better land" to enter, and no right to a place in the home of the blessed where sickness is unknown! But while I think that the Psalm refers to bodily sickness, I am fully persuaded that it also applies to spiritual sickness and that we shall act in accordance with the mind of the Spirit if we consider the text as first, *describing the spiritually sick.* Then, as *showing the means by which they are cured.* And lastly, as *revealing what they do after they are cured.*

I. So, first, we have in the text A DESCRIPTION OF THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY SICK.

First, *we are told their name.* It is not a complimentary one—"Fools." But it is a name which they richly deserve! At least I know that I deserved it when I was in their case. God never calls a man a fool unless he is one. Why, then, are unconverted sinners rightly called fools?

They are fools because they prefer the shadow to the substance. They are as foolish as the dog in the old fable who dropped the solid meat that he had in his mouth and tried to seize the shadow of it that he saw reflected in the water. And men are indeed fools when they prefer the shadows of time to the substances of eternity!

They are fools, next, many of them, because they say that this world grew up by chance. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." He said that because he was a fool—if he had not been a fool, he would neither have thought it nor said it. If I were to assert that this Tabernacle grew up by chance, without either architect or builder, I would be a liar as well as a fool! But I should have just as much reason to say that as to declare that the universe came into existence without the fiat of the great Creator. Men who deny the plain teaching of Scripture upon this point are indeed fools!

They are fools, too, because they make a mockery of sin. If men cut their fingers by playing with edged tools. If they put red hot coals into their bosom, or fling firebrands about and say that they do it for fun, truly they are fools! But they are not such mad fools as those who play with sin and so ruin their souls forever, or who put into their lives sins that are like hot coals of juniper—and then laugh as though they had done a wise thing. They are indeed fools who prefer the pleasures of sin to the joys of eternity, for such pleasures will soon end—and then everlasting misery will be their portion. If you want to know how foolish they really are, you must view their folly in the light of eternity. Look down upon them from the heights of the heaven which they appear so willing to lose, or try to imagine the depths and woes of the hell which they seem determined to inherit, and you will straightway discover what fools they are! They think nothing of their never dying souls, but Christ thought so much of immortal beings that He left heaven with all its glories and endured suffering and shame of the most fearful character that He might deliver souls from going down into the pit of woe forever!

The text does not say that they are fools who are short of wit as we generally use that term, but it refers to those who are short of heavenly wit. They are fools who are deficient in common sense, for it is certainly in accordance with common sense that I should look first to that which is of the greatest importance—that is to say, my soul and the position it is to occupy throughout eternity when this mortal life is ended. Whoever you may be, my friend, though some may call you wise, and though you think yourself wise, if you have not seen that all is right with you for *eternity*, God calls you a fool—and I dare not call you anything else! You may be a master of mathematics, but if you have not solved this great

problem, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" you are what God says you are—a fool!

But the test goes on to tell us that *these fools fall sick*—and that is a cause for devout thankfulness, for if they never feel sick, they would never get well—and the sickness which I am about to describe is one which leads to everlasting health! What is the cause of the sickness which comes upon these fools? The text says, "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." "Transgression" is crossing over the line which God has laid down in His word. "Iniquity" is a lack of equity, a lack of that "right spirit" which God alone can give, and without which right words and actions are impossible. Well do I remember when I was spiritually sick because of my transgressions and iniquities. I could not sleep in peace, for I remembered that I had provoked God to anger by my sins. I had not loved Him with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. I had set up my will against His will and so I had insulted Him to His face. I felt not only that I was condemned by God, but my own conscience joined in the condemnation! As I read the whole law of the Lord through and remembered how Christ interpreted and applied it, I felt sick at heart, and the conviction burned itself into my soul with all the force of a raging fever—that all the Ten Commandments would be swift and sure witnesses against me at the judgment bar of God! It must be a terrible thing to stand in front of a row of soldiers, knowing that every one of their rifles contains a bullet that is meant for your heart, but the condemnation of a sin burdened conscience is worse than that! The ten great guns of the law of God are all aimed at the poor sinner and there he stands, dreading the doom that he knows he deserves, for the justice of God has but to lift its finger and swift and awful would be the punishment which his sin would bring upon him!

I can bear my testimony that there is no sickness that is so hard to bear as the sickness that is caused by sin. You may get a little rest now and then in almost every other form of affliction, but you cannot get any rest when you are suffering from this spiritual malady! "Day and night," said David, "Your hand was heavy upon me." So it is not at all surprising that he added, "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." This sickness because of sin is one that no human physician can cure and no earthly medicine can even alleviate! When suffering thus, the soul can find no comfort—often, not even in the word, itself! Yet, if there are any here who are sick in this way, let me say that I am glad that they are thus afflicted, for this is a sickness of which souls do not eternally die—it is a sickness which ends in everlasting health! So I pray with all my heart that we may *all* fall sick of it—and then that Jehovah Rophi may come and cure us as only He can!

There is one special symptom of this soul sickness to which the text directs our attention—"Their soul abhors all manner of meat." Here comes the world's waiter bearing a dainty dish in his hand. As he lifts the cover, the sinner recognizes its contents and remembers how he has relished such food in the past. But when he tastes it, he cannot tell why,

but he feels an utter revulsion to it! That which once seemed so savory is now quite nauseous to him! "Take it away," he cries. "I am sick of the very sight of it!" Then the waiter brings in something that is more highly spiced and sets it before him, but when he has tried it, he says, "I do not see why people are so fond of such fare as this! To me it is utterly flavorless and insipid." One brings him the fare that is provided at the theater, another tries to tempt his appetite with innocent pleasantries, a third tries the seductions of immoral amusements, but to the whole set of them he cries, "Get you gone, every one of you! Not one of you can bring me anything to suit my palate." He finds fault with everything that is offered to him! The fact is, his mouth is out of taste for all such dainties, as some call them. It is a blessed thing to have no liking for such fare as the world can set before you, for those who are satisfied with such food as that will find that they have to digest it in hell—and long enough will they be in doing so! There may be some in this building, tonight, who have lost their taste for things that once charmed them. You do not know how it is, but somehow or other, you cannot get on with the company in which you used to feel quite at home. The amusements which once delighted you seem, now, to be so frivolous and senseless that you wonder how you could ever have been allured by them. The explanation is that you are now like those of whom our text speaks—"Their soul abhors all manner of meat."

The worst of it is that people in this state of mind and heart abhor the good meat as well as the bad—"their soul abhors *all manner of meat*"—the good meat of the gospel as well as the tainted viands of the world. Many a time I have acted as a cook and I have tried to tempt these sin sick folk with what I reckoned to be most delicious fare—food which I had myself tasted first and found it to be most palatable and nourishing. But when I have set it before them, they have turned away from it and said, "No, no, that is not for us—we cannot relish such fare as that." I have preached concerning the abounding mercy of God, but the sinner has said, "There is no mercy for me." I have talked of the power of Jesus' precious blood, but the sinner has said, "It will never cleanse *me*." I have spoken of the prevalence of believing prayer, but the poor man has shaken his head and despairingly cried, "I cannot pray!" I have told him that Christ is willing and waiting to receive all who come to Him, but he only turned his face to the wall and said, "I cannot come to Christ, and I never shall come to Him. I know that I am a condemned man." I have brought out the promises and set them in a dish garnished with gospel invitations, but his soul has abhorred all manner of meat. The fault is not with the meat, but with the sinner's mouth—the provision is good, yet his soul abhors it!

I recollect the time when I used to come out of every house of prayer feeling worse than when I entered it. I used to read Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*, Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and other books of the same sort—but often, when I shut them up, I wished I had never opened them! I read the Bible most diligently, but the choicest passages in it only made me cry, "Ah, it is a

most blessed book for other people, but it is not for me." I was in the condition described by the text and my soul abhorred all manner of food, even the very best!

The text also tells us *the extent to which this soul sickness had gone*—"they draw near unto the gates of death." Ah, poor soul, is not this a true portrait of you? You think that your death warrant has been signed by your God, that you are shut up in the condemned cell and that you can hear the carpenters at work making the scaffold ready for your execution! In imagination you have been already shackled, you have gone up the fatal stairs, the cap has been drawn over your face, you are standing upon the drop and to your own apprehension you are about to be launched into hell! This shows how sick you are, but while I am moved to pity as I see how you are suffering, I am thankful that your present pains are of so salutary a character and that they will prove to be for your lasting good! I can even clap my hands for joy that you are brought so low as to draw near to the gates of death, for my hope is that you will soon be brought near to the gate of everlasting life! Now that God has brought you down, He will soon bring you up, for it is as Hannah sang, "The Lord kills and makes alive: He brings down to the grave, and brings up." Therefore be of good courage even though your soul is in such a sad and desperate state!

II. Now, secondly, let us consider the text as SHOWING THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE FOLKS ARE CURED.

First, *they call for the aid of the Great Physician.* "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Now that they are brought so near to the gates of Death that there is no hope of their recovery unless God Himself interposes on their behalf, "they cry unto the LORD." I have known some who when they have got to their most desperate state, have been afraid to call upon God to help them. "How can I pray, now," one asks, "when I never prayed before?" That is all the greater reason, my friend, why you should begin to pray now! You need not even bend the knee, but let your heart go up to God in prayer just where you are now sitting or standing. "But," says another, "if I were to pray, it would only be through fear of hell. Poor soul, do not be too particular about your reasons for praying! Cry from your very soul, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and God will hear you and have mercy upon you! I doubt not that many have come to God first through fear of hell, and afterwards they have learned the attractive power of the love of God in Christ Jesus. If you go to Christ, He will in no wise cast you out!

"But my prayer would be such a selfish one! I could only ask that I might be saved." Well, and what then? For whose sake did the prodigal go back to his father? And did his father refuse to receive him because it was a selfish motive that made him return? He said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" It was a mere bread and cheese motive that took him back from the far country, but his father's welcome was none the less hearty to the returning prodigal! I never send for a doctor except from the most selfish motive—I do it for my own good, not for his! And so it must be

with you. Cry to the Great Physician because you need Him to cure you. You will think more of His honor and glory after He has cured you, but for the present, be selfish enough to cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish!"

"But I have tried everyone else, first, so I cannot expect God to attend to me after that." Ah, but God's ways are not like man's! If you had been round to every other shop, first, an ordinary tradesman might refuse to serve you, but God does not deal with sinners in such a fashion as that! Though you have tried the law of God and tried your own good works, and tried all sorts of human inventions—and all have failed you, cry now to your God! "Better late than never." All that you have yet done is but part of your disease, so go to your God and confess it, mourn over it before Him and he will tell you that all your sins are forgiven you for His dear Son's sake because He took your place and suffered in your place when He died, "the just for the unjust," to bring you to God!

"But I cannot pray," says one. Then do not try to pray, but simply cry to God as they did in the Psalmist's day. Crying is the most natural expression of human needs. I expect you have learned that your child manages very early in life to let you know what he wants—he does not say, "Father, teach me a little phrase that I may say every morning when I want my breakfast." How soon a little child in pain will let you know that something is the matter! He will cry all over—head, hands, feet and his whole body will be in such a state of agitation that you will run to his relief! And that is the way to cry to God in your trouble. If your tongue cannot express your needs, let your bended knees, your uplifted hands and your streaming eyes and heaving bosom and aching heart all help to make up for your broken utterance! And then will the Lord speedily save you out of your distress.

"But what is the Physician's fee?" asks one, who has vivid memories of earthly doctors' bills. The fee—oh, the Physician will have you, yourself, as His fee! When He heals you of your soul sickness, He takes you to be His forever. But He wants nothing from you! Only trust Him. Only cry to Him. Then, and though your soul has abhorred all manner of meat, and you have drawn near to the gates of death, Jehovah Rophi will cause your disease to vanish in a moment and your soul shall rejoice in perfect restoration to health!

I can only speak briefly upon *the happy cure of the sin sick patients by the Great Physician*—"He sent His word, and healed them." The one remedy for sin sick sinners is the Word of God, so let them be diligent in reading it and eager to hear it whenever they can, for, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Certain passages of Scripture will always be peculiarly precious to us, for they were the golden keys which opened the dungeons in Doubting Castle and set us at liberty. I can never forget that blessed text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," for that was the message that brought peace to my troubled spirit! And no doubt many of you have similar memories concerning the texts which were used by God for your deliverance. It is the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit, that is the means of healing sin sick souls!

But there is a still higher meaning in this expression, for the Lord Jesus Christ is THE WORD OF GOD and it is He whom God has sent for the healing of poor sin sick souls! He was sent by God to be the sinner's friend and the sinner's Savior! He lived for sinners and He died for sinners. Listen to this good news, sinner! You have sinned, but if you believe in Jesus, you shall no longer be regarded by God as a sinner, for Christ has borne your sins into the land of forgetfulness, as the scapegoat of old did typically for Israel! You have sinfulness still within you, but if you are truly trusting in Jesus, He will overcome your sinfulness by putting His holy fear in your heart and by causing His Spirit to subdue all your evil properties.

Notice, too, how quick the cure is. God has but to say to the sinner, "Be you healed," and he is healed! Just as in creation, Jehovah said, "Let there be light: and there was light." And just as when He was upon the earth, the Lord Jesus but spoke and blind eyes were made to see, deaf ears were made to hear, the lame were enabled to walk and even the dead were raised to life! Poor sinner, you think that your coffin will soon be needed, but Jehovah Jesus has but to speak the word and in an *instant* the flush of health shall come upon your soul and you shall be perfectly healed!

This cure is also perfect as well as immediate, for the text says that the Lord "delivered them from their destructions," as well as that He "saves them out of their distresses." They are not only cured of one spiritual malady, but of all! They are delivered from the guilt, the power and the penalty of sin! And once they are really cured by Christ, there is no fear of their ever having this soul sickness again! Let the Great Physician but speak the healing word to the sinner here who is in the most desperate condition—and in a moment that sinner shall be made whole, never to suffer in the same fashion again! Oh, that He would put forth His healing power this very moment! I can only talk, but He can act. I can only tell you how sin sick sinners are cured, but He can cure you! Oh, that you who have been brought so low that you think you can go no lower unless you are cast into hell, would only cry unto the Lord in your trouble and He will save you out of your distresses! He will send His word and heal you, and deliver you from going down to destruction! God grant that it may be so, for His dear Son's sake!

III. Now I must close by briefly reminding you of WHAT THESE SIN SICK FOLKS DO AFTER THEY ARE CURED. They do what I would like to do all my life!

First, *they praise the name of the LORD*. What blessed employment this is, and I think God has just cause of complaint against us that we do not praise Him more. Men of the world seem to have thoroughly learned the art of cheering themselves with song. If the woodman goes forth on a snowy morning with his axe over his shoulder, he is generally humming or whistling a merry tune. You scarcely ever see a milkmaid in the country brushing the early dew from the grass without also hearing her singing some lively strain. And the housewife, as she rocks the cradle, soothes her babe to sleep with a tuneful lullaby. The sailors an

board ship never haul up the anchor or join in other heavy labor without uniting in a jovial song to help them in their task! And Christians ought to imitate them, only on a much higher scale! I think we lose a great deal through not praising God more. We need much more singing—could you not sing much more at home, at the family altar, or when you are engaged in your various occupations? It would help to bring heavenly enjoyment into your lives if you had more of this heavenly employment!

Then, next, sin sick souls who have been healed *offer sacrifices unto the Lord*—"Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving." I do not believe you have ever been cured by Christ unless you need to do something to show how grateful you are to Him. A saved soul feels the sacred burdening of love and longs to consecrate itself and all it has to God's glory! And if there is one thing that is more difficult than another, the grateful soul says, "That is what I should like to do for Christ, to prove my love to Him." Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, have you really devoted yourselves—body, soul and spirit—to Him who gave His all for you? Then prove it by your self-denial and self-sacrifice for His cause!

Now, lastly, those who are cured by Christ *"declare His works with rejoicing,"* by which is meant, I suppose, that if they can preach, they are to do it "with rejoicing." There are some preachers who seem to regard the gospel as though it were a cup of medicine of the bitterest kind. It is true that it is a healing balm—it is a most blessed cure all—but it is neither to be presented nor taken with a wry face as though it were some nauseous concoction of the apothecary! Whitefield began one of his discourses thus—"When I read my text, I felt inclined to sing instead of preaching to you." That is the way to preach—with a holy joyfulness of spirit, telling your hearers that you have found the priceless pearl and inviting them to share its preciousness with you! And you who cannot preach, can talk to one another in a similar strain—how much good can be done by a bright testimony to God's grace in little companies of three, four, five, or six! I thank God that many of you are not strangers to this blessed work, but I wish that more of you would get at it. How can you keep this blessed secret to yourselves? You are in a hospital full of spiritually sick folks and yet you keep to yourselves the secret of everlasting health! You are surrounded by myriads of lost souls and yet you keep to yourselves the secret of salvation! Oh, shame on you for such guilty silence! End it at once—tell the good news to someone before you go to bed tonight—and then tell it to somebody else as early as you can in the morning! And keep on telling it in season and out of season as long as you live! Let us have plenty of street preaching, plenty of Bible distribution, plenty of Sunday school teaching, plenty of teaching young men and women in Bible classes, plenty of *everything*, in fact, that will make men know what Jesus Christ can do! I would that I could whisper in the ear of everyone who has been healed, "Go, and tell your neighbor, your friend, your child, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife what the Lord has done for you!"

"Are we all to preach?" asks someone. Oh, no! Only you who have been healed can tell about the Good Physician's healing power. If you are

among those who are sick through sin, and sick of sin, come to Him to be healed—trust Him to save you and then—

"Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found
Point to His redeeming blood
And say, 'Behold the way to God.'"

God bless you, everyone, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107:1-32.

The Psalmist exhorts the redeemed in praising God, to observe the different forms of His mercy. He views the chosen people as travelers, captives, sick men and seamen. And in each of these classes he exhorts them to praise the Lord.

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good.* He is essentially good. His name, God, is only a shorter form of good, yet if we were to lengthen it, there could be no more goodness found in it than is found in the three letters, "God."

1. *For His mercy endures forever.* That is the form which His goodness takes in relation to us, His sinful creatures. As we deserve nothing, everything that He gives us is a gift of mercy—and what a range His mercy takes! "His mercy endures forever."

2. *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* If nobody else will say that God is good, let His redeemed ones say it! If others are silent, let them speak to His praise! If others are doubtful, let them declare positively that the Lord is good and that His mercy endures forever!

3. *And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west from the north, and from the south.* We were scattered in various directions by our own folly and sin—

"Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road"—

and He gathered us unto that blessed Shiloh of whom Jacob said, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

4. *They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way.* Ah, the way of a sinner, convicted of sin, is indeed a solitary way! He has a sorrow which he cannot tell to anybody else—a stranger intermeddles not with his grief!

4. *They found no city to dwell in.* There are no cities in the wilderness for people to dwell in. We look for a city that is out of sight at present—"a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Here, in this fleeting world, we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

5, 6. *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.* They were a long while before they prayed to the Lord, but He was not a long while before He answered their prayer! When they were brought to that, *then*, that is to say, when they were so hungry, and so thirsty, and so faint that they could do nothing else but cry, *then*, was

the moment that they cried unto the Lord, "He delivered them out of their distresses."

7. *And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.* "He led them"…"that they might go." The leadings of divine grace do not destroy the activities of the human will. God does not treat us as if we were blocks of wood or stone, but He treats us as reasonable beings.

8, 9. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness.* We hardly looked for that verse to follow the preceding one! We might have thought that the Psalmist would have written, "for He brings them to a city of rest." God always exceeds our expectations. He not only brings His wandering people home, but He feeds them bountifully when they are there! He holds high festival within Zion's gate, and the citizens of the New Jerusalem are fed with the finest of the wheat. Surely souls so blessed must praise Jehovah for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Now comes another picture, the picture of the captives—

10, 11. *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High.* They "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," for they have lost all energy. They sit down in dumb despair, for at last their sins have found them out. They rejected God and He has left them to suffer the consequences of their sin—"being bound in affliction and iron."

12, 13. *Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble*—This seems to always be the last thing that people in trouble do! Until they hunger and thirst, and their soul faints, as in the former case, or until they fall down utterly helpless, as in this case, they will not pray. But "then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble"—

13-16. *And He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.* All glory be to the great liberator's name! Now comes the picture of sick men, which is also the portrait of ourselves—

17. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* Perhaps affliction comes to their bodies, but more especially it attacks their hearts—they have heart disease, a mortal tremor within, or a terrible fever of fear.

18. *Their soul abhors all manner of meat.* You cannot comfort them, they cannot or will not receive the Truth of God that would sustain them—they have lost all appetite for spiritual food.

18. *And they draw near unto the gates of death.* They seem to come close to those great iron gates that shut out all hope forever! They can

hear them grind upon their massive hinges—they begin to realize what the wrath of God means.

19. *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble.* Fools though they are, they have sense enough to do this!

19. *And He saves them out of their distresses.* So that a true prayer from one who is near unto the gates of death is a prevailing prayer! We earnestly urge all to repent long before they come to a dying bed, but if they are on a dying bed—if they are literally near unto the gates of death—here is evidence that if they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, He will not close His ears or His heart to their prayer!

20. *He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.* The Word of God has a sort of omnipotent power in it. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and by the word of the Lord are sick [See Sermons #1992, Volume 33—SONG FOR THE FREE—HOPE FOR THE BOUND; #1824, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF SUNDRY FOOLS and #2921, Volume 51—AN OLD-FASHIONED REMEDY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] souls healed. That word can do anything that God purposes. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," but where the Word of God is, there is omnipotence!

21, 22. *Oh that man would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.* Now we come to the seafaring men—

23, 24. *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.* These words literally apply not only to seamen, but also to others who are called to endure great storms while sailing across the sea of this mortal life.

25, 26. *For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.* For even he who has his "sea legs" on, finds them of little use to him when such a storm as this is tossing everything in a dreadful hurly burly. "They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths," and this experience is repeated, perhaps, hundreds of times, day and night, sometimes for weeks together!

27. *They reel to and fro, and stagger like drunken men, and are at their wit's end.* But, oh, when souls are caught in a storm of conviction of sin, this is a true description of their spiritual distress—they are at their wit's end and do not know what to do! Everything about them is shaking, and they are reeling to and fro, sometimes this way and sometimes that—staggering, scarcely able to believe anything, seeing some things double and everything out of place!

28. *Then they cry*—Yes, *then*, when they are reeling and staggering! That is a strange condition—is it not—in which to be praying, reeling to and fro, and staggering like a drunken man? "Then they cry"—

28. *Unto the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.* Then God will hear the prayer of a staggering man, and the

prayer that has not any sense in it because the man who prays is at his wit's end! By "sense" I mean not following the consecutiveness of an orderly petition—the prayer itself seeming to reel to and fro. The suppliant is so overpowered by sorrow that he might be thought to be drunk—as she was to whom Eli so harshly spoke bidding her put away her wine from her, whereas she was overcome by sorrow. God hears us when we cannot hear ourselves pray and when we cannot put the words of our supplication in proper order. God knows what we mean to say and gives us what we really need.

29. *He makes the storm a calm*—What a change! And what a blessing it is to get into one of God's calms, for they are far beyond the ordinary calm of nature! Then do we enjoy "the peace of God, which passes all understanding."

29-32. *So that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.*

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"A KIND OF FIRST FRUITS"
NO. 3275

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 5, 1868.

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."
James 1:18.

MARTIN LUTHER, the great defender of the faith, who passionately loved the doctrine of justification by faith, once grew so thoroughly out of temper with the opponents who quoted the Apostle James against him, that he almost threatened to tear his epistle out of the canon, because he supposed that James fell afoul of Paul upon the matter of justification by faith alone. It is, however, very clear to us that James, like the other apostles, never doubted that every good thing that can be found among mankind is a gift of pure grace, the gift of God. Hear how he puts it in the verse preceding our text, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above"—nothing from human nature, nothing from mere free agency. Good and perfect gifts are flowers too rich and rare to spring up of themselves upon the dunghill of human nature. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights." James knew how to—

"Give all the glory to Him
To whom all the glory belongs."

There was no gainsaying upon this matter with the apostle—he put the crown upon the right head and ascribed the honor to Him alone who is worthy to receive it.

Waiting upon God this evening in the same spirit, and desiring to honor and magnify Him, I ask you to consider the words of the text. They speak only to the saint—and a division must therefore be made in the congregation at once, for I fear we are not all saved—not all the children of the divine God, not all resting upon the Rock of Ages. Let conscience speak, let each man judge himself, and let us now stand a divided company—as I fear we shall one day stand, some on the right hand and some on the left of the judge.

It is to the children of God, the believers, the saved ones, that such a pedigree belongs and such a destiny opens up. *Their privilege of birth* claims our first notice. And then *the practical consequences flowing from that privilege* must engage our attention.

I. THE PRIVILEGE MENTIONED IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN REGENERATED, THAT WE ARE NEW CREATURES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD.

"Of his own will He brought us forth."*Regeneration and all consequent blessings come to us entirely through the absolute, but gracious will of God.* He is not bound to give. He may, if He wills, withhold. We have no claim upon God, except the claim of justice—and what would that involve but that He should punish us for our sin? We are felons against the Majesty of heaven. We have forfeited all the rights we ever had under the divine government. The right to punishment is the only right we can now claim upon the footing of justice. Henceforth we are simply in the hands of God awaiting His sentence. He may, if He wills, save the entire human race. If it pleases Him, He may save none. If so He wills, He may make this man a monument of mercy and leave his neighbor to reap the due reward of his works. This is what God has a right to do and He claims His sovereign prerogative! Are not His own words heard through Scripture like peals of thunder, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; so then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy"? There are some who, in their blindness, grow wrathful at this doctrine, as if it were ungracious to mention a fact which it is impossible to disguise—they will almost froth at the mouth when the subject is broached. Well, let them do so—it still stands firm as a rock and fast as the eternal hills! Jehovah gives no account of His matters. He does as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. So—

"Mortals, be dumb! What creature dares
Dispute His awful will?
Ask no account of His affairs,
But tremble and be still!"

Brothers and sisters, you and I, to whom this sovereignty has looked forth through the lattice of grace, can gladly appreciate it. We bless that wonderful, discriminating love which fixed upon us while others were let to go their downward course and perish. The only motive God had to stir up His mercy, was His own will. To us, therefore, it is precious. Before we ever prayed, before we ever sought His face, His own will, acting spontaneously, brought to us the bounty of His lovingkindness. Now most men who are generous need to have their generosity excited. They will need to be waited upon. Appeals must be laid before them. They must sometimes be pressed—an example must lead them on. But "of His own will" God did to us all that has been done, without any incentive or prompting, moved only by Himself because He delights in mercy—because His name and His nature are love—because evermore, like the sun, it is natural to Him to distribute the beams of His eternal grace! "Of His own will He brought us forth." Come, my brothers and sisters, let us

magnify the Lord who loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins! Let us extol the freeness of that mercy, the goings forth of which were of old, from everlasting, while we remember that we deserved it not—that we set ourselves against it, that when we did know it, we despised it! That when it was presented to us, we defied it, resisted it, stood out against it many a long year! Oh, when we think of this, I say, let us bow humbly before the throne of the infinite Majesty and bless Him whose mercy endures forever and whose lovingkindness, like Himself, owes nothing to any incentive beyond itself, but is causeless, not communicated, existing full and free in the mind of God Himself! Because He willed and according to the dictate of His own good pleasure, did He have compassion upon us!

The benefit we have thus received is described in the next words, "Of His own will *He brought us forth."* That is to say, we have, by divine power, been born again! Our first birth was to us our sensitive creation. Our second birth, our regeneration, is our second creation. We were made once and God made us. These bodies are the wonderful fabrics of His skill and these souls are the emanations of His power. Father of Spirits, You are, O God, and we are Your offspring, and Yours alone! But our being made *again* is as great a work of God and quite as solely a work of God, quite as entirely the handiwork of God, as our first creation! Of His own will He gave us a new life and made us new creatures. Beloved, are we conscious tonight that we are new creatures? Some, perhaps, have doubts about it sometimes, but a man cannot be a new creature and not be conscious of some sort of change. And there will be times, with the most doubtful of the saints, when they are certain and assured that they are no longer what they were, but have passed from death unto life! Search your own hearts, dear friends. Let the prayer that was offered just now to the great searcher of hearts, and trier of the reins of the children of men, come from your lips and your hearts, "Search us, O God, and try us!" Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you have not something more than what nature gave you, you will perish! If you are not something higher than the best morality, the most exact discipline and the most consistent moral behavior can make you, you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven!

"You must be born again." This declaration stands like a sentry at the gate of heaven, thrusting the bayonet in the way to show that, however amiable, moral, upright and excellent those may be who seek to enter there, they must be born again. "You must be born again." You dignitaries of the church, you senators of the nation, you who wear imperial crowns and you who don your coronets, you must be born again! You who have been brought up and dandled upon the knees of piety. You who have not openly offended against the law. You who have been in your houses a joy and in the world a delight, you must be born

again! It matters not who you are—if you are born of woman, how can that be clean which comes of the unclean? You must be passed out of the flesh into the spirit—and this must be the work of God, Himself, or it is worth nothing! It must be a *supernatural* change, above and beyond all the struggling and the striving of the creature. It must be the display of the eternal power of the Holy Spirit, or where God, is you cannot go. Happy should you be, my brothers and sisters, who trust that you have a share in this unutterably precious privilege! "Of His own will He brought us forth." You are twice born. You are God's children with an emphasis which belongs not to other men. You, though you were dead, are now alive! Though you were carnal, you have been spiritualized! Though you were far off, you have been brought near—and this all due to the sovereign will of God alone! Bless Him, bless Him, and humble your hearts before Him!

The instrumentality through which this singular change has been worked in us is clearly stated, "Of His own will He brought us forth *by the word of truth*." Men are not usually saved without the immediate agency of the gospel. Some have said that the Spirit of God always works through the truth of God and that the truth is sure to work conviction. The truth, however, is preached—and faithfully preached—to tens of thousands to whom it conveys not a blessing at all, but is the savor of death unto death! Others have said that the Spirit of God regenerates men apart from the Word of God but this is not told us in Scripture and is not, therefore, to be received. But always the word and the Spirit are put together. Scripture does not talk of the Word of God as a dead letter. It says, "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword." On the other hand, Scripture does not speak of the Holy Spirit as though the Word would work apart from Him, but the two are put together, and "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." My dear brothers and sisters, you who have been begotten again unto a lively hope, was it not through the hearing of the word, or the reading of it, or the remembrance of some hallowed text which you had almost forgotten? You know it was! Good McCheyne used to say, "Depend on it, it is God's word that saves souls, and not our comment upon God's word." And so I believe it is. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes!

And what is this word? What is it that usually brings men to be begotten unto a new life? The word, the special quickening word, is the preaching of the doctrine of the cross. Beloved, no man was ever begotten again by preaching to him the law. The law may smite him, and lay him low in his death and ruin, and break and bruise him, but the telling him of what he ought to be, and should be, and of what he has done amiss, and of the punishment that he will receive will never quicken him! It is telling him that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"—this it is which brings the

heart to God, to peace, to life, to safety! Leave out the doctrine of the cross and you have left out everything! Those men who take away the atonement from the gospel, murder the gospel—they are like vampires that suck the blood out of the living man's veins, and lay him dead! That word, "blood," is one of the most solemn and most important in the whole of Scripture! "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin," is one of the most weighty of all the truths of revelation—and he that speaks that doctrine stammeringly, or who holds it without confidence, had better go to his bed—but never to his pulpit, for he cannot win souls! Let him repent of his iniquity, but never pretend to be a minister of Christ! Oh, then, if you have been quickened by the word, proclaim the word! If the gospel has brought you to salvation, proclaim that gospel! Whisper into every sinner's ear the fact that Christ died for sinners. Make it known wherever your influence can reach that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life! Tell how Jesus stood as the substitute for guilty men. How, when vengeance poured out her vials, she emptied them upon Christ instead of us! How, when the sword awoke against iniquity, it smote the shepherd instead of the sheep! And how the Beloved Redeemer—

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

Now, looking back, I recall the minds of believers to holy gratitude and humble hope as they look back to what God has done, and bless His name that "of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth."

II. And now we shall ask your earnest attention to THE PRACTICAL DUTY WHICH SPRINGS OUT OF THIS PRIVILEGE.

It is a universal rule that to whom much is given, of him much will be required—a rule as much under the gospel as under the law—it is a part of the government of the great house of God. Now, we were begotten by the word with an end and with a purpose, namely, "that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."

I suppose it is meant *that we should have a dignity above all the rest of His creatures*. God intends to put us first. He puts His saints beyond all others as His peculiar treasure. I ventured to say, last Sabbath evening, that I believed the poorest and the meanest of the Lord's people were, in the estimation of God, infinitely more important than the greatest potentates living upon the face of the earth when they are unconverted. God looks upon the rest of mankind as though they were but the common pebbles of the brook, but these are the gems, the jewels, the regalia of His crown! In these He takes delight—they are His peculiar treasure. See, then, dear brothers and sisters, your privilege. You have been begotten on purpose that you may be the choice ones of the earth—precious beyond conception, dear to the heart of God and lying very near to His bosom!

But the duty that comes out of this is the point to which I wish to call your attention. This morning I told you that the first fruits were gathered out of the harvest and presented to God. I think I shall have time to read a few verses from the 26th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy which will throw a great deal of light upon the fact of the first fruits and may help us in practically aiming to be such.

In Deuteronomy 26:1-4, we read as follows—"And it shall be, when you are come in unto the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwell therein, that you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth which you shall bring of your land that the Lord your God gives you and shall put it in a basket, and shall go unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to place His name there. And you shall go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord your God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of your hands and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God." Then there is an account of what the offerer shall say, which we will read, by and by, and then the account closes in the 11th verse, "And you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given unto you, and unto your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you."

Now, according to James, God has been pleased to save us, *that we may bring ourselves as an offering unto God*, just as the Israelites brought a basket full of the first ripe ears of corn to offer them unto the Lord in sacrifice.

Observe, that *this was ordered of God*. This giving of the first fruits was according to God's own ordinance. My brothers and sisters, I might if I liked, tonight, talk to you about the duty of giving a portion of your substance to God's cause, but I trust that you have learned that and that many of you practice it—as many of you as do not, neglect your own profit. The rich should give that they may be rich and the poor that they may become rich—for those who give shall usually find that God returns it into their bosoms abundantly. But I am not going to speak of that just now. When it was the birthday of Socrates, each one of his disciples brought him a present, but there was one so poor that he brought nothing, but he said to Socrates, "Oh, teacher, I give you myself as my offering." So you saints of God, I shall say nothing to you about your substance—it belongs to God. You are only stewards. I will say nothing about your time—that belongs to God, and not to you unless you redeem it, you that care for it. But rather I speak about yourselves—this is an ordinance of God, that every soul redeemed by blood should acknowledge that he is not his own, but that he is bought with a price. If you reject the giving up of yourselves to God, then you reject the purchase of the blood—but if you acknowledge that you are redeemed, you must also admit that you are not your own, but that you belong to Christ.

Professors and members of this church, may I solemnly put it to you, whether you are carrying out day by day the consecration of yourselves to Christ? Could you honestly say, "For to me to live is Christ"? Remember, if you cannot say that, there is something wrong within—you are acting dishonestly to Him whose servant you profess to be!

A genuine Christian, I take it, makes the main and chief objective of his life the extension of his Master's kingdom and the manifestation of the Redeemer's glory. He can scarcely be thought to be a Christian, except in name, who lives from week to week with no more spirituality than that which enables him to go sometimes to the house of prayer, but who, neither by his powers, nor his gifts, nor his time, nor by any other means, ever does service to the Lord, his God! I must be faithful with you, his servants you are to whom you obey! If you spend the whole of your energies, the whole of your strength in serving yourselves, then you are your own servants and not God's. If Christ is in you, you will seek to honor Christ! Away with your profession, away with your name to live if there is no care for Christ's honor! I believe that there are some professors who would as soon see the church decline as prosper, who would just as soon hear of no conversions as of many, who never did go about to bring a soul to Christ, who never sought by any means to increase the number of the faithful! Woe unto such when He shall come, whose fan is in His hand and who shall thoroughly purge His floor. Woe unto you, I say, in that day when He shall sit as a refiner and shall purify the sons of Levi, for that which is not living Christianity will rot and be cast into the sea in that day! That which is not solid, sterling service to Christ will be held to be wood, hay and stubble which the fire shall burn! I tremble while I thus speak, for those of us who do the most may yet be doing it unto ourselves—and even the preaching of the cross may be to us a selfish service! Oh, it is to be feared that we may sometimes preach Christ rather for the display of our own ability than the display of Christ's beauty! And if so, we have brought no sacrifice to Him—we have rather prostituted the service of Christ to our own pride and so have dishonored Him and brought sorrow upon ourselves! Come, then, you who claim that you are blood bought! Come, I pray you, tonight, and confess your shortcomings and ask for grace that, henceforth, if you live, you may live unto Christ! And bring yourselves, now, I pray you, as is your reasonable service, your spirits, souls and bodies, and present them to your God, for they are His unless you have deceived yourselves!

But, in the next place, *the offering was a willing one on the part of the offerer*. Nobody ever went up to God's house, in the olden time, flogged there or dragged there! If the Israelite did not choose to bring the first fruits, it was his own decision, and his own alone. He incurred the penalty. He lost the blessing. But if he did bring it, God loved a cheerful giver—it was to be brought by him freely. So, beloved, if I were speaking

to you tonight about the giving of your substance, I would say, "Not by constraint, but willingly." If I were speaking to you concerning the offering of your time to serve God, I would say, "Not grudgingly, but being glad to be servants of the Most High." But I am speaking of yourselves, and I pray you bring yourselves cheerfully. 'Tis mine to exhort you, but, oh, where the heart is right, our exhortation will be thankfully received—but still the heart will be willing beforehand. Happy is he who preaches to a people whose pure minds have the good thing in them and who, therefore, only need to have them "stirred up by way of remembrance." Yet to any that have hitherto held back, I say, "I beseech you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Do you notice the word the apostle uses, "I beseech you"? Beseech! It is the beggar's word. "I beseech you," and I do. If I may have any love to you at all, or any care for your spiritual prosperity, I would express in this earnest beseeching of you that you would present yourselves to God!

Ah, we shall soon be gone, and on the dying bed may it never be your regret nor mine that we wasted opportunities of serving our Lord! I have stood by bedsides, and of good men, too, where there has been much of darkness and of gloom because they had to confess that they had not lived as they should have lived. O may your deathbed pillow never be stuffed with thorns because you have been unfaithful! My hearer, are you doing all you can for Christ? Is there any service that you might undertake which you have hitherto slighted? My young brother, with all the strength of your youth, or you, yonder, with all the wisdom of your experience—are you sure that you have laid out every talent? Is there any rusty talent wrapped in a napkin? Is there not yet something that you might do for your Master? May God grant us what I cannot bestow—the grace to be wholly sanctified! I am afraid that few of us are so and yet we might be—might be without giving up our business, might be without leaving our daily calling—for there is such a thing, as you full well know, as eating and drinking to the glory of God! You can buy and sell, you can sweep a street crossing, you can do anything if the heart is but right, so as to glorify God in it! The household servant, the nursery girl, the laborer in the docks, the carpenter, the bricklayer, the tradesman, the merchant, the senator, the clerk—each of these is necessary to the commonwealth—and if they are diligent and fear God in all they do, they may be as acceptable as the minister of Christ whose whole time is devoted to what are thought to be more sacred works! Only do, I beseech you, do bring yourselves cheerfully, willingly, without pressing or persuasion! Bring yourselves unto Christ in every way that your loving heart can devise and make yourselves a living sacrifice!

You noticed, perhaps, when I was reading the chapter in Deuteronomy, that the man brought ears of corn in a basket, and he brought them freely. *But he did not, himself, offer them to God.* Did you

note those words, "And the priest shall take the basket out of your hand"? Not the man's hand that brought them could offer them but the priest's hands should offer them—"The priest shall take the basket out of your hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God." Our offering of ourselves to God, then, is divinely ordered and should be willingly performed, but it *must be mediatorially presented*. We cannot offer ourselves to God directly—we must come through Jesus Christ. Nothing that you and I can do or can be, in itself, is acceptable to the Most High! Christ must wash the sins of our best charities in His precious blood—and He must perfume our most industrious works with His own merit—or else they are not such as the pure and holy God can receive! I do like to think that I can bring myself by holy self-consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ, and can say to Him, "Here I am, a poor unworthy one, defiled with sin. I want to serve God. I do desire to give Him all my powers, my goods, my hours—but Lord, everything I have is so defiled, and I myself am so polluted! Put out that dear hand of Yours that was once outstretched to bleed for sin. Take me into Your hands and then take me up to Your Father's throne and say, "Father, I have brought You a poor sinner's heart. He freely offers to give it, for I have fairly won it, and I present it to you. It is all Yours, it is all Mine. Father, help that poor heart, as long as it beats, to live for You. Help it with Your grace to move hands, and tongue, and feet, and every power that is within it for your glory and for Yours alone." Come then, brothers and sisters, on this, the first Sabbath of the year [1868]—bring your hearts, bring yourselves to the High Priest, our blessed Lord Jesus—and let us pray Him to take us as we are and offer us before the eternal throne, that we may be "accepted in the Beloved."

After that, it appears that *the worshipper made a confession of what he owed to God*. I have no time to read the rest of that 26th chapter, but it suffices to say that the pious Jew, standing there with his ears of corn, confessed that his father was a Syrian, that he went down into Egypt, that there God multiplied him. That Israel was brought out of the wilderness and made, through divine love, to possess the promised land. "Now, therefore," he says, in effect, "of Your own do I give unto You." Now, if you and I give ourselves to God anew tonight, let us remember all the ways whereby the Lord has led us. Why, some of us were but boys and girls when we first loved Christ! When we were singing just now that hymn—

"O happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior and my God"—

I could not help thinking what a blessing and a privilege it has been to have had one's choice fixed on Jesus so many years ago! Why, it is some 18 years ago since Jesus won my heart and I am not yet old! That is much the biggest half of my life and I bless Him for it. Would I have had it postponed? Would to God I had known my Lord before I was fifteen,

and loved Him while still younger—while still a child! But what has been our experience since then? Very checkered, many ups and downs, a world of ingratitude and forgetfulness on our part, but a heaven of faithfulness and lovingkindness on His part! We can sing of His love tonight, His immutability, His longsuffering, His forgiving grace—and every note in that song seems to say to us, "Then bring yourselves and offer yourselves afresh." By every sin forgiven, by every grace received, by every prayer answered, by every trial from which you have been delivered, by every conflict in which you have obtained the victory, by every act of mercy vouchsafed to you, I beseech you, bring yourselves as living sacrifices unto God! Oh, if you have never got to the dignity of being sacrificed for Christ, strive after it! An ordinary Christianity is not worth the picking up, but the true Christianity that wraps a man up and envelopes him as the bush was enveloped in the fire and was not consumed—that will make you happy—that will make the eyes to flash and the soul to beat high with a more than earthborn joy! I tell you solemnly, I believe that half the professors do not know what true religion means. They have never got to it. They have got to the skimmed milk, the scum and the froth, but they have not got down into the depths! The more you give up self, the more you dare and do for Christ, the more fully Jesus sits on the throne of your heart and the more divinely blessed will this life become to you! But the farther you keep from Christ and the more content you are with a halfhearted religion, the more will you find it to be a weariness, a mere burden to be borne, a custom to be endured—not a banquet to be enjoyed, nor a thing divine to be loved and to be grasped with all your mind and heart!

After the worshiper had presented his ears of corn, he went his way. And we are told in Deuteronomy that he was *to have gladness of heart and a blessing upon all*. The consecration of the first fruits was a blessing on the whole, for it was a rule with God that if the first fruits were holy, the lump should be also holy. Now, if you, then, would have a blessing from God, begin, my fellow Christians, with a thorough consecration. "Oh," you say, "my boys did not turn out as I wished!" How did you turn out yourself? "Ah," you say, "there are my girls growing up, and I do not believe they will ever be converted!" How near do you live to God yourself? "There are my servants—I was in hopes that I should see some of them joined to the Christian Church and walking in the faith." How about your own example? As sure as there are laws and rules of nature, you will find that by living near to God, yourself, you will become a channel of blessing to others. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Your way may be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations." The blessing comes to His people, first, and then afterwards it comes to all nations. Did you forget that promise, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon," and so on. And then, "They that

dwell under His shadow shall return"? When you get consecrated yourselves, those who are overshadowed by your influence shall be blessed by the divine grace which comes to you! True revivals must begin at home. If you want to kill weeds, take the hoe into your own garden . If you want to make sweet flowers grow, dig up your own beds. So, then, if you want to have the oil of grace communicated to the whole household, strive, as the father, the mother, the elder brother, or the sister, or the servant, or whoever you may be, to get the divine grace abundantly into your own soul, that afterwards it may come to the rest! O brothers and sisters, bring yourselves, like the basket of ears of corn, to the Lord, now, and there shall be a blessing in your going out and in your coming in! And if the blessing comes not in the shape that you would prefer, yet for all that, all things shall work together for your good. If your house is not so with God as you could desire, yet shall you feel that He has made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure!

All this while I have been speaking to the children of God—but to others of you I cannot thus speak. It would be sheer hypocrisy for me to say to you, "Come and bring yourselves to God." Ah, no! You can make no offering to Him. Your heart is not right with Him and, therefore, you could not be accepted. But I will tell you what you can do by His grace. Though you have nothing to bring Him, you have something to ask from Him. If your heart is not such that you can bring it, and say, "Take it, Lord, take and seal it," yet there is the heart of Christ ready for you to take, and the love of Christ ready for you to receive! You cannot be a giver, so be a receiver! You say, "How can I receive?" I notice the poor hungry creatures on these wintry days, when they stand round the soup kitchens, bringing their pitchers with them—they do not bring their pitchers full! They bring an empty pitcher, each one of them, and they get it filled. Now, all that Christ wants of you is your empty pitcher—that poor, empty, needy heart of yours! If you would receive from Him, here is His command, "Believe and you shall live." To believe is to trust, to confide, to lean upon, to depend. Depend upon Christ, trust in Christ and He will save you, for no one ever yet did lean on Christ and find Him fail! Oh, may you be led to a simple confidence in the dying, but now risen Savior—and then, after that—give God your whole heart and live to Him who died for you!

The Lord command His blessing for Jesus' sake! Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 43.

Verses 1, 2. *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For You are the God of my strength.* In the previous Psalm, David had called the Lord the

God of his life. Now he calls Him the God of his strength. We generally sing ourselves up. We may begin in a very low key, as David did, but if we can praise God in the dark, we shall soon praise God in the light!

2-4. *Why do You cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out Your light and Your truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Your holy hill, and to Your tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.* "My exceeding joy"—exceeding all the other joys I have—exceeding all the joys of the happiest men I have ever known!

4. *Yes, upon the harp will I praise You, O God, my God.* It was not enough for David to say, "O God." He cries, "O God, my God." You cannot praise another man's God. Possession is not only nine points of the law, but it is all the points of the gospel!

5. *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.* May the Lord comfort His mourning people by such words as these!

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

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CHRIST'S GLORY TURNED TO SHAME
NO. 3276

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1865.

"O you sons of men, how long will you turn My glory into shame?"
Psalm 4:2.

DAVID had many times been the subject of cruel mockery and, therefore, while writing this Psalm probably in the first place about himself, he also described in it one of the bitterest of our Savior's sufferings. What an illustration this is of the union which exists between Christ and His people in the matter of experience! He had a cross to bear and so have they. He was "despised and rejected of men," and so are they. The church of God is not like the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, which had a head of gold and feet of iron and clay, but as is the head, such are also the members. As the head had to endure cruel mocking, the members must not expect to be exempted from similar treatment. This is why so many of the Psalms of David are equally applicable to David and to his Lord. And I believe that we have, in this verse, a reference not only to David, himself, but also to "great David's greater Son." In the case of both of them, the sons of men turned their glory into shame, but I want especially to call to your remembrance the sufferings of our Savior in this respect.

I. So, in the first place, notice that EVERYTHING ABOUT OUR SAVIOR THAT WAS GLORIOUS WAS MADE THE SUBJECT OF SCORN.

Begin with *His glorious person*, and think how shamefully that was treated by the sons of men in the time of His humiliation. He was betrayed, but the betrayer was one who had been His disciple and who, in the very act of betrayal called Him, "Master." This was shameful cruelty on the part of Judas, not only to betray Him to His enemies, but to hail Him as "Master," in mockery and to kiss Him in scorn. There was shame even in the way in which they went to Gethsemane to arrest the Savior—with swords and staves, lanterns and torches—as though He had been some desperate malefactor who would resist to the utmost the officers of the law. No lanterns or torches were needed to show the way to the light of the world! And their swords and staves would have availed them nothing if He had chosen to put forth His omnipotent power! When He was dragged before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, His precious person was the constant subject of scorn, so that He could truly say, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked

off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." "The soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head. They put on Him a purple robe and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they struck Him with their hands." And when Pilate brought Him forth to the people and cried, "Behold the man!" instead of pitying Him in His distress, they shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" His agonies upon the cross provided further subjects for their contempt and scorn. He could truthfully employ the language of the 22nd Psalm—"All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." They looked upon His person as being so utterly contemptible that they desired that He should suffer death in its most ignominious form, "even the death of the cross."

And while they treated thus shamefully the human person of our Lord, we cannot forgot the jeers and taunts with which they assailed His deity. When He said, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," the high priest tore his clothes and charged Him with being a blasphemer, while the whole assembly declared that He was guilty of death! And to show their contempt for Him, "then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands." Even when He was enduring all the agony of the crucifixion, we read that, "they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Was it not sufficient to degrade His spotless humanity? No, the glory of His deity must also be turned into shame—in both His natures, as Son of God and Son of man, He must be "despised and rejected of men." Alas that for so long the prophet's words were true concerning us, "we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not."

Not only was Christ's blessed person thus despised, but *all His offices were the subject of scorn*. I do but tell you what you all well know. I do but point you to the picture upon which you have often gazed. Remember how they mocked Him as a prophet. "When they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck you?" They treated His prophetic office as though it had only been worthy of a jest or a jeer. He claimed to be the King of the Jews, so with ribald shouts they cried, "A king! Bring here His throne and seat Him upon it! Bring His royal robes and let Him be fitly adorned." Their idea of fitness was some soldier's discarded mantle cast over His shoulders in mockery of the royal purple. They put a reed into His hand as a mock scepter. And the only crown they thought worthy for Him to wear was made of thorns! To show their contempt for His royalty, they mockingly bowed the knee before Him and rendered Him only the semblance of homage. The only gifts they brought to Him were cruel blows and coarse insults which must have been peculiarly trying to His gentle, gracious spirit. I must not stay to tell how they turned the glory of

His office as our great High Priest into shame, but all His offices were treated with the utmost contempt and scorn.

They even laughed contemptuously at His deeds of love. "The chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others. Himself He cannot save." It seems to me that they meant thus to cast contempt upon His miracles of mercy. "He saved others." Yes, that He did, He saved the famishing by multiplying the loaves and fishes and feeding thousands of people! He saved the sick by touching them or by speaking the word which made them perfectly whole! He saved even the dead by calling them back from the unseen world to live again in the abodes where they had before lived! Yet all these miracles of mercy are now to have contempt poured upon them because He does not choose to come down from the cross at the mocking call of the scoffing priests and scribes and elders! "O you sons of men, how long will you turn His glory into shame?" It was His glory that He had saved others and it was also His glory that He could not save Himself—yet both of these were turned into subjects for shame by those who had no pity for Him even when they had hounded Him to His death!

Perhaps it was worst of all when these *wicked men scoffed at Christ's pangs and prayers*. If you have hurt yourself and someone laughs at the accident, you feel indignant. If you are tossing to and fro upon a bed of sickness and someone sneers at your pains, you know how such unkindness cuts you to the quick. If you were dying and in your agony you cried aloud to God—and somebody ridiculed your prayer—it would be a terrible trial to you. So must it have been to Christ when He was dying upon the cross, forsaken by His friends, forsaken even by His Father because He was then occupying the place that *we ought to have occupied*. Then, when He uttered that heart melting cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?"—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—the heartless spectators made a sort of pun upon His words and mockingly said that He was calling Elijah, though many of them must have recognized the quotation from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm! To mock a man's prayers when he is dying seems to me the very lowest depth of cruel contempt! I do not remember ever reading of any other mob but this one that was so brutal as to turn into mockery the last cries of one who was in his death agony! Yet, at Calvary, the last expiring groans of our blessed Savior were the subject of the mocking mirth of the rabble around the cross. How all this must have pained His sensitive spirit and made Him cry out with David, "O you sons of men, how long will you turn My glory into shame?"

II. NOW, secondly, THE GLORY WHICH CHRIST OUGHT TO HAVE RECEIVED AMONG MEN WAS RENDERED TO HIM ONLY IN SHAME.

A German writer has given us an outline of the way in which worldlings mockingly honored Christ. First of all, he says, *they gave Him a procession of honor*. When a victorious general returns from the wars,

he rides through the streets amidst the plaudits of the crowds that gather to welcome him. And when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was to be honored by the world, He also had a procession, and what a procession it was! "He bearing His cross went forth"…"and there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him." That weeping and wailing company of the daughters of Jerusalem was the only element of real honor in the whole procession—all the rest was mockery and shame—and what a shameful thing it was! O men of the world, if you had known that He was the King of kings and Lord of lords, would you have crucified the Lord of glory? Instead of a band of children and a fickle mob strewing palm branches in His way and crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," kings and princes, judges and senators ought to have felt honored by being allowed to cast their royal robes and costly garments in His road, that He might ride in state over them amid the welcoming shouts of the whole race of mankind! Instead of that, see the poor weary man of sorrows painfully toiling on and presently sinking beneath the burden of the cross on which He was about to die in ignominy and shame—while all around Him the clamorous multitude is hoarsely crying, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!!" That was the kind of procession of honor that men gave to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, *they gave Him a cup of honor*. When a great man comes as a visitor from a foreign country, it is the custom to honor him with a grand banquet and other marks of hospitality. But when Christ came to this earth on a mission of mercy, what did they give Him? First, a stupefying draft which He would not drink, for He would not have any of His powers deadened by any drug. And then, when He was so parched that He cried, "I thirst," "they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth." And Luke expressly says that this was done in mockery by the soldiers, who at the same time tauntingly said to the Savior , "If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." Thus again men turned His glory into shame.

Then, *they gave Him a guard of honor*. Men who have performed deeds of renown often have a bodyguard allotted to them to attend them wherever they go and to ensure their safety where they stay. But what bodyguard did the world allot to the Savior—a guard of gamblers! The soldiers parted His other garments among them, and then cast lots—probably throwing dice—to see which of them should have His seamless coat, little thinking that they were thus fulfilling the prophecy that had been written hundreds of years before! But what a guard was this for Him who was King of kings, and Lord of lords—rough, cruel men whose hearts had been shriveled and in whose breasts no sign of tenderness remained! Thus also was His glory turned into shame.

Then, *they gave Him a seat of honor*. We are accustomed to conduct our noble visitors to the platform at the end of the hall and to lead them to the chair of state or the most honorable position we can find. And the

world conducted its honored Guest down the Via Dolorosa with a bodyguard of gamblers around Him up to the seat of honor! There it is—the accursed tree! He will have little rest there, for the great nails will be roughly thrust through the tenderest parts of His hands and feet, making every nerve in His body quiver with pain! And then, as they brutally jerk the cross down into the hole prepared for it, His whole frame will be so jarred and shaken that He will cry out, in the language of the Psalmist, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint." Thus they turned His glory into shame.

Then, once more, *they gave Him a title of honor*. When the Queen wishes to put special honor upon any of her subjects, she makes them knights, or baronets, or peers of the realm. But the world only thought Christ worthy of the title of "King of thieves." You will perhaps tell me that they called Him, "the King of the Jews." It was Pilate who did that, and he would not alter it even when the chief priest asked him not do so. But the Jewish and Gentile world practically called Him "King of thieves" by crucifying Him between two thieves as though He had been the worst of the three. He was no thief. He had never injured anyone, but had scattered blessings broadcast with both His hands. He had given Himself and all that He had to save the lost, yet they called Him, "King of thieves," by their actions if not by their words. Thus again they turned His glory into shame.

O beloved, I wish I could speak upon this theme in appropriate language! Yet I feel that there is no tongue that can adequately describe the Savior's griefs, and no pen or pencil that can worthily depict Him in His agonies! You must yourselves sit down at the foot of the cross and look, and look, and look again at your blessed Lord and Master as He hung there for your sakes. It used to be more common than it is now for godly men and women to spend hour after hour in solemn meditation upon the agonies of Christ upon the cross. I tried, one day when I was alone, to get a vivid realization of that awful tragedy—and I succeeded to the breaking of my own heart—but I cannot describe the scene to you. That is a matter for private meditation rather than for public speech. So, when many of us gather presently around the table of our Lord in obedience to one of His last commands, let us try to realize what it meant to Him when wicked men turned His glory into shame even when He was in the very throes of His death agony.

When the Savior was nailed to the accursed tree, there was a great crowd before Him composed of all sorts of people from the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees down to the lowest rabble of Jerusalem. And there were doubtless, as on the day of Pentecost, "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." How did this great mixed multitude

treat the august sufferer upon the cross? I have already quoted to you our Lord's own words, "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn." And Mark further says, "They that passed by railed at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, You that destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross." With the exception of a little band of timid disciples, that entire vast crowd exerted itself to the utmost by hideous gestures and grimaces and by cruel taunts and jeers, to show its contempt and scorn for the Christ of God, His only begotten and well beloved Son! I suppose this great congregation now gathered in the tabernacle is but a mere handful in comparison with the enormous throngs that assembled to see that great sight, but if I had to be the unhappy victim of the malice and scorn of all of you—if you were all seeking by some word of contempt or expression of loathing and hatred, to set me at nothing and mock me—what a dreadful position mine would be! But this was not the treatment accorded to a man in full vigor of health and strength, as I am just now, who might be able to defy his foes to do their worst, or who might stand unmoved amidst the hail of calumny and obloquy! Christ's was the case of one who was dying in indescribable agony, forsaken even of His God—and you can hardly conceive how such an experience as that takes all one's strength away. Yet, do you know? As I meditated upon this sad scene—while my eyes were streaming with tears on the Savior's account, it seemed to me that the ribald crowd was unconsciously honoring Him, after all, because contempt from such people was true honor for Jesus. If they had applauded Him, He might have blushed at the disgrace of being praised by such miscreants! But when they despised and rejected Him, it brought Him true honor! Thus virtue received the homage of vice and the beauty of holiness was the more plainly manifested in contrast with the ugliness of sin! They must have felt that although they seemed to be victorious over Him, Christ was really the conqueror, or they would not have been so anxious to show how much they despised Him. They must have had some sort of consciousness of the true dignity of His character or they would not have vented their malice so ferociously in mocking Him.

While I have been trying to bring before your minds this picture of the suffering Savior, as it has been all vividly present to my own mental vision, I wonder if anyone here has been saying, "Oh, sir, I also have to endure the cruel mocking of the ungodly! They call me this name and that, and I feel that I cannot endure it." What? Are you—

"A soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb"—

and do you need to turn coward when they mete out to you something of the treatment that they gave to Him? Look at your Master in the hour of His agony on the cross and never be afraid again! Remember how He forewarned His followers concerning this very matter—"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?" Cheerfully accept all the contempt and scorn that the world pleases to pour upon you—take it as a tribute to the likeness to Christ that even worldlings can see in you—and praise the Lord that you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name's sake!

Perhaps some self-righteous person says, "I wish I had been there. I would have taught those miserable wretches not to treat the Savior in such a shameful fashion!" Ah, that is the way one of our English kings once talked. "I wish," said he, "that I had been there with my soldiers—I would have cut them in pieces!" But somebody who stood by said, "Ah, that speech shows that you have not yet learned how to be like He." He could have cut them all in pieces in a moment! He could have asked for more than 12 legions of angels to come to His rescue! But how, then, could He have accomplished the purpose for which He came to this earth? And how would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? It was written concerning Him, seven centuries before His birth, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." And that prophecy was literally fulfilled when He stood silent before Caiaphas and before Pilate, and when He endured without a murmur all the insults of the mocking crowd at Calvary!

I think I hear someone say, "If I had been there, I would not have mocked the Savior as they did." Ah my friend, I am not so sure that you would not! Do you love Him now? Do you love His people? Do you love His ways? Do you love His word? Do you love His house? Do you love Him? If you do not, I do not see why you should imagine that you would have behaved better than most of the men and women at that time did. You would not have known the Lord of life and glory any more than they did, and you would probably have joined them in heaping scorn and contumely upon Him! His stern rebukes of your sin would have made you as angry as they were. "He that is not with Me is against Me," is still one of the infallible tests by which He tries the sons of men! And if you are not with Him, you are against Him! If you are not out and out for Him, you are mocking Him in your way even as the Jews did in theirs!

Possibly somebody asks, "Why did the Savior endure all that mockery and scorn?" Ah, some of us can tell! We once mocked religion and perhaps even poured contempt upon the name of Jesus, so He was mocked even while He was making atonement for our sin of mockery! Besides, sin is always so contemptible a thing that it ought to be held up to derision by all sane men—and as Christ took upon Himself the sins of all His people—it was necessary that He should be despised even when He was only by imputation bearing the sins of others—

"For sins not His own
He came to atone"

and, therefore, as the sin bearer, the substitute for His people, He had to bear all the scorn that their sins deserved.

Now, in closing, I say to you, brothers and sisters in Christ, your Master has been despised for your sakes, mind that you greatly honor Him. He was made nothing of, as far as that was possible to men—see that you make much of Him. For every thorn that pierced His blessed temples, give Him some precious pearl that you highly prize. For every hiss of scorn that greeted His holy ears, give Him a song of grateful praise. Oh, how I wish that we could continually lift Him up higher and higher before the sons and daughters of men! If He would but make us as the dust beneath His feet so that He might be exalted so much more in the eyes of sinners, we would count it our highest glory to be trampled beneath His feet. Oh, for more crowns to put upon His blessed head!—

"Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne."

It shall be the heaven of heaven to us when He gives us the crown of life, the crown of righteousness and the crown of glory, and we cast them all at His feet crying, "Not unto us, O Lord, be the glory," but, "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." But why not begin to honor Him here? I hope many of us are doing so already, but let us do it more and more! O Lamb of God, bleeding, languishing, despised, rejected, what can I do to honor You more than I have ever done before? Is not that the language of your heart, my brother, my sister? Come to His table and honor Him by obeying this as well as all His other commandments, "Do this in remembrance of Me." And then go tomorrow into the world wherever your business and your duty call you, and say—

"Now for the love I bear His name
What was my gain I count my loss.
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.
Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake—
Oh, may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake."

Is there anyone here who has despised and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ? Alas, I fear that many, even in this assembly, have done so. Have you set Him at nothing? Have you thought nothing of Him? Have you mocked Him? Have you put a crown of thorns upon His head? Oh, if you have hitherto been numbered among His enemies, quit their ranks this very hour, bend your knees before Him in true homage and submission, give Him your hearts to be His royal throne, give Him yourselves to be His loyal subjects and servants forever! Look unto Him as He was upon the cross and as He is upon the throne of God! Trust Him with your whole heart, for whoever believes in Him has everlasting life! God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 4; 5.

Verse 1. *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.* Good men want to be heard when they pray. They are not satisfied with merely praying—they must have God's answers to their supplications. See how David pleads the past mercy received from God—"You have enlarged me when I was in distress." Cannot my own heart look back to God's lovingkindness to me in days gone by? Oh, yes! Then, as He is the same God, what He has done in the past is an argument for what He will do in the future! There are some of us here who can adopt the Psalmist's language and say, "You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

2. *O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame?* How long will you slander me, how long will you slander God, how long will you turn the gospel into ridicule, how long will you resist the Spirit of God?

2. *How long will you love vanity, and seek leasing?* That is, after falsehood, after lying. Why do men seek after falsehood? What attraction can it have for them? Why, only this attraction—that it suits a fool's heart to feed on falsehood.

3. *But know that the LORD has set apart him that is godly for Himself.* [See Sermon #2530, Volume 43—"A PECULIAR PEOPLE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You cannot hurt him, for God has hedged him about. You may say what you please against him, but God loves him and will take care of him.

3. *The LORD will hear when I call unto Him.* What a sweet assurance! O brothers and sisters, the mercy seat is always open to us! It will be a blessed thing if everyone of us can say with David, "The Lord will hear when I call unto Him."

4. *Stand in awe, and sin not.* This is good advice to ungodly men! Let them feel aright the awe of God's presence and they must turn from sin. Holy reverence is a great preservative from sin.

4. *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.* Hold private communion with yourself, in a private place, at a private hour. "Be still." We are far too noisy—most of us talk too much. It would often make men wiser if they were more still. If a still tongue does not make a wise head, yet it tends that way.

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.* This is a capital rule for the whole of life. Serve God and trust in Him—do what is right, and rest in the God of right.

6. *There are many that say, who will show us any good?* We all need to see anything that is really good, we do not care who shows it to us, even

if it is the devil himself. "Who will show us any good?" That question may have another meaning, for there are some who have no desire for spiritual good—for such good as God calls good.

6. *LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.* David began the Psalm with a personal petition, "Hear me when I call," but now he begins to glow in spirit and, as his prayer burns more vehemently, he prays for others, also—"Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us." This is our highest joy, this is our greatest good—to walk in the light or God's countenance! If we have the favor of God, and know that we have it, we need ask for nothing else, for every other blessing is assured to those who have the favor of God!

7. *You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* The harvest and the vintage were the two seasons of greatest joy in the East. They shouted, "harvest home," with gladness that the fruits of the earth had again been ingathered, and they drank the new wine and danced for joy. But David says to the Lord, "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." When God puts gladness in the heart, it is real gladness, for God is not the giver of a sham joy! It is lasting gladness, for God does not give temporary gifts.

David says, "You have put gladness in my heart," and then he compares it with the gladness of the sons of men, and he says that his joy was greater than theirs when their earthly stores were increased. Boaz went to sleep on the threshing-floor, but he that sleeps upon the bosom of God has a far softer bed than that!

8. *I will lay me down both in peace, and sleep: for You, LORD, only make me dwell in safety.* [See Sermon #2033, Volume 34—PLAIN DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE SAVED FROM SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He who has Jehovah as his God is at home even when he is abroad! He is well guarded even when he has none upon earth to protect him! And he can go to sleep in calm confidence when others would be disturbed in mind and too timid to close their eyes!

Psalm 5. **Verse 1.** *Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.* Sometimes we pray right off, as David did when he cried to the Lord, "Hear me when I call." At other times, we sit down to meditate, and think over what we want to say to the Lord in prayer, as David did when he said, "'O Lord, consider my meditation.' What I have considered do You consider." A well-considered prayer is very likely to succeed with God.

2. *Hearken unto the voice of my cry*—"When I have not confidence or comfort enough to present a well ordered prayer to You—but, like a child in pain, cry unto You, 'Hearken unto the voice of my cry'"—

2. *My King, and my God.* What? Will a king hearken to a cry? Men generally prepare elaborate petitions when they come into the presence of

royalty, but although the Lord is far greater than all earthly sovereigns, He is far more condescending than they are.

2. *For unto You will I pray.* I trust that we all pray. I am sure that all Believers do, but let us pray more, let us pray much more than we have done and let us, each one truly say to the Lord, "Unto You will I pray." He is a King, so serve Him with your prayers! He is God, so adore Him with your prayers! And if you can put both your hands on Him and say, as David did, "My King, and my God," what abundant motives you have for abounding in prayer to Him!

3. *My voice shall You hear in the morning, O LORD.* "When the dew is on all nature, and on my spirit, too, then shall You hear my voice in prayer. Before I go out into the world, my first thoughts shall be of You." Never see the face of man, beloved, until you have seen the face of God.

3. *In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up.* Adjust your prayer as the archer fits his arrow on the bow. Look up as you shoot it and keep on looking up and looking out for an answer to your supplication. You cannot expect God to open the windows of heaven to pour you out a blessing if you do not open the windows of your expectation to look for it! If you look up in asking, God will look down in answering. It is always well to take good aim in prayer. Some prayers are like random shots, they cannot be expected to hit the target. But David's prayer was well aimed and he expected it to prevail with God—"In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up."

4. *For you are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with You.* In both of these Psalms there is a clear line drawn between the righteous and the wicked, this is a line which still needs to be kept very clear, and we must all seek to know on which side of that line we are.

5, 6. *The foolish shall not stand in Your sight: You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy them that speak lies: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.* These are strong words, but not too strong—God is not tolerant of evil and those who are most like He in other respects will be like He in this matter, also.

7. *But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy.* "I will be like a child who goes in and out of his father's door as often as he pleases because he is at home. I will not go there on my own merits, but 'in the multitude of Your mercy.'"

7. *And in Your fear will I worship toward Your holy Temple.* There was no temple on earth when David wrote this Psalm, but God was his temple, and so the pious Jew opened his window and looked towards Jerusalem. So do we look towards God upon the throne of grace in heaven and seek to worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

8. *Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies, make Your way straight before my face.* David does not say, "Make my way straight." He does not want to have his own way, but he wants to

walk in God's way. Thus sweet submission blends with a desire for perfect obedience. "Make Your way straight before my face."

9. *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth.* You cannot expect ungodly men to speak that which is right. "There is no faithfulness in their mouth."

9. *Their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher.* Pouring out foul, putrid gas. They cannot speak without using filthy or blasphemous expressions, or if they do, there is falsehood lurking behind their words, for deceit and evil of all kinds are in their hearts.

9. *They flatter with their tongue.* Always beware of people who flatter you, and especially when they tell you that they do *not* flatter you and that they know you cannot endure flattery—for you are then being most insincerely flattered—so be on your guard against the tongue of the flatterer!

10. *Destroy You them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against You.* "It does not matter what they do against me, but O Lord, 'they have rebelled against You.'" David speaks here like a judge pronouncing sentence upon the guilty—not out of malice, but out of loyalty and devotion to God!

11, 12. *But let all those that put their trust in You rejoice: let them always shout for joy because You defend them: let them also that love Your name be joyful in You. For You, LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor will You compass him as with a shield.*

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GOOD CHEER FROM CHRIST'S CALL AND FROM HIMSELF
NO. 3277

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1911.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they came to Jericho: and as Jesus went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, You Son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise, He calls you. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What will you that I should do unto you? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."
Mark 10:46-52.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #266, Volume 5—
THE BLIND BEGGAR—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE blind man described in this narrative is a picture of what I earnestly desire that every hearer and reader of my sermons may become. In his first condition, Bartimaeus was a type of what the sinner is by nature—blind, hopelessly blind, unless the healing Savior shall interfere and pour in upon him the light of day. It is not, however, to this point that we shall now turn our thoughts, but to his conduct while seeking sight. This man, by God's great mercy, so acted that he may be held up as an example to all who feel their spiritual blindness, and earnestly desire to see the light of grace!

Several of the blind men of Scripture are very interesting individuals. There was one of the them, you remember—the man born blind—who baffled the Pharisees by answering them with cool courage mixed with shrewdness and mother wit. Well might his parents say that he was of age, for he had all his wits about him. Blind as he had been, he could see a great deal—and when his eyes were opened, he proved beyond all dispute that his questioners deserved the name of "blind Pharisees" which the Lord Jesus gave them!

Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, is a notable character. There is a sharp cut individuality and crispness of style about him which makes

him a remarkable person. He is one who thinks and acts for himself; is not soon daunted nor easily swayed; makes sure of what he knows and when he is questioned gives a clear reply. I suppose that as he sat in the midnight darkness which was his perpetual lot, he thought much. And having heard that from the seed of David there had arisen a great prophet who worked miracles and preached glad tidings to the poor, he studied the matter over and concluded that His claims were true. A blind man might well see that fact, if at all familiar with Old Testament prophecy. And as he heard more and more of Jesus, and compared Him with the prophetic description of the coming King, he felt convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Then, he thought within Himself, "If He were ever to come this way, I would announce myself as one of His followers. I would proclaim Him King, whether others acknowledged His royalty or not. I would act as a herald to the great Prince and shout aloud that He is the Son of David." Then he further resolved to seek the pity of the Messiah and beg for his sight, for it was foretold that the Messiah would come to open blind eyes! This resolution he had so long dwelt upon that when the time did come, and he heard that Jesus passed by, he immediately availed himself of the opportunity, and cried out with all his might, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" Oh, that you who read these lines would think over the claims of Jesus and come to the same conclusion as the blind beggar of Jericho!

Learn a simple lesson from this man, I pray you. He made use of what sense he had. He could *hear* if he could not see. We have heard persons talk about their natural inability to perform gracious acts and we have not answered them because it will be time enough to talk of what they cannot do when they have done what they can do! There are some things which we are sure they can do, and these they have neglected—it is mere hypocrisy, therefore, for them to be pleading lack of power when they do not use the strength they have. They do not constantly hear the gospel, or, if they do, they do not listen with attention and, consequently, they do not get faith, for "faith comes by hearing." In the case of Bartimaeus, everything was honest and sincere—the man had no eyes, but he had ears and a tongue and he took care to use the faculties which remained to him, so that when the Savior passed by—he cried to Him with all his might! He made his confession of faith and offered, at the same time, a personal petition for mercy as he cried aloud, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!"

I wish to drive at one point only—which will stand out clearly when I have finished. But I must go a little roundabout, to compass my design. May the Holy Spirit dictate every word!

I. My first remark is that this man is a pattern for all seekers BECAUSE HE SOUGHT THE LORD UNDER GREAT DISCOURAGEMENTS.

He cried to the Lord Jesus so loudly, so unceremoniously and at so unseasonable a time, as others thought, that they checked him and bade

him hold his peace! But this was like pouring spirits upon a fire and it only made him the more intense in his pleading.

Notice his first discouragement—*no one prompted him to cry to Christ*. No friend lovingly whispered in his ears, "Jesus of Nazareth passes by! Now is your opportunity. Seek His face!" Possibly you, dear friend, may have been so neglected that you have sighed out, "No man cares for my soul." Then yours is a parallel case to that of Bartimaeus. Very few can fairly thus complain if they live among lively Christians, for, in all probability, they have often been invited, entreated and almost compelled to come to Christ! Some even complain of Christian importunity and are weary of it, not liking to be spoken to about their souls. "Intrusion," it has been called by some cavilers, but indeed it is a blessed intrusion upon a sinner, slumbering in his sin over the brink of hell, to disturb his slumber and awaken him to flee for his life! Would you not think it very ridiculous, were a house on fire, if the fireman declined to fetch anybody out of the house because he had not been introduced to the family? Must he send his card up and obtain leave to enter? I reckon that a breach of courtesy is often a most courteous thing when the desire is the benefit of an immortal soul! If I say a very personal thing and it causes anyone to seek and find salvation, I know that he will never blame me on that score!

Still, a person may reside where there is no one to invite him to seek Jesus. And if so, he may recall the example of this man, who, all unprompted, sought the Savior's aid. He knew his need and, believing that Jesus could give him his eyesight, he did not need pressing to pray to Him. He thought for himself, as all ought to do. Will not you do the same, my dear friend, especially on a matter so weighty as the salvation of your own soul? What if you have never been the subject of friendly insistence pleas? You ought not to require them! You are possessed of your reason— you know that you are already sinful and will be lost forever unless the Lord Jesus saves you—does not common sense suggest that you should cry to Him at once? Be as least as sensible as this poor blind beggar and let the voice of your earnest prayer go up to Jesus, the Son of David.

The discouragement of Bartimaeus was still greater, for when he did begin to cry, *those around discouraged him*. Read the 48th verse, "*Many* charged him that he should hold his peace." Some for one reason and some for another, charged him that he should hold his peace. They did not merely advise him, but they "charged him." They spoke like people in authority. "Be quiet, will you? Be still! What are you doing?" Judging him to be guilty of a grave impropriety in disturbing the eloquence of the great preacher, they would have hushed him to silence! Those who do not smart under a sense of sin often think awakened sinners are out of order and fanatical when they are only in earnest. The people near the

blind beggar blamed him for his bad taste in shouting so loudly, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

But he was not to be stopped. On the contrary, we are told that "he cried the more," and not only the more, but "the more a great deal," so that it was time wasted to try to silence him! One man thought that surely he would put him down, and therefore spoke most peremptorily, but he gained nothing by the effort, for the blind man shouted still more lustily, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" Here was an opportunity for having his eyes opened and he would not miss it to please anybody! Folks around him might misjudge him, but that would not matter if Jesus opened his eyes. Sight was the one thing necessary, and for that he could put up with rebuffs and reproaches. To him, discouragements were encouragements and when they said, "Be silent," he cried the more a great deal! His manhood and determination were developed by opposition. Friend, how is it with you? Can you defy the opinion of ungodly men and dare to be singular that you may be saved? Can you brave opposition, discouragement and resolve that if mercy is to be had, you will have it? Opposers will call your determination obstinacy, but never mind, your firmness is the stuff of which martyrs are made! In a wrong cause, a strong will creates unruly rebels, but if it is sanctified, it gives great force to character and steadfastness to faith! Bartimaeus must have sight and he will have sight—there is no stopping him—he is blind to all hindrances and pushes through! He had been begging so long that he knew how to beg importunately. He was as sturdy a beggar with Christ as he had been with men and so he followed up his suit in the teeth of all who would stave him off.

There was, however, one more discouragement that must have weighed on him far more than the need of prompting and the presence of opposition—*Jesus did not answer him at first*. He had evidently, according to the run of the narrative, cried out to Jesus many times, for how else could it be said, "he cried the more a great deal"? His cry had waxed stronger and stronger, yet there was no reply! What was worse, the Master had been moving on. We are sure of that, because we are told in the 49th verse that Jesus, at length, "stood still," which implies that, before this time, He had been walking along, speaking to the crowd around Him as He went. Jesus was passing by—passing by without granting his desire, without giving a sign of having heard him!

Are you, my friend, one who has cried for mercy long and found it not? Have you been praying for a month and is there no answer? Is it still longer? Have you spent weary days and nights in waiting and watching for mercy? There is a mistake at the bottom of the whole affair which I will not explain just now, but I will tell you how to act. Even if Jesus does not appear to hear you, be not discouraged, but cry to Him "the more a great deal." Remember, He loves importunity, and sometimes He waits a while on purpose that our prayers may gather strength—and that we may be the more earnest. Cry to Him, dear heart! Be not desponding! Do

not give up in despair! Mercy's gate has oiled hinges and it swings easily—push at it again. If you will use the knocker long enough, the porter will appear to you and say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside?" Do have the courage of this poor blind man and say, "Though for a while He may not hear me, yet still will I confess Him to be the Son of David, and so avow that He is able to save me, and still I will cry to Him, 'You Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

Note, then, that this blind man is an example to us because he did not take much notice of discouragements, whatever they were. He had within himself a spring of action which none could dry up! He was resolved to draw near to the Great Physician and put his case into His hands. O my dear friend, let this be your firm determination and you, too, shall yet be saved!

II. Observe, in the second place that there came a change over the scene. "Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called." Here we see him under a warmer and brighter light for a moment, and we remark that AFTER A WHILE HE RECEIVED ENCOURAGEMENT.

The encouragement was not given to him by our Lord, but by the same persons who had formerly rebuked him. Christ did not say to him, "Be of good comfort," because the man was not in need of such a word. He was by no means backward, or disconsolate, or staggered by the opposition he had met with. Jesus Christ said, "Be of good cheer" in the case of the poor paralytic man who was let down by cords from the roof because he was sad at heart. But this man was already of good courage and, therefore, the Savior gave him no superfluous consolation. The onlookers were pleased with the hope of seeing a miracle and so offered their encouragements which were not of any great worth or weight since they came from lips which a few minutes before had been singing quite another tune!

At this time, I wish to give to all anxious souls who are trying to find their Savior, some little word of cheer, and yet I warn them not to think too much of it, for they need something far better than anything that man can say! The comfort given to Bartimaeus was drawn from the fact that Christ called him. "Be of good comfort, rise! *He calls you*." To every sinner who is anxious to find Jesus, this is a note from the silver trumpet! You are invited to Jesus and need not, therefore, be afraid to come! In one sense or another, it is true of all who hear the gospel, "He calls you," and, therefore, to every one of our hearers we may say, "Be of good cheer."

First, it is true that *Jesus calls each one of us by the universal call of the gospel*, for its message is unto all people. Ministers are bid to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. You, my friend, are a creature and, consequently, the gospel has a call for you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." We are bid to preach the gospel of the kingdom throughout all nations, and to cry, "Whoever will,

let him take the water of life freely." "Whoever." There is no limit to it and it would be a violation of our commission if we would attempt to enclose what God has made as free as the air, and as universal as manhood! "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." This is the universal call. "Repent, you, and believe the gospel." In this there is comfort of hope for all who desire to come to God—

"None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude!
Welcome, the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude."

But there is still more comfort in what, for distinction's sake, we will name *the character call*. Many promises in the Word of God are directed to persons of a certain character. For instance, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you labor? Are you heavy laden? Then Christ especially calls you and promises rest to you if you come to Him. Here is another, "Ho, everyone that thirsts , come you to the waters." Are you thirsting after something better than this world can give? Then the Lord bids you come to the waters of His grace. "And he that has no money, let him come." Is that you? Are you destitute of merit—destitute of everything that could purchase the favor of God? Then you are the person whom He specially invites! We find a very large number of invitations, both in the Old and New Testament, addressed to persons in certain conditions and positions. And when we meet with a person whose case is thus anticipated, we are bound to bid him be of good cheer because the Lord is plainly calling him.

Next, there is *a ministerial call*, which is made useful to many. At times, the Lord enables His servants to give calls to people in a very remarkable way. They describe the case so accurately, even to the little touches, that the hearer says, "Somebody must have told the preacher about me." When personal and pointed words are thus put into our mouths by the Holy Spirit, we may give our hearer comfort and say, "Arise, He calls you." What said the woman of Samaria? "Come, see a man which told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" When your inmost secrets are revealed—when the Word of God enters you as the priest's keen knife opened the sacrificial victim, laying bare your inward and secret thoughts and intents, you may say, "Now have I felt the power of that word which is quick and powerful. Oh, that I might also know its healing power!" When a call to repentance and faith comes on the back of a minute personal description, you may assuredly gather that the Lord has sent this message especially to you—and it is your right and privilege at once to feel the comfort of the fact that Jesus calls *you*. "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

Yet there is another call which overtops these three, for the universal call and the character call and the ministerial call are none of them

effectual to salvation unless they are attended with the Holy Spirit's own personal and *effectual call*.

Dear friend, when you feel within yourself a secret drawing to Christ which you do not understand, but yet cannot resist—when you experience a tenderness of spirit, a softness of heart towards the Lord—when your soul kindles with a hope to which it was previously a stranger, and your heart begins to sigh and almost to sing at the same time for love of God—when the Spirit of God brings Jesus near you, and brings you near to Jesus—then we may apply to you this message, "Be of good comfort, rise. He calls you."

III. Thus have I tried to set this man before you as receiving comfort. But we shall see that HE LEAPED OVER BOTH DISCOURAGEMENT AND ENCOURAGEMENT AND CAME TO JESUS HIMSELF!

Bartimaeus did not care one whit more for the comfort than he did for the rebuffs of those around him. This is a point to be well observed. You who are seeking Jesus must not rest in our encouragements, but press on to Jesus. We would cheer you, but we hope you will not be satisfied with our cheering. Do what this blind man did! Let us read the text again—"Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, "Be of good comfort, rise. He calls you." "And (it should be, "but," not, "and") he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus." He did not give them a "thank you" for their comfort. He did not stop half a minute to accept or to reject it. He did not need to—he wanted Christ, and nothing else!

Dear friend, whenever any man with the best intentions in the world, tries to comfort you before you believe in Jesus, I hope you will pass him by and press on to the Lord, Himself, for all comfort short of Christ, Himself, is perilous comfort! You must come at once to Christ. You must hasten personally to Jesus, and have your eyes opened by Him. You must not be comforted till He comforts you by working a miracle of grace. I fear we pamper you too much in unbelief, applying balm that does not come from the mountains of myrrh, nor from the sacrifice of our redeeming Lord. I fear that we talk as if there were balm in Gilead, but there is none anywhere except at Calvary! If there is a balm in Gilead, the Lord inquires, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?" The ointment of comfort—apart from Christ—has been tried long enough and has healed none! It is high time to point you to Christ Jesus, Himself! Even the consolation to be drawn from the fact of a man's being called requires much caution in its use lest we do mischief with it. The true eye salve is with Jesus, Himself, and unless the soul comes actually into personal contact with Christ, no other comforts ought to satisfy it, for they cannot save. Note with admiration, then, that this man did not content himself with the best comforts that friendly lips could utter, but he was eager to reach the Son of David!

We read first that *he arose*. He had been sitting down before, wrapped up in his great cloak in which he had often sat begging, but now that he heard that he was called, he, according to some versions, "leaped to his feet." The expression may be, perhaps, too strong, but at least he rose up eagerly and was no laggard! His opportunity had come, and he was ready for it! No, *hungering* for the gift! Now, dear friend, I pray you, let neither discouragements nor comforts keep you sitting still, but rise with eagerness! Oh, be stirred up to seek the Lord! Let all that is within you be awakened to come unto the Savior!

The blind man was on his feet in far less time than it takes to tell. And as he rose, *he flung off his old cloak* which might have hindered him. He did not care what he left or lost as long as he found his sight! His mantle had, no doubt, been very precious to him many a time when he was a poor beggar, but now that he needed to get to Jesus, he flung it away as if it were worth nothing so that he might get through the throng more quickly and reach the one in whom his hopes centered! So then, if anything impedes you in coning to your Savior, fling it off! God help you to be rid of self and sin and everything that is in the way! If any ill company you have been accustomed to keep. If any bad habit into which you have fallen. If anything dear as life hinders you from simple faith in Jesus, regard it as an evil to be renounced! Off with it and make a rush to Him who calls you. Now, even now, draw near and cast yourself at the Redeemer's feet. Say within yourself, "Encouraged or discouraged, I have weighed the matter, and I perceive that faith in Christ will save me. Jesus Christ will give me peace and rest, and I mean to have Him at once, whoever hinders or helps."

Then we are told that *he came to Jesus*. He did not stop halfway, but emboldened by Christ's call, he came right up to Him. He did not stay with Peter, or James, or John, or any of them, but he came to Jesus! Oh, that you, my friend, may have faith in Jesus Christ and trust in Him at once, putting your case by a distinct and personal act into Jesus Christ's hands that He may save you!

Our Lord was well aware that this man knew His name and character and so without giving him further instruction, He addressed him in these words, "What will you that I should do unto you?" Our Lord's addresses to persons were usually based upon their condition. He knew that this man very clearly understood what he needed and so He put the question that he might only give the answer. "What will you that I should do unto you?" "Lord," he said, "that I might look up," or, as our version has it, "that I might receive my sight." Go, dear friend, to Jesus whether comforted or discouraged, and tell Him what ails you. Describe your case in plain words. Do not say, "I cannot pray. I cannot find language." Any language will do if it is sincere. In the matter of speech, Jesus does not need hyacinths from a conservatory—He is delighted with field flowers plucked from any hedge where you can find them! Give to Him such words as come first to hand when your desires are fully awake. Tell Him

you are a wretch undone without His sovereign grace. Tell Him you are a sinner worthy of death. Tell Him you have a hard heart. Tell Him you are a drunkard, or a swearer, if such is the case. Tell Him all your heart, as the woman did of whom we read in the gospel. Then tell Him that you need forgiveness and a new heart. Speak out your soul and hide nothing. Out with it! Out with it! Do not stay listening to sermons or consulting with Christian friends, but get to your chamber and speak with Jesus! This will do you good. It may be well to go into an enquiry room to be helped by an earnest Evangelist, but it is infinitely better to make your own chamber your enquiry room, and there enquire of the Lord, Himself, on your own account. May the divine Spirit lead you to do this now, if you have never accepted Jesus before! So, when Bartimaeus had stated his case in faith, he received more than he had asked for! He received salvation—so the word may be rendered.

He was made whole, and so saved. Whatever, therefore, had caused his blindness was entirely taken away—he had his sight and he could look up a saved man! Do you believe that Jesus Christ is as able to save souls as He was to heal bodies? Do you believe that, in His Glory, He is as able to save now as He was when He was a humble man here below? Why, if there is any difference, He must have much more power than He had then! Do you believe that He is the same loving Savior now as He was when here on earth? O soul, I pray you to argue this out with yourself and say, "I will go to Jesus straight away. I never find that He cast out any—why should He cast out me? No bodily disease baffled Him and He is Master of the soul as well as of the body—why should my soul disease baffle Him? I will even go and lie at His feet and trust Him, and see whether He will save me or not. Discouraged or encouraged, I will have done with men, and I will go to the Savior**.**" That is the lesson which I would have every unsaved soul learn! I would have him go beyond the outward means of grace to the secret fountain of grace, even to the great sacrifice for sin—go to the Savior, Himself, whether others cheer you or frown upon you! Dejected, rejected, neglected, yet come to Jesus and learn that you are elected to be perfected in Him!

One thing more, and I have done. I want this man to be an example to all of us, if we get a blessing from our Lord, and are saved. *Having found Christ, he stuck to Him.* Jesus said to him, "Go your way." Did he go his way? Yes, but what way did he choose? Read the last sentence—"He followed Jesus in the way." The way of Jesus was *his way.* He in effect said, "Lord, I do go my way when I follow You. I can now see for myself and, therefore, can choose my way and I make this my first and last choice—that I will follow You in every pathway which You mark out." Oh, that everyone who professes to have received Christ would actually follow Him! But, alas, many are like those nine lepers who received healing for their bodies, but only one of them returned to praise Him. Great numbers, after revival services, are like the nine lepers—they declare that

they are saved, but they do not live to glorify God! Why is this—"Were there not ten cleansed?" In great disappointment we inquire, "Where are the nine?" Alas, we ask with bleeding hearts, "Where are the nine?" They are not steadfast in our doctrine and fellowship, or in breaking of bread! They are neither active in service nor exemplary in character. Where are they? Where? Echo answers, "Where?" But this man was of a nobler breed—immediately after he received his sight, he "followed Jesus in the way."

He used his sight for the best of purposes! He saw his Lord and kept to His company. He determined that He who gave him his eyes should have his eyes! He could never see a more delightful sight than the Son of David who had removed his blindness, and so he stayed with Him that he might feast his eyes upon Him! If God has given your soul peace and joy and liberty, use your newfound liberty in delighting yourself in His dear Son!

Bartimaeus became Christ's avowed disciple. He had already proclaimed Him as the royal Son of David and now he determined to be one of David's band! He enlists under the Son of David and marches with Him to the conflict at Jerusalem. He stayed with our great David in the hold to share His persecutions and to go with Him to death itself. We are told that he went with Jesus in the way, and that way was up to Jerusalem where his leader was soon to be spit upon, and to be mocked, and to be crucified. Bartimaeus followed a despised and crucified Christ! Friend, will you do the same? Will you fare as He fares, and endure reproach for His sake? Brave men are needed for these evil times—we have too many of those thin skinned professors who faint if society gives them the cold shoulder! Power to walk with the crucified Lord into the very jaws of the lion is a glorious gift of the Holy Spirit! May it rest on you, dear friend, to a full degree! May the Spirit of God help you!

This Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, is a fine man. When he is once really awakened, you can see that he possesses a firm, decided, noble manhood. Many nowadays bend to every breeze like the willow by the stream, but this man held his own. Most men are made of soft material which will run into every mold, but this man had stern stuff within him. When he was a blind man, he cried till he received his sight, though Peter, and James, and John forbade him! And when he became a seeing man, he followed Jesus at all costs, though shame and spitting lay before him. It is our impression that he remained a steadfast and well-known disciple of Jesus, for Mark, who is the most graphic of all the gospel writers, always means much by every stroke of his pen, and he mentions him as Bartimaeus, whose name signifies, "son of Timaeus." And then he further explains that his name really has that meaning. A name may not be actually correct, for many a Johnson is not the son of John, many a Williamson is not the son of William, and so there might possibly have been a Bartimaeus who was not the son of Timaeus. Mark, however, writes as if Timaeus was very well known and his son was known, too.

The father was probably a poor believer known to all the church, and the son made his mark in the Christian community. I should not wonder if he was what we call, "a character," in the church—known to everybody for his marked individuality and force of mind.

If, my friend, you have been long in seeking salvation, and have become discouraged, may the Lord give you resolution to come to Jesus Christ this very day! Bring that firm, steadfast mind of yours, and bow it to Jesus, and He will accept you and end your darkness! Under His teaching you may yet become a marked man in the church, of whom in later years believers will say, "You know that man—that grievous sinner while he was unsaved, that eager seeker when he was craving mercy, that earnest worker after he became a Believer—he will not be outworked by anybody! He is a true man and gives his whole heart to our Lord." I shall be delighted beyond measure if you should be such a convert—a man or woman who will not need looking after, but a determined man resolute to do right, cost what it may! Such persons are a great gain to the good cause. Gently would I whisper to each one of you—*Will not you be one of them?*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 10:25-37.

Verses 25, 26. *And, behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How do you read it?* That was a most appropriate answer to a lawyer. "You ask me what you should do—well, you profess to be a teacher of the law, you ought, therefore, to know what is written in the law."

27, 28. *And he answering said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. And He said unto him, You have answered right: this do and you shall live.* This lawyer was one of those people who know the law, yet do it not. No doubt Jesus struck the nail on the head when he gave him that very pertinent answer, "This do, and you shall live." This lawyer was trying to live by teaching the law, by his knowledge of it, but Christ insists that nothing will do but a practical carrying out of its precepts. [There is a Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole of this passage #1360, Volume 23—THE GOOD SAMARITAN—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

29. *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?* He probably meant to say, "I have not any neighbors. I have no near relations. My father and mother are dead and gone, I have no brothers and sisters, and therefore I may be excused from the duty of loving anyone else as I love myself." Jesus did not answer the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" He did not turn the eyes of the man to

the poor mendicants who needed charity, but he made him look at himself.

30, 31. *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.* This priest had been up to the temple to perform his part of the service—he was much too good, in his own opinion, to go and touch a man who was wounded! "He passed by on the other side."

32. *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him.* He did a little more than the priest, who would not even cross the road.

32-34. *And passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast*—Denying himself, therefore, because, of course, he had to walk—

34, 35. *And brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence*—A much more valuable sum than two pence of our money—

35, 36. *And gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these three, think you, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?* He might have said, "The Samaritan," but he would not, for the Jews hated them.

37. *And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.* Here was a dismission, and here was a commission, too! Jesus dismissed him. "I have nothing more to say to you. 'Go.'" Here was the commission. "Do you likewise." Alas, I am afraid that after most sermons people get the dismission, "Go," but they forget the commission—"Go, and do you likewise." It is your privilege as well as your duty, O Christians, to assist the needy and, whenever you discover distress, as far as lies in you, to minister practically to its relief!

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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 WORDLESS BOOK
NO. 3278

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 11, 1866.

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."
Psalm 51:7.

I DARESAY you have, most of you, heard of a little book which an old divine used constantly to study. And when his friends wondered what there was in the book, he told them that he hoped they would all know and understand it, but that there was not a single word in it. When they looked at it, they found that it consisted of only three leaves—the first was black, the second was red and the third was pure white. The old minister used to gaze upon the black leaf to remind himself of his sinful state by nature; upon the red leaf to call to his remembrance the precious blood of Christ; and upon the white leaf to picture to him the perfect righteousness which God has given to believers through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son.

I want you, dear friends, to read this book this evening, and I desire to read it myself. May God's Holy Spirit graciously help us to do so to our profit!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE BLACK LEAF. There is something about this in the text, for the person who used this prayer said, "Wash me," so he was black and needed to be washed. And the blackness was of such a peculiar kind that a miracle was needed to cleanse it away—so that the one who had been black should become white, and so white that he would be "whiter than snow."

If we consider *David's case when he wrote this Psalm*, we shall see that he was very black. He had committed the horrible sin of adultery, which is so shameful a sin that we can only allude to it with bated breath. It is a sin which involves much unhappiness to others besides the ones who commit it. And it is a sin which—although the guilty ones may repent—cannot be undone. It is altogether a most foul and outrageous crime against God and man—and they who have committed it do indeed need to be washed!

But David's sin was all the greater because of the circumstances in which he was placed. He was like the owner of a great flock, who had no need to take his neighbor's one ewe lamb when he had so many of his

own. The sin in his case was wholly inexcusable, for he well knew what a great evil it was. He was a man who had taken delight in God's law, meditating in it day and night. He was, therefore, familiar with the commandment which expressly forbade that sin, so that when he sinned in this way, he sinned as one does who takes a draft of poison, not by mistake, but well knowing what will be the consequences of drinking it! It was willful wickedness on David's part for which there cannot be the slightest excuse.

No, more! Not only did he know the nature of the sin, but he also knew the sweetness of communion with God and must have had a clear sense of what it must have meant for him to lose it. His fellowship with the Most High had been so close that he was called "the man after God's own heart." How sweetly has he sung of his delight in the Lord. You know that in your happiest moments, when you want to praise the Lord with your whole heart, you cannot find any better expression than David has left you in his Psalms. How horrible it is that the man who had been in the third heaven of fellowship with God could have sinned in this foul fashion!

Besides, David had received many providential mercies at the Lord's hands. He was but a shepherd lad, but God took him from feeding his father's flock and made him king over Israel! The Lord also delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, enabled him to overthrow and slay giant Goliath and to escape the malice of Saul when he hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains. The Lord preserved him from many perils and at last firmly established him upon the throne—yet, after all these deliverances and mercies, this man, so highly favored by God—fell into this gross sin.

Then, also, it was a further aggravation of David's sin that it was committed against Uriah. If you read through the list of David's mighty men, you will find at the end, the name of Uriah the Hittite—he had been with David when he was outlawed by Saul. He had accompanied his leader in his wanderings. He had shared his perils and privations, so it was a shameful return on the part of the king when he stole the wife of his faithful follower who was at that very time fighting against the king's enemies! Searching through the whole of Scripture, or at least through the Old Testament, I do not know where we have the record of a worse sin committed by one who yet was a true child of God! So David had good reason to pray to the Lord, "Wash me," for he was indeed black with a special and peculiar blackness.

But now, turning from David, let us consider *our own blackness in the sight of God*. Is there not, my dear friend, some peculiar blackness about your case as a sinner before God? I cannot picture it, but I ask you to call it to your remembrance, that your soul may be humbled on account of it. Perhaps you are the child of Christian parents, or you were the subject of early religious impressions, or it may be that you have been in

other ways specially favored by God—yet you have sinned against Him, sinned against light and knowledge, sinned against a mother's tears, a father's prayers, and a pastor's admonitions and warnings! You were very ill once and thought you were going be die, but the Lord spared your life and restored you to health and strength—yet you went back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit, or the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Possibly a sudden sense of guilt alarmed you, so that you could not enjoy your sins, yet you could not break away from them. You spent your money for that which was not bread, and your labor for that which did not satisfy you, yet you went on wasting your substance with riotous living until you came to beggary—but even that did not wean you from your sin. In the house of God you had many solemn warnings and you went home again and again resolving to repent, yet your resolves soon melted away like the morning cloud and the early dew—leaving you more hardened than ever! I remember John B. Gough, at Exeter Hall, describing himself in his drinking days as seated upon a wild horse which was hurrying him to his destruction until a stronger hand than his own seized the reins, pulled the horse down upon its haunches and rescued the reckless rider. It was a terrible picture, yet it was a faithful representation of the conversion of some of us. How we drove the spurs into that wild horse and urged it to yet greater speed in its mad career until it seemed as if we would even ride over the gracious being who was determined to save us! That was sin, indeed, not merely against the dictates of an enlightened conscience and against the warnings which were being continually given to us, but it was what the apostle calls treading underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace!

Let me, beloved, before I turn away from this black leaf, urge you to study it diligently and to try to comprehend the blackness of your hearts and the depravity of your lives. That false peace which results from light thoughts of sin is the work of Satan—get rid of it at once if he has worked it in you! Do not be afraid to look at your sins! Do not shut your eyes to them for you to hide your face from them may be your ruin—but for God to hide His face from them will be your salvation! Look at your sins and meditate upon them until they even drive you to despair. "What?" says one, "until they drive me to despair?" Yes. I do not mean that despair which arises from unbelief, but that self-despair which is so near akin to confidence in Christ. The more God enables you to see your emptiness, the more eager will you be to avail yourself of Christ's fullness. I have always found that as my trust in self went up, my trust in Christ went down—and as my trust in self went down—my trust in Christ went up. So I urge you to take an honest view of your own blackness of heart and life, for that will cause you to pray with David,

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Weigh yourselves in the scales of the sanctuary, for they never err in the slightest degree. You need not exaggerate a single item of your guilt, for just as you are you will find far too much sin within you if the Holy Spirit will enable you to see yourselves as you really are.

II. But now we must turn to the second leaf, THE BLOOD RED LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK which brings to our remembrance the precious blood of Christ.

When the sinner cries, "Wash me," there must me some doubt of cleansing where he can be washed "whiter than snow." So there is, for there is nothing but the crimson blood of Jesus that can wash out the crimson stain of sin! What is there about Jesus Christ that makes Him able to save all whom come unto God by Him? This is a matter upon which Christians ought to meditate much and often. Try to understand, dear friends, the greatness of the atonement. Live much under the shadow of the cross. Learn to—

"View the flowing
Of the Savior's precious blood,
By divine assurance knowing
He has made your peace with God."

Feel that Christ's blood was shed for you, even for you! Never be satisfied till you have learned the mystery of the five wounds. Never be content till you are "able to comprehend with all saints what is the breath, and length, and depth, and height and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge."

The power of Jesus Christ to cleanse from sin must lie, first, in the greatness of His person. It is not conceivable that the sufferings of a mere man, however holy or great he might have been, could have made atonement for the sins of the whole multitude of the Lord's chosen people! It was because Jesus Christ was one of the persons in the divine Trinity. It was because the Son of Mary was none other than the Son of God. It was because He who lived, and labored, and suffered, and died was the great Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made, that His blood has such efficacy that it can wash the blackest sinners so clean that they are "whiter than snow!" The death of the best man who ever lived could not make an atonement even for his *own* sins, much less could it atone for the guilt of others. But when God, Himself, "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" and, "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," no limit can be set to the value of the atonement that He made! We hold most firmly the doctrine of particular redemption, that Christ loved His church and gave Himself for it. But we do not hold the doctrine of the limited value of His precious blood! There can be no limit to deity—there must be infinite value in the atonement which was offered by Him who is divine. The only limit of the atonement is in its design,

and that design was that Christ should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him—but in itself the atonement is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world—and if the entire race of mankind could be brought to believe in Jesus, there is enough efficacy in His precious blood to cleanse everyone born of woman from every sin that all of them have ever committed!

But the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus must also lie in the intense sufferings which He endured in making atonement for His people. Never was there another case like that of our precious Savior**.** In His merely physical sufferings there may have been some who have endured as much as He did, for the human body is only capable of a certain amount of pain and agony—and others beside our Lord have reached that limit. But there was an element in His sufferings that was never present in any other case. The fact of His dying in the place of His people—the one great sacrifice for the whole of His redeemed—makes His death altogether unique, so that not even the noblest of the noble army of martyrs share the glory with Him. His mental suffering also constituted a very vital part of the atonement—the sufferings of His soul were the very soul of His sufferings. If you can comprehend the bitterness of His betrayal by one who had been His follower and friend, His desertion by all His disciples, His arraignment for sedition and blasphemy before creatures whom *He had Himself made*—if you can realize what it was for Him, who did no sin, to be made sin for us, and to have laid upon Him the iniquity of us all—if you can picture to yourself how He loathed sin and shrank from it, you can form some slight idea of what His pure nature must have suffered for our sakes! We do not shrink from sin as Christ did because we are accustomed to it—it was once the element in which we lived, moved and had our being! But His holy nature shrank from evil as a sensitive plant recoils from the touch. But the worst of His sufferings must have been when His Father's wrath was poured out upon Him as He bore what His people deserved to bear—but which now they will never have to bear—

"The waves of swelling grief
Did over His bosom roll
And mountains of almighty wrath
Lay heavy on His soul."

For His Father to have to hide His face from Him so that He cried in His agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" must have been a veritable hell to Him! This was the tremendous draft of wrath which our Savior drank for us to its last dregs so that our cup might not have one drop of wrath in it forever! It must have been a great atonement that was purchased at so great a price!

We may think of the greatness of Christ's atonement in another way. It must have been a great atonement which has safely landed such multitudes of sinners in heaven, which has saved so many great sinners

and translated them into such bright souls. It must be a great atonement which is yet to bring innumerable myriads into the unity of the faith and into the glory of the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven. It is so great an atonement, sinner, that if you will trust to it, you shall be saved by it however many and great your sins may have been. Are you afraid that the blood of Christ is not powerful enough to cleanse you? Do you fear that His atonement cannot bear the weight of such a sinner as you are? I heard, the other day, of a foolish woman at Plymouth who, for a long while, would not go over the Saltash Bridge because she did not think it was safe. When, at length, after seeing the enormous traffic that passed safely over the bridge, she was induced to trust herself to it, she trembled greatly all the time and was not easy in her mind until she was off it. Of course, everybody laughed at her for thinking that such a ponderous structure could not bear her little weight. There may be some sinner in this building who is afraid that the great bridge which eternal mercy has constructed, at infinite cost, across the gulf which separates us from God, is not strong enough to bear his weight. If so, let me assure him that across that bridge of Christ's atoning sacrifice, millions of sinners as vile and foul as he is, have safely passed, and the bridge has not even trembled beneath their weight nor has any single part of it ever been strained or displaced. My poor fearful friend, your anxiety lest the great bridge of mercy should not be able to bear your weight reminds me of the fable of the gnat than settled on the bull's ear and then was concerned lest the powerful beast should be troubled by his enormous weight! It is well that you should have a vivid realization of the weight of your sins, but at the same time you should also realize that Jesus Christ, by virtue of His great atonement, is not only able to bear the weight of your sins, but He can also carry—indeed, He has already carried upon His shoulders the sins of all who shall believe in Him right to the end of time—and He has borne them away into the land of forgetfulness where they shall not be remembered or recovered forever! So efficacious is the blood of the everlasting covenant that even you, black as you are, may pray with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

III. This brings me to THE WHITE LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK, which is just as full of instruction as either the black leaf or the red one—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

What a beautiful sight it was, this morning, when we looked out and saw the ground all covered with snow! The trees were all robed in silver, yet it is almost an insult to the snow to compare it to silver, for silver at its brightest is not worthy to be compared with the marvelous splendor that was to be seen wherever the trees appeared adorned with beautiful festoons above the earth which was robed in its pure white mantle. If we had taken a piece of what we call white paper, and laid it down upon the surface of newly fallen snow, it would have seemed quite dirty in

comparison with the spotless snow. This morning's scene at once called the text to my mind—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You, O black sinner, if you believe in Jesus, shall not only be washed in His precious blood until you become tolerably clean, but you shall be made white, yes, you shall be "whiter than snow"! When we have gazed upon the pure whiteness of the snow before it has become defiled, it has seemed as though there could be nothing whiter. I know that when I have been among the Alps and have, for hours looked upon the dazzling whiteness of the snow, I have been almost blinded by it. If the snow were to lie long upon the ground and if the whole earth were to be covered with it, we should soon all be blind. The eyes of man have suffered with his soul through sin, and just as our soul would be unable to bear a sight of the unveiled purity of God, our eyes cannot endure to look upon the wondrous purity of the snow. Yet the sinner, black through sin, when brought under the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, becomes "whiter than snow."

Now, how can a sinner be made "whiter than snow"? Well, first of all, *there is a permanence about the whiteness of a blood washed sinner which there is not about the snow*. The snow that fell this morning was, much of it, anything but white this afternoon! Where the thaw had begun to work, it looked yellow even where no foot of man had trod upon it. And as for the snows in the streets of London, you know how soon its whiteness disappears. But there is no fear that the whiteness which God gives to a sinner will ever depart from him—the robe of Christ's righteousness which is cast around him is permanently white—

"This spotless robe the same appears
When ruined nature sinks in years.
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is always new."

It is always "whiter than snow." Some of you have to live in smoky, grimy London, but the smoke and the grime cannot discolor the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness! In yourselves, you are stained with sin, but when you stand before God, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the stains of sins are all gone. David in himself was black and foul when he prayed the prayer of our text, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ, he was white and clean. The believer in Christ is as pure in God's sight at one time as he is at another. He does not look upon the varying purity of our sanctification as our ground of acceptance with Him—He looks upon the matchless and immutable purity of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and He accepts us in Christ—not because of what we are in ourselves! Hence, when we are once "accepted in the Beloved," we are permanently accepted! And being accepted in Him, we are "whiter than snow."

Further, *the whiteness of snow is, after all, only created whiteness.* It is something which God has made, yet it has not the purity which

belongs to God, Himself. But the righteousness which God gives to the believer is a divine righteousness! As Paul says, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And remember that this is true of the very sinner who before was so black that he had to cry to God, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." There may be one who came into this building black as night through sin, but if he is enabled now, by grace, to trust in Jesus, His precious blood shall at once cleanse him so completely that he shall be "whiter than snow!" Justification is not a work of degrees—it does not progress from one stage to another—but it is the work of a moment and it is instantly complete! God's great gift of eternal life is bestowed in a moment and you may not be able to discern the exact moment when it is bestowed. Yet you may know even that, for as soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born of God, you have passed from death unto life, you are saved, and saved to all eternity! The act of faith is a very simple thing, but it is the most God glorifying act that a man can perform. Though there is no merit in faith, yet faith is a most ennobling grace, and Christ puts a high honor upon it when He says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Christ puts the crown of salvation upon the head of faith, yet faith will never wear it herself, but lays it at the feet of Jesus and gives Him all the honor and glory!

There may be one in this place who is afraid to think that Christ will save him. My dear friend, do my Master the honor to believe that there are no depths of sin into which you may have gone which are beyond His reach! Believe that there is no sin that is too black to be washed away by the precious blood of Christ, for He has said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And "all manner of sin" must include yours! It is the very greatness of God's mercy that sometimes staggers a sinner! Let me use a homely simile to illustrate my meaning. Suppose you are sitting at your table, carving the meat for dinner, and suppose your dog is under the table, hoping to get a bone or a piece of gristle for his portion? Now, if you were to set the dish with the whole roast on it down on the floor, your dog would probably be afraid to touch it lest he should get a cut of the whip! He would know that a dog does not deserve such a dinner as that—and that is just your difficulty, poor sinner! You know that you do not deserve such grace as God delights to give. But the fact that it is of grace shuts out the question of merit altogether! "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." God's gifts are like Himself—immeasurably great!

Perhaps some of you think you would be content with crumbs or bones from God's table. Well, if He were to give me a few crumbs or a little broken meat, I would be grateful for even that, but it would not satisfy me! But when He says to me, "You are My son, I have adopted you into My family, and you shall go no more out forever," I do not agree with

you that it is too good to be true! It may be too good for *you*, but it is not too good for *God*—He gives as only He can give! If I were in great need and obtained access to the Queen, and after laying my case before her, she said to me, "I feel a very deep interest in your case, here is a penny for you," I would be quite sure that I had not seen the Queen, but that some lady's maid or servant had been making a fool of me! Oh, no—the Queen gives as Queen, and God gives as God—so that the greatness of His gift, instead of staggering us, should only assure us that it is genuine and that it comes from God! Richard Baxter wisely said, "O Lord, it must be great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy is of no use to me!"

So, sinner, go to the great God with your great sin, and ask for great grace that you may be washed in the great fountain filled with the blood of the great sacrifice—and you shall have the great salvation which Christ has procured! And for it you shall ascribe great praise forever and ever to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.

It is a Psalm and, therefore, it is to be sung. It is dedicated to the Chief Musician and there is music in it, but it needs a trained ear to catch the harmony. The sinner with a broken heart will understand the language and also perceive the sweetness of it—but as for the proud and the self-righteous, they will say, "It is a melancholy dirge," and turn away from it in disgust. There are times, to one under a sense of sin, when there is no music in the world like that of the 51st Psalm! But it is music for the Chief Musician, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." And this is the Psalm of penitence—there is joy in it—and it makes joy even to the Chief Musician, himself!

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Here is a man of God, a man of God deeply conscious of his sin, crying for mercy, crying with all his heart and soul, and yet with his tear dimmed eyes looking up to God and spying out the gracious attributes of deity—loving-kindness, and tender mercies, multitudes of them! There is no eye that is quicker to see the mercy of God than an eye that is washed with the tears of repentance! When we dare not look upon divine justice—when that burning attribute seems as if it would smite us with blindness—we can turn to that glorious rainbow of grace round about the throne of God and rejoice in the loving-kindness and the tender mercies of our God!

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* "If washing will not remove it, burn it out, O Lord, but do cleanse me from it! Not only from the guilt of it, and the consequent punishment, but

from the sin itself. Make me clean through and through. 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.'"

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* "As if the record of it were painted on my eyeballs, I cannot look anywhere without seeing it! I seem to taste it in my meat and drink. And when I fall asleep, I dream of it, for Your wrath has come upon me, and now my transgression haunts me wherever I go."

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* This is the sting of sin to a truly penitent man—that he has sinned against *God*. The carnal mind sees nothing in that. If ever it does repent, it repents of doing wrong to man. It only takes the manward side of the transgression, but God's child, though grieved at having wronged man, feels that the deluge of his guilt—that which drowns everything else—is that he has sinned against his God! It is the very token and type and mark of an acceptable repentance that it has an eye to sin as committed against God. Now observe that the Psalmist, having thus sinned, and being thus conscience of his guilt, is now made to see that if the evil came *out* of him, it must have been *in* him at first—he would not have sinned as he had done had there not been an unclean fountain within him!

5, 6. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts*—Then it is not sufficient for me to be washed outside—being outwardly moral is not enough. "You desire truth in the inward parts"—

6. *And in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* In that part which is even hidden from myself, where sin might lurk without my knowing it, *there* would You spy it out. I pray You, Lord, eject all sin from me, rid me of the most subtle form of iniquity that may be concealed within me.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* This is a grand declaration of faith! I know not of such faith as this anywhere else. The faith of Abraham is more amazing, but to my mind, this faith of poor brokenhearted David, when he saw himself to be black with sin and crimson with grime, and yet could say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," is grand faith! It seems to me that a poor, trembling, broken down sinner who casts himself upon the infinite mercy of God, brings more glory to God than all the angels that went not astray are ever able to bring to Him!

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* Brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot sin with impunity! Worldlings may do so as far as this life is concerned, but a child of God will find that, to him, sin and smart, if they do not go together, will follow very closely upon one another's heels. Yes, and our Father in heaven chastens His people very sorely, even to the breaking of

their bones—and it is only when He applies the promises to our hearts by the gracious operation of His Holy Spirit and makes the chambers of our soul to echo with the voice of His loving kindness, that we "hear joy and gladness again." It is only then that our broken bones are bound up and we begin to rejoice once more.

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* David could not bear that God should look upon them. [See Sermon #86, Volume 2—UNIMPEACHABLE JUSTICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* "Put them right out of sight. Turn Your gaze away from them and then put them out of everybody's sight."

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* "Make me over again. Let the image of God in man be renewed in me. No, not the image, only, but renew the very Spirit of God within me."

11, 12. *Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.* "Lift me up, and then keep me up. Let me never sin against You again."

12, 13. *And uphold me with Your free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your way.* There are no such teachers of righteousness as those who have smarted under their own personal sin—they can, indeed, tell others what the ways of God are! What are those ways? His ways of chastisement—how He will smite the wandering. His ways of mercy—how he will restore and forgive the penitent!

13. *And sinners shall be converted unto You.* He felt sure that they would be converted and if anything can be the means of converting sinners, it is the loving faithful testimony of one who has, himself, tasted that the Lord is gracious. If God has been merciful to you, my brother or my sister, do not hold your tongue about it, but tell to others what He has done for you! Let the world know what a gracious God He is!

14. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* I like that confession and that prayer of David. He does not mince matters, for he had guiltily caused the blood of Uriah to be shed, and here he admits it, with great shame, but with equal honesty and truthfulness. As long as you and I call our sin by pretty names, they will not be forgiven. The Lord knows exactly what your sin is, therefore do not try to use polite terms about it. Tell Him what it is, that He may know that you know what it is. "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation."

"But surely," says someone, "there is nobody here who needs to pray *that* prayer!" Well, there is one in the pulpit, at least, who often feels that he has need to pray it, for what will happen if I preach not the gospel or if I preach it not with all my heart? It may be that the blood of souls shall be required at my hands! And, my brothers and sisters, if anything in your example should lead others into sin, or if the neglect of any opportunities that are presented to you should lead others to continue in

their sin till they perish, will not the sin of blood guiltiness be possible to you? I think you had better, each one, pray David's prayer, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation." "And then, O Lord, if I once get clear of that, 'my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.'"

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* He is afraid to open them himself lest he should say something amiss. Pardoned sinners are always afraid lest they should err again. [See Sermons #1130, Volume19—THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT BUSINESS and #713, Volume 12—SOUL-MURDER—WHO IS GUILTY?—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

15, 16. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire no sacrifice; else would I give it.* "Whatever there is in the whole world that You desire, I would gladly give it to You, my God."

16-18. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion.* You see that the Psalmist loves the chosen people of God. With all his faults, his heart is right towards the kingdom under his charge. He feels that he has helped to break down Zion, and to do mischief to Jerusalem, so he prays, "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion."

18, 19. *Build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Once get your sin forgiven and then God will accept your sacrifices. Then bring what you will with all your heart, for an accepted sinner makes an accepted sacrifice through Jesus Christ!

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"EVER THIS OUR WAR CRY— VICTORY, VICTORY!"
NO. 3279

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1911,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"
Isaiah 53:12.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2070, Volume 35— CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH SINNERS THE SOURCE OF HIS GLORY— read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

OUR great concern is concerning Christ. "For Him shall constant prayer be made." It does not much matter what becomes of us, the common soldiers, so long as our great captain is to the front. As the men of Napoleon's Old Guard could defy death for themselves, but were always anxious about the emperor, so every loyal soldier of Christ feels that the one question in the present conflict is, "How goes it with the King?" Is He crowned? Is He exalted? Is He winning His way among the sons of men? Brothers and sisters, it may be that our star is waning. Does it matter if *His* sun is reaching its noon? It may happen that the company with which we are associated is not so much to the front as it used to be, and the regimental flag is in the rear, but what of that? Let us do the best we can to retrieve its honor but, after all, the main consideration is the royal standard. Where is that? "Let my name perish," said Whitefield, "but let Christ's name last forever." Such a feeling should actuate us all! What are we, my brothers and sisters, and what is our father's house? What if ten thousand of us should fall merely to fill a ditch for Him to march over? What if He took the whole of us and crushed us to the dust—if He were lifted an inch higher, it were none too costly for such an one as He is who has redeemed us unto God by His precious blood!

Our first and last concern is about the result of our great warfare in regard to Christ. And my text will be consoling to your hearts in proportion as you are consecrated to Christ. If you are a worker for Jesus and your heart is tremulous for the cause of God—if you feel dismayed at times and often anxious about the progress of the kingdom—such an assurance as this will be like a voice from the Comforter, Himself! It is the Father who speaks and He says, concerning the Well-Beloved,

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong."

I. The first great truth of God taught us here is that THE VICTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS SURE!

Sure, first, because *these words are a divine promise* and every word of promise that comes from God is established. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" God has said, "I will divide Him a portion," that portion shall be divided. If the Lord has declared that He shall divide the spoil with the strong, who is he that shall keep Him back from the prey? We might have doubted if His word had been a prediction as to the probabilities of the life of this religion or of that. We might have supposed that the religion of Christ would be crushed out by rougher faiths that could use carnal weapons, or that its exceeding spirituality might cause it to wither away in an atmosphere so uncongenial. We might, I say, have had some trembling because of the ark of the Lord if this had been a mere influence or opinion! But we have none, now, for as surely as this book is the infallible Word of God, so surely must Christ win the day! As surely as God cannot lie, so surely must He, upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of men, rise from all His sorrows to a glorious victory!

The text is a promise placed very singularly in connection with facts which have been accomplished. We are told that Christ shall divide the spoil with the strong, but that promise is set side by side with the declaration that He is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." Just as surely, then, as that part of the prophecy is fulfilled in which Christ suffers, so surely shall that be fulfilled in which He triumphs! You have no doubt whatever about His being taken from prison and from judgment, about His making His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death. Well, the same book and the same chapter which contains the prophesy of those sorrowful facts contains this prophecy—that He shall divide the spoil with the strong! Therefore the ultimate victory of Christ is made sure by a divine promise!

Notice, moreover, that *it is the Father, Himself, who here puts forth His hand to guarantee the victory*. He writes, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great." "I will do it. I will see that He conquers. I will see that He has the reward of His labor. My own right hand and My holy arm shall so be with Him that He shall tread down His enemies and He shall take from them mountains of prey." Who is this that says, "I will divide Him a portion"? It is He at whose voice the earth trembles—

"The pillars of heaven's starry roof
Tremble and start at His reproof."

When He says, "I will do it," who shall stay His hand, or resist His will? God, the everlasting Father, has staked His honor and His glory upon the success of Christ! I make bold to say that if Christ wins not the world, and if He is not crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, it is not Jesus

that is dishonored so much as the great Father by whom He was ordained, sent and anointed! The stain would not only be upon the manhood but upon the Godhead, too, for God, Himself, appointed the Lord Jesus and said of Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He must see the Messiah through with it! It is the pleasure of the Lord that is in His hand—and that pleasure must prosper there, or else God's name would be dishonored. I am sure that Jesus will win the victory!

I am delighted to notice a change of expression in the next sentence. *The Son of God Himself also puts His hand to the work of ultimate victory*. Read the text again—"Therefore will I divide Him a portion," "and He shall divide." God gives Him the victory and He takes it Himself. The Father grants it and the Son grasps it by His own right hand. The glorious Jehovah cries, "He shall divide," and the ever blessed Son of the Highest, as a conqueror, comes forth actually to divide the spoil. O my brothers and sisters, Jesus is as gentle as a lamb, but I might say of Him as they at the Red Sea said of Jehovah, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name." The Lamb is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and who shall stand before Him when He goes forth to war? Who shall rouse Him? They that came against Him to take Him in the days of His humiliation stumbled and fell when He uttered the words, "I AM." And if the full power of that, "I AM," had been let loose upon them, they had not merely staggered to their falling, but each man among them had stumbled into his grave! It is He that stilled the waves upon Gennesaret! It is He that ruled the powers of the deep and made the devils fly at His bidding! If He puts His hand to the battle, woe to those that strive against Him! The defeat of Christ? Laugh the idea to scorn! No, the thorn crowned Prince is victorious! Well spoke the apostate Julian in his dying moments, "Nazarene, You have conquered." All His foes will have to admit it. In the day of judgment, trembling, and in the lowest pit of hell, despairing, they shall acknowledge His supremacy! The despised and rejected of men, with a rod of iron shall break His enemies in pieces! Yes, He shall break them in pieces like potters' vessels. "Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

That is the first thing, then—the Christ will conquer. It is a divine promise! Its fulfillment is guaranteed by the Father! It will certainly be achieved by the Son!

II. Secondly, THE VICTORY IS AS GLORIOUS AS IT IS SURE. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great."

The great King rewards our champion. You have heard of great champions who have been knighted on the battlefield by their sovereigns—deeds of special prowess have been thus rewarded. Others, amid the acclamations of their troops, and while yet their hands were

unwashed from gore, have been crowned on the field only because of their superior valor and the decisive nature of the battle. Now, what is it to be knighted or crowned by kings or nations? It is as nothing! But to be crowned of God? For God Himself to give the reward in the light of eternity? What must such a victory be? I know that many an act which man applauds is despised by the Most High—and many a fierce fight that has stirred the heart of nations and made the poets ring out their hymns for centuries—has been not only despicable but abominable in the sight of the Most High! But when God rewards, what must be the glory of the achievement? And here we have it—God, even the Father, the same one whom it pleased to bruise His son when He made the iniquity of us all to meet upon Him—that same God who knows all things and weighs all things aright, and is the very source and soul of honor, He shall crown our Lord Jesus! Must it not be a glorious victory? He *has* crowned Him! He *is* crowning Him! He *shall* continue to crown Him, for thus it is written, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great."

The glory of this victory may be seen, next, not only in the reward coming from so high a source, but from *its being manifestly a great reward in the esteem of men*, since our Lord is to have "a portion with the great." It is difficult to say what makes a great man. When I look over the lists of great men, some of them seem to be to be very little. But still, men have among themselves a sort of standard by which to measure, and they say of such and such persons that they are "great." From different points of view they are. Now, Christ is to have a portion with the great. Perhaps you have been grieved to see how certain ungodly men in these times make nothing of Christ—like Herod, they set Him at nothing—but these people are mostly very second rate individuals, of small account even among their own order. Almost all intelligent men, even if they do not accept all that Christ says, agree that He is a great man and many confess that there never was such another man as He. There have been skeptics whose admiration of Christ has been extreme. I, for one, cannot understand how any honest mind can do other than reverence His marvelous character and the grandeur of the truths which He has revealed. He is great, inexpressibly great, and the day will come—*must* come, is every day *coming nearer*—when Christ will be seen even by His enemies to be supremely great. His cross today towers over the wrecks of time and He, Himself, rises before my faith's vision so much above all the sons of men that I see all philosophies, theories, and human dogmas crouching at His feet! His victories are not victories among pigmies, but victories among the great, such as shall make all men see that He, Himself, is the great—such as shall make all men see that He is the greatest of the great!

My brothers and sisters, think for a minute what a battle Christ has waged with all the powers of evil. With all the wit, and craft, and unbelief, and pride, and lust of man. With all the foul devices and cruelties, and wickedness of the devil, and all the principalities and powers that obey

his bidding. And with death and all that goes with it, and shall come of it—against all these He has set the battle in array, and over all these He has triumphed, so that He divides the spoil with the great! Your adversaries, O Prince Emmanuel, are not such as a common warrior might rout. They are foemen worthy of your steel! What desperate tugs they gave You when they forced the bloody sweat from out of You in the moment of your sternest wrestling. But you have flung them to the ground!

Of course, this language can only be used as speaking part of the truth of God because the portion which God has given to His dear Son is indisputably greater than the greatest things that earth can hold! I take it that the question that Christ has come to answer is the greatest question that ever moved eternity. The work that Christ has come to do is the grandest work that ever stirred the ages. It is God's work and God's question—how shall evil be driven out of the world? How shall justice, without a stain, smile on a sinner? How shall God be seen as the Holy One with all the glory of His character manifested, receiving to His bosom the guilty sons of men? The grandest work that ever was done of God, Himself, Christ has come to perform, and not only has He His portion with the great, but of all the great He is the greatest, and His portion is above their portion! They are not to be mentioned in the same breath!

Notice, too, that a part of the description of this victory represents *the Lord as Himself dividing the spoil "with the strong."* Not merely with great enemies did Christ wrestle, but with strong powers. I might give you a hundred illustrations of this, but I prefer to give you just one. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart—came to battle there—He did, indeed, divide the spoil with the strong, for I was strong willed and desperately set on mischief—and for a while I was in the hands of strong despair, out of which it seemed impossible that I could escape. The bands which held me were of iron, tough as steel, hardened in the fires of hell! And yet this day I am His, for He has won me and taken the prey from the mighty! I have been, just now, to see our venerable elder White. He is dying. I looked at his venerable beard as he sat up in bed, and I looked at the bright face that shone above it—and I was charmed at the joyful sight! He said, "I have no trouble. I have not a troubled thought. I am the happiest man in the world—I am going home and I rejoice in it! Though I am perfectly satisfied to wait." Death is just nothing at all to him! Just like a dear sister who went from us some time ago. When I went to see her, you might have thought she was going to be married, she was so happy in prospect of departing! Charles Wesley once said, "They may say what they will about Methodism, but our people die well." That is my comfort—our people die well—they die gloriously triumphant in the Lord! When I think of it, I can see how my Lord divides the spoil with the strong. Death comes and he says, "That is mine." He has taken

the poor, wrinkled body! And Christ smiles, and lets him have it, for He takes for His share, the soul, the life! And as He bears him off, He takes the best part of the spoil! He has left death the husk, but He has, Himself, secured the kernel! Yes, the day will come when He will take the body, too, out of the custody of death, for not a wreck or a rag of all His saints shall remain in the domains of death. There is a resurrection of dead bodies as well as an immortality of spirits! Glory be to Christ! In this way, here and hereafter, He divides the spoil with the strong! Strong is death, but still stronger the omnipotent Son of God!

There is another aspect under which we may speak of the glory of Christ's victory, *He will share it with His people*. The second paragraph of the text is, "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." That is, He will divide it out, and allot portions to all those who came to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Just as David after Ziklag, when he had taken the prey from the Amalekites, sent portions all round to his friends in Judah, so, when the King Eternal takes the spoil, He will give a share to you and to me if we have been faithful to Him. There shall be a portion even for us whom the Lord made strong for Himself in the day of battle. Does it not make your heart laugh to think of it? Jesus wins the victory, but He will not enjoy it alone—He will glorify His people. Even the sick folk that go not down to the battle, shall have their share of the spoil, for this is David's law, and the law of the Son of David, that they that abide with the stuff shall share with those that go down to the fight. He will give to each faithful sufferer or worker a portion of the prey. Make haste, O Champion, make haste to give to every one of us a prey of divers colors, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil!

III. Thus we have seen that Christ *will win the victory, and the victory will be glorious*. Now let us declare, thirdly, that THE RESULTS OF THIS VICTORY WILL BE VERY SUBSTANTIAL.

Let me remind you that in consequence of what our Lord has done, *myriads of souls will be redeemed*. How many will escape from sin and death and hell to live forever is not revealed. We have every reason to believe that a number that no man can number out of every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue shall praise their redeeming Lord. Christ's death will not spend its force in the conversion of here and there one, but He will see of the travail of His soul and will be satisfied. And we are convinced that no little thing will satisfy Him. The great result of our Lord's death will be the eternal salvation of untold myriads!

Next to that will be the overthrow of every form of evil which now reigns in the world, and the extermination of religions falsehood, vice, drunkenness, war and every horrible mischief born of the fall and of human depravity. Christ will conquer these and there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. Forever and ever boundless honors shall be given to Christ for His victory over every force of evil. The seed of the woman shall trample on the serpent.

As the result of Christ's death, Satan's power will be broken. He will no longer go forth to rule among the nations.

Death also will have lost its dominion over the sons of men. The Son of David shall restore that which He took not away. More than our first father lost, shall Christ bring back. There shall be substantial glory to Himself in the lives of His people on earth, in their deaths and in their lives forever. Glory shall be brought to God of a new and unusual kind. A light will be shed upon the character of God which so far as we know, could not have come to us by any other means except by the death of the only begotten. Hallelujahs louder than before shall rise up before the throne of God. Praises shall ascend unto God such as Creation never produced, "for You were slain, and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood, and we shall reign forever and ever."

Now, my brothers and sisters, do not get into a state of fright and fear about the Christian religion. Do not go to your chambers and sigh, "Everything is going to the bad, and we shall all be eaten up by the devil." Nonsense! There is a stronger arm yet than that black arm of Satan! In God's eternal goodness resides a power and majesty that cannot be found in the infernal malevolence of the devil! I know which is the winning side—I am sure of it. Though we may drearily imagine that things go amiss and fancy that the vessel is ready to break up and become a wreck, she will enter the harbor yet with all her cargo safe—and from every wave that tossed her and every wind that beat upon her she shall derive eternal advantage! Courage, brothers and sisters, we are not beaten and we are not going to be beaten! We are succeeding all along the line. Shout victory, universal victory, from stem to stern of the good old ship! Not a foe has been able to live upon her deck. Give the enemy's black hull another broadside. When you think that the crew of the Black Prince are about to board us, grasp your pikes and give them a warm reception! This good ship bears the Red Cross at her masthead, and shall never be taken, but shall win the victory as surely as God lives and His Son lives who has risen from the dead!

IV. So I close with this last remark. THE WHOLE OF THIS VICTORY RESULTS FROM CHRIST'S OWN WORK.

Lend me your best attention for two or three minutes, because this is the pith and marrow of it all. "*Therefore* will I divide Him a portion"—that is logic. Why this, "therefore"? What is the argument? Christ shall divide with the strong because—how does it run? "Because His doctrinal teaching is singularly in keeping with the progress of the age"? I have heard that observation and smiled at it. "Because His gospel is preached with such remarkable eloquence and singular clearness?" Indeed not! Why, then, will Christ win the victory? The answer is, "Because He has poured out His soul unto death." If God, Himself, deigns to take upon Himself our nature and in that nature pours out His life like a libation even unto death—if, I say, He thus pours out His life—it is impossible to

conceive that He will be defeated! Blasphemy may imagine it, profanity may speak it, but truth abhors the idea that Jesus can be baffled! A dying God? It is an inaccurate expression, yet I know of no expression that is so accurate! God putting Himself into human form, so as to be capable of suffering and death, cannot suffer and die in vain! He must, He shall, He will win that for which He died! He must reign, "because He has poured out His soul unto death."

Listen again, here is the second reason, *"He was numbered with the transgressors."* This is mentioned secondly, as if there was something even more in that than in the first. To die is wonderful condescension, but for the pure and Holy One to deign to be numbered with the transgressors, and stand as if He had, Himself, transgressed, though transgress He never did, nor could—I say this is more wonderful! If Jesus did that, then He must win the victory! When I am dispirited, where do I find encouragement? Where the stars of Bethlehem burn and where men make merry on their Christmas days? No, their mirth is weariness to a heavy heart! I will tell you where I go for comfort—to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, to the Garden and to the tomb. Christ cannot have suffered there in vain! Christ cannot have been despised, slandered and actually numbered with transgressors—and all for nothing! It cannot be! It cannot be! Death and hell, you can defeat armies of men, but the crucified treads you down! When our champion of the pierced hands comes to the front, the battle no longer wavers! We glory in His death and in His making common cause with transgressors!

But this is not all. It is added, *"And He bore the sin of many."* This denotes His actual and literal substitution—His acting as the sin bearer. This is something more than being numbered with the transgressors. He actually takes the sin of the transgressors and bears their burden upon His own shoulders by a wondrous system of substitution which is easier to be believed than to be explained! Because He did this, He must conquer! He must conquer! Sin cannot be victorious if Jesus has carried it on His shoulders and hurled it into His sepulcher! If the darkest days were to come and all the churches of Christ were to be extinguished, if there were left only one Christian and he as good as dead by reason of weakness, yet might he believe that God, from the dead, would raise up seed unto His Son and fulfill His covenant, and keep His word! It must be so. The offering of Christ's soul for sin secures to Him a seed forever!

And lastly, there is this fourth reason given, *"He made intercession for the transgressors."* I can conceive you praying, my dear friend, and God's not hearing you. But if the man who was despised and rejected should say, "Rise, poor suppliant, rise, and I will take your place." And if the Blessed and Beloved of the Father whose eyes are as the eyes of the morning, and whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh, kneels down and prays, "My Father, by My blood, and wounds, and agony, save this sinner," why, it must be done! And if He says, "Father, give Me those whom I have redeemed," it must be done! And if He pleads,

"Father, keep them by Your word," it must be done! And if He prays, "Father, make them one, as We are," it must be done! And when He shall ask, "Father, give them power and victory," it must be done! And when He shall ask, "Father, let My servants all become champions and send them forth, East, West, North, and South against idolatry, and infidelity, and Popery, and clothe them with the Holy Spirit," why then it must be done! The power of Christ's intercession is irresistible! Queen Mary reckoned the prayers of John Knox to be worth many regiments, but what shall I say of the prayers of Jesus, the Son of God? They are with us today! While we are sitting here, and troubling our minds about the Lord's work, and saying, "What shall we do?" and, "What will come of it?" and all that, Jesus is pleading! Hush till your hearts leave off beating—till not a thought is heard! You may hear Him saying, "Father, I will." Here is the power of the church! The plea of Christ with authority before the throne of God is the majestic force upon which the church depends! "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Therefore pluck up courage. Jesus will yet win. You weak, fainthearted ones, rejoice! The victory is sure, not because of anything you are, or of anything you can do, but for Jesus' sake! In the name of the Lord we set up our banners. Hallelujah!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 19:14-37.

Verse 14. *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews, Behold your King!* [See Sermon #1353, Volume 23—ECCE REX—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They had accused Him of being a king, or of pretending to be one. Pilate had scourged Him, the soldiers had mocked Him, and there He stood—a piteous spectacle of woe. What cruel sarcasm there was in the tones of the Governor when he said to the Jews, "Behold your King."

15. *But they cried out, away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King?* "How could you call Him, King, and bring against Him a charge of setting up a rival kingdom when you, who would be His subjects, are all crying out, 'Crucify Him'? 'Shall I crucify your King?'" How false they were their own actions proved.

15. *The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar.* They said this with all the coolness in the world. The mob had been stirred up and excited, but the chief priests, the principal ecclesiastics of the day, coolly said, "We have no king but Caesar." Did they not recollect that the scepter was not to pass away from Judah until Shiloh came, so that, as it had evidently passed away, Shiloh must have come? After all their Bible reading, did they not know that? Oh, how easy it is to read much of Scripture and yet to know little about its teaching! Dear friends, let us not join the Jews in refusing to have Christ as King. They cried, "Away

with Him, away with Him," when He was set before them as King. Let us not do that, but let us rather accept the crucified as our Master and Lord, and cheerfully bow at His feet.

16. *Then delivered he, Him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away.* [See Sermon #497, Volume 9—THE PROCESSION OF SORROW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So was He led as a sheep to the slaughter, as Isaiah had long before foretold that He would be.

17. *And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.* Probably a knoll of rock which today stands outside the city gate looking wonderfully like a skull, with two depressions in the rock which, at distance, appear like eyes. This was the common place of execution—the Tyburn, the Old Bailey of Jerusalem!

18, 19. *Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side, one, and Jesus in the middle. And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* What could have moved Pilate to write that title? Perhaps he did it just to let the Jews know that they had forced him to put the Christ to death. He would put over Him their accusation without any endorsement of His own—"JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." And so He is, and King of the Gentiles, too!

20. *This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.* So that everybody could read it, for someone or other of these languages would be known to everybody in the crowd—they were not dead languages, then, as they are now.

21, 22. *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.* He could sometimes be firm. Perhaps when there was least excuse for it but when there was need of firmness, this vacillating Governor was swayed by the will of cruel men.

23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments.* It was the custom with executioners to take the garments of the criminal.

23. *And made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat: now the coat woven without seam, woven from the top throughout.* The common robe of the country, for Christ assumed no garment or vesture that would make Him seem great. He was too great to need the adornment of any special style of clothes.

24. *They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.* Those rough Roman soldiers knew nothing about the ancient prophecy, yet a divine destiny

guided them! God's word must be fulfilled and they, in the freedom of their will, did exactly what God had ordained, and the Spirit had long before prophesied! There are two things that are true—that men act freely and are therefore responsible when they sin, but that there is a divine predestination that rules all things according to the purpose and will of God! It would have puzzled us to explain how such a prophecy could be fulfilled at all—parting Christ's raiment among them, and then casting lots for his vesture—yet so it was, they divided what could be divided, and they cast lots upon what would have been spoilt if they had torn it! I think that no Christian will ever like the rattle of dice when he remembers that they were used at the cross! All games of chance should be put away from us, for we can, as it were, see our Master's blood spattered upon them.

25, 26. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son!* "See in John one who will act as a son to you."

27. *Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother!* "John, take her home and treat her as a mother should be treated."

27. *And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* He was the disciple whom Jesus especially loved, so as a token of Christ's great love to him, He left His mother to his charge. Have you any poor folk dependent upon you? Do you know any of God's very poor people? Take care of them and do not think the charge a burden, but do it for the sake of Him who loves you so much that He entrusts His poor ones to you. Oh, that everybody would look at this matter of caring for God's poor in that light!

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst!* It seems a strange thing that Jesus should have said, "I thirst," because, out of all the pains that He endured upon the cross—and they were very many and very sharp—He never mentions one except thirst! A person in such terrible agony as He was enduring might have mentioned 50 things, but He singles out this one because there was a prophecy concerning it.

29. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth.* Why is hyssop mentioned here? You remember that the hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper and that David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." The hyssop was also used in the sprinkling of blood under the law of God, so it is introduced here with a set purpose. The sponge is introduced here, too—it always seems to me very remarkable that in the death of Christ the circle of life was completed. The sponge is the very lowest form of animal life and Christ is the very highest type of life of any kind. The sponge was

lifted to the lips of the King of glory and carried refreshment to Him—and you and I, like the sponge—the very least of God's living ones, may yet bring refreshment to our Savior's lips!

30. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.* It is not that He died, and that then His head fell forward, but while He yet lived, having before maintained an erect, noble bearing even in the pangs of death, He now, to show His perfect resignation to His Father's will, bows His head and yields up that saved spirit of His which dwelt within His body!

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away*. The breaking of the legs was intended to hasten death—a very cruel method, but a very effectual one. Passing by Christ hanging in the center it was a strange thing for them to do, yet it had to be done, although they were quite unconscious of the reason why they so acted.

32-34. *Then came the soldiers and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side*—To make sure that He would not survive—

34-37. *And forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bares record, and his record is true, and he knows that he says the truth, that you might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced."* So His side must be pierced, but His bones must not be broken! See how the hand of God carries out the Word of God—and value every line of Scripture! Our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to go out of His way so as to ensure that every single word in the Old Testament in reference to Himself should be fulfilled, so mind that you do not think little of the Old Testament which He so highly prized! [See Sermons #421, Volume 7—IT IS FINISHED!; #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH and #1956, Volume 33—ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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CHRIST'S PRAYER AND PLEA
NO. 3280

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1866.

"Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust."
Psalm 16:1.

I BELIEVE that we have in this verse a prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some portions of this Psalm cannot apply to anyone but the Savior. And we have the examples of Peter and Paul to warrant us in saying that in this Psalm, David spoke of Jesus Christ. There is no apparent division in the Psalm, so that as one part of it refers most distinctly to Christ, we are justified in concluding that the whole of it refers to Him and belongs to Him! But we know that whatever belongs to Christ belongs, also, to all His people because of their vital union with Him, so we shall treat the text, first, *as our Savior's own prayer.* And then, secondly, we shall regard it also as *the prayer of the followers of the Lamb*.

I. So, first, we will take these words as OUR SAVIOR'S OWN PRAYER. "Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust." And we will divide the text at once into two parts—*the prayer itself*—"Preserve me, O God." And *the argument or plea*—"for in You do I put my trust."

In considering these words as Christ's prayer, does it not immediately strike you as a very singular thing that Christ should pray at all? It is most certain that He was "very God of very God," that, "Word," who was in the beginning with God, and who was Himself, God, the great Creator "without whom was not anything made that was made." But, without in any degree taking away His glory and dignity as God, we must never forget that He was just as truly man, one of the great family of mankind and, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." Though He remained sinless, He "was in all points tempted like as we are." Being, therefore, man, and intending to make Himself not only the atoning sacrifice for His people, but also a perfect example that they might imitate, it became necessary that He should pray. What would a Christian be without prayer, and how could a Christ who never prayed be an example to a Christian? Yet notwithstanding the fact that it was necessary, it was marvelously condescending on our Savior's part! The Son of God, with strong crying

and tears making known His requests unto His Father, is one of the greatest marvels in all the ages! What a wondrous stoop it was that Jesus, the un-sinning Son of God, the thrice holy One, the anointed, the Christ for whom prayer is to be made continually, should Himself have prayed to His Father!

Yet, while there is much condescension in this fact, there is also much comfort in it. When I kneel in prayer, it is a great consolation to me to know that where I bow before the Lord, there is the print of my Savior's knees. When my cry goes up to heaven, it goes along the road which Christ's cry once traveled. He cleared away all impediments so that now my prayer may follow in the track of His. Be comforted, Christian, if you have to pray in dark and stormy nights, with the thought that your Master did the same—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer!
The decent His temptation knew,
His conflict and His victory too."

If you have to pray in sore agony of spirit fearing that God has forsaken you, remember that Christ has gone further even than that into the depths of anguish in prayer, for He cried in Gethsemane, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

In addition to being condescending and comforting, this fact of our Savior praying shows the intimate communion there is between Christ and all the members of His mystical body. It is not only we who have to pray, but He who is our head bowed in august Majesty before the throne of grace. Throughout the narratives of the four evangelists, one is struck with the many times that mention is made of Christ's prayers. At His baptism, it was while He 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." On another occasion, we read 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." On the Mount of Transfiguration, "as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering." Jesus was emphatically "a man of prayer." After a long day of teaching the people and healing the sick, instead of seeking repose, He would spend the whole night in prayer to God or, at another time, rising up a great while before day, He would depart into a solitary place and there pray for the needed strength for the new day's duties.

Having thus noticed the fact of Christ's praying, I want now to call your attention to the particular prayer in our text. I ask you first to observe that it is addressed to God in a peculiar aspect. You do not see this in our translation, but in the Hebrew it is, "Preserve me, O El." That is one of the names of God and the same name that the Savior used

when He cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lame sabachthani?" "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Many Christians seem to have only one name for God, but the Hebrew saints had many titles for the one living and true God! Worldlings generally talk of, "the Almighty," as though His only characteristic was the omnipotent might which is displayed in great storms on the sea or terrible calamities on the land. But our Savior, whose knowledge of God was perfect, here selects a name of God peculiarly suitable to the condition in which He was when He offered this prayer, for according to most commentators, the word, "El," means, "The strong One." So it is weakness crying to the strong for strength—"Preserve me, O You who are so strong, so mighty, that You uphold all things by the word of Your power!" Others say that "El" means "The Ever Present One." This is a delightful name for God, and one that is most appropriate for a believer to use when he is in peril on land or sea, in the den of lions or in the burning fiery furnace—"O You Ever Present One, preserve me!" Jehovah is indeed "a very present help in trouble." I wish we could acquire a more intimate knowledge of the divine character so that in calling upon Him in prayer, we could seek the aid of that special attribute which we need to have exercised on our behalf. What a blessed title is that of Shaddai which Bunyan uses in His *Holy War*—El Shaddai, God All-Sufficient or, as some render it, "The Many Breasted God," the God with a great abundance of heart, full of mercy and grace, and supplying the needs of all His children out of His own fullness! Then take the other names or titles of God—Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Shammah, Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah Tsidkenu—and any others that you can find, and think how much better we could pray if, instead of always saying, "O Lord!" or, "O God!" we appealed to Him under some title which indicates the attribute which we desired to be exerted on our behalf!

Next notice that this is a prayer produced by an evident sense of weakness. The suppliant feels that He cannot preserve Himself. We believe that the human nature of Christ was altogether free from any tendency to sin and that it never did sin in any sense whatever. But still, the Savior here appears not to rely upon the natural purity of His nature but He turns away from that which might seem to us to be a good subject for reliance in order to show that He would have nothing to do with self-righteousness, just as He wishes us to have nothing to do with it. The perfect Savior prays, "Preserve me, O God." So, beloved, let us also pray this prayer for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was without any tendency to sin, put Himself under the shadow of the almighty wings—then shall I wickedly and presumptuously dare to go into danger trusting to my own integrity and relying upon my own strength of will? God forbid that you or I should ever act thus. Jesus was only weak because He had assumed our nature, yet in His weakness there was no tendency to sin! But our weakness is linked with a

continual liability to evil—so, if Jesus prayed, "Preserve me, O God," with what earnestness should each one of us cry unto the Lord, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe"!

I remark, next, that this prayer on the lips of Christ, appeals for a promised blessing. "What?" Someone says, "is there anywhere in God's word a promise that Christ shall be preserved?" Oh, yes! Turn to the prophecy of Isaiah, the 49th chapter, and the seventh and following verses, and there read, "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nations abhor, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You. Thus says the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard You, and in a day of salvation have I helped You: and *I will preserve You*, and give You for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." When the Savior prayed this prayer, He could remind His Father of the promise given through Isaiah, and say to Him, "You have said, 'I will preserve You.' Do as You have said, O My Father!"

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us learn from our Savior's example to plead the promises of God when we go to Him in prayer! Praying without a promise is like going to war without a weapon! God is so gracious that He may yield to our entreaties even when He has not given a definite promise concerning what we are asking at His hands. But going to Him with one of His own promises is like going to a bank with a check—He must honor His own promise! We speak reverently, yet very confidently upon this point. To be consistent with His own character, He must fulfill His own word which He has spoken! So, when you approach the throne of grace, search out the promise that applies to your case and plead it with your heavenly Father, and then expect that He will do as He has said.

Observe, next, that this prayer of Christ obtained an abundant answer. You recollect the many preservations which He experienced—how He was preserved while yet a child, from the envy and malice of Herod and how, again and again He was delivered from those who sought His life. He was also preserved many times from falling into the snares set for Him by scribes and Pharisees and others who sought to entrap Him in His talk. How wisely He answered the lawyer who came to Him tempting Him, and those who sought to catch Him over the matter of paying tribute to Caesar! He was never taken as a bird ensnared by the fowler—He was always preserved in every emergency. He was like a physician in a hospital full of lepers, yet He was always preserved from the disease!

Then, to close this part of the subject, notice that this prayer most deeply concerns the whole company of believers in Christ, for it strikes me that when our Savior prayed to His Father, "Preserve me," He was

thinking of the whole of His mystical body and pleading for all who were vitally united to Him! You remember how, in His great intercessory supplication, He pleaded for His disciples, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are." This is the same prayer as, "Preserve me," if we understand the "me" to include all who are one with Christ. We also are included in that supplication, for He further said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me." Yes, dear friend, though you may seem to yourself to be the meanest of the Lord's people, even though you are in your own apprehension but as His feet that glow in the furnace of affliction—even you are among those whom Christ entreated His Father to keep—and you may rest assured that He will certainly do so! Christ will never lose one of the members of His mystical body! If He could do so, His body would be imperfect and incomplete, but that it never can be! Paul tells us that Christ's church "is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all" so that if He were left without His fullness, He would have suffered an irreparable loss. That can never be the case, so this prayer will be answered concerning the whole body of believers in Jesus, who shall be presented "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Blessed be His holy name!

Let us now turn *to the plea which Christ urged in support of His prayer*: "Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust." Did Christ put His trust in His Father? We surely need to ask the question and we know at once what the answer must be. In the matter of faith, as in everything else, He is a perfect example to His people—and we cannot imagine a Christian without faith! Faith is the very life of a true believer in Jesus! Indeed, without faith he is not a believer, so Christ was his model in this respect as well as in every other.

The words, "in You do I put my trust," may be translated, "in You do I shelter." There is in them an allusion to running under something for shelter. In fact, the best figure I can use to give you the meaning of this sentence is that of the chicks running under the wings of the hen for shelter. Just so do we hide ourselves under the overshadowing wings of the eternal. As a man, Christ used this plea with God, that He was sheltering from all evil under the divine wings of power, and wisdom, and goodness, and truth. This is an accurate interpretation of the passage, and there are many instances recorded in Scripture in which Christ really did this. Take, for instance that remarkable declaration in Psalm 22:9—"You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts," as though very early in life, probably far earlier than any of us were brought to know the Lord, Jesus Christ was exercising hope in the Most High. Then again, in the 50th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, we have these

words, which must refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked out the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." That verse is immediately followed by this one, "For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." These words were peculiarly appropriate from the lips of Christ, yet each one of His followers may also say, "The Lord God will help me."

Even in His last agonies Christ uttered words which plainly prove that He had put His trust in God, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." There is more faith in that final commendation of His soul to His Father than some of you might imagine, for it takes great faith to be able to speak thus in the circumstance in which Christ was then placed. Not only was He suffering the terrible pangs that were inseparable from death by crucifixion, but He had to bear the still greater grief that was His portion when His Father's face was withdrawn from Him because He was in the place of sinners and, therefore, had to endure the separation from God which was their due. Job said, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him"—and this was what Jesus actually did! What wondrous faith it was that trusted in God even when He said, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of hosts!" Yet even then Jesus turned to His Father and said, "Father into Your hands I commend My spirit. I commit Myself into the hand that wields the sword of infallible justice. Into the hand that has crushed Me and broken Me in pieces." Talk of faith! Did you ever hear of such sublime confidence as that having been displayed by anyone, else? When a martyr has to lay down his life for the truth of God, his faith is sustained by the comforting presence of God—he believes in the God who is smiling upon him even while he is in the midst of the fire. But Christ on the cross trusted in the God who had forsaken Him! O beloved, imitate this faith as far as it is possible in your case! What a glorious height of confidence Jesus reached! Oh, that we may have grace to follow where He has so blessedly led the way!

I want you carefully to notice the argument that is contained in Christ's plea—"Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust." Christ, as God, had felt the power of that plea, so He knew that His Father would also feel the power of it. You remember that Jesus said to the woman of Canaan, "O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will." Her faith prevailed with Him and He felt that His faith would prevail with His Father so that when He said, "In You do I put my trust," He knew that He would obtain the preservation for which He pleaded. Jesus never forgot that the rule of the kingdom is, "According to your faith be it done unto you." He knew 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. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of

the Lord." So Jesus came to His Father with this plea, "I do trust in You, I have absolute confidence in You, therefore I pray You to preserve Me." My dear brother or sister in Christ, can you say the same? Can you look up to God and say, "In You do I put my trust"? If so, you may use it as Christ used it in pleading with His Father. Perhaps you have gazed upon a weapon that has been wielded by some great warrior. If you had that weapon in your hand and were going forth to fight, you would feel, "I must not be a coward while I am grasping a brave man's sword, but I must play the man with it as he did." Well, you have in your grasp the very weapon which Christ used when He gained the victory! You can go before God with the very same argument that Christ used with His Father and He will hear your plea even as He heard Christ's! "Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust."

II. I had intended, in the second place, to speak of my text as THE PRAYER OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS. But, instead of preaching upon it as I would have done had time permitted, I will merely give you a few notes upon it, and then you can preach the second sermon yourselves by practicing it as you go your several ways to your homes.

First, *what does this prayer mean to a believer?* It means that you put yourself and all belonging to you under divine protection. Before you close your eyes, pray this prayer—"'Preserve me, O God!' Preserve my body, my family, my house from fire, from famine, from hurt or harm of every kind." Specially present the prayer in a spiritual sense. Preserve me from the world. Let me not be carried away with its excitements. Do not allow me to bow before its blandishments, nor to fear its frowns. Preserve me from the devil. Let him not tempt me above what I am able to bear. Preserve me from myself—keep me from growing envious, selfish, high minded, proud, slothful. Preserve me from those evils into which I see others run and preserve me from those evils into which I am myself most apt to run! Keep me from evils known and from evils unknown. 'Cleanse You me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins—let them not have dominion over me.'"

This is a prayer which is more comprehensive in the original than it is in our version. It may be translated, "Save me," and this is a prayer that is suitable for many here. Those of you who have never prayed before can begin with this prayer, "Save me, O Strong One! It will indeed need a strong One to save me, for I am so far gone that nothing but omnipotence can save me." It may also be rendered, "Keep me," or, "Guard me." It is the word which we would use in speaking of the bodyguard of a king or of shepherds protecting their flocks. It is a prayer which you may keep on using from the time you begin to know the Lord until you get to heaven—and then you will only need to alter Jude's doxology very slightly, and say, "Unto Him who has kept us from falling, and presented us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the

only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Next, *when is this prayer suitable?* Well, it is suitable at this moment! You do not know what dangers you will meet with before you go to your bed tonight. Take special care when you come to what you consider the safe parts of the road, for you will probably be most in danger when you think you are in no danger at all! It is often a greater peril not to be tempted than to be tempted. This prayer is suitable to some of you who are going into a new situation where you will have new responsibilities, new duties and probably new trials and difficulties. In the old days of superstition, people were foolish enough to wear charms of various kinds to guard them from evil—but such a prayer as this is better than all their charms! If your pathway should lie through the enchanted fields or even through the Valley of Death Shade, you need not be afraid, but may march boldly on with this prayer on your lips, "Preserve me, O God: for in You do I put my trust."

Then, *in what spirit ought this prayer to be offered?* It should be offered in a spirit of deep humility. Do not pray, "Preserve me, O God," as though you felt that you were a very precious person. It is true that God regards you as one of His jewels if you are a believer in Jesus, but you are not to regard yourself as a jewel. Think of yourself as a brand plucked from the burning and then you will pray with due humility. Pray as a poor feeble creature who must be destroyed unless God shall preserve you! Pray as if you were a sheep that had been shorn and that needed to have the wind tempered to it. Pray as a drowning man might pray, "Preserve me, O God." Pray as sinking Peter prayed, "Lord, save me," for so you shall be preserved even as he was!

With what motive ought you to pray this prayer? Pray it especially out of hatred to sin. Whenever you think of sin, the best thing you can do is to pray, "Preserve me, O God." Whenever you hear or read of others doing wrong, do not begin to plume yourself upon your own excellence, but cry at once, "Preserve me, O God, or it may be that I shall sin even as those others have done." If this night you are a Christian, the praise for this is not to be given to yourself, but to the Lord who has made you to differ from others! You are only what His grace has made you, so show how highly you value that grace by asking for more and more of it!

This must suffice concerning the prayer of the text, for I must, in closing, remind you of the plea and ask if each one here is able to use it—"Preserve me, O God: *for in You do I put my trust.*" Can you, my friend, urge this plea with God tonight? Perhaps you say that you could do so years ago. Then why not put your trust in the Lord now? It is present faith that you need in your present perils and you cannot pray acceptably 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." You know what it is to trust a friend and, perhaps, to be deceived—but do you

know what it is to trust in God and not be deceived? Are you trusting for salvation only to Christ? Do you sing—

"You, O Christ, are all I need,
More than all in You I find"?

Is this your plea continually? Are you always trusting in God—in the dark as well as in the light? Many a man thinks he is strong until he begins to put forth his strength—and then he finds that it is utter weakness. There are many who fancy they are full of faith until they try to exercise it, and then they realize how little they have. They are fine soldiers when there is no fighting, and splendid sailors as long as they are on dry land—but such faith as that is of little service when some great emergency arises. The faith we need is that firm confidence which sings—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink!
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

If that is the kind of faith you have, you need not fear to pray, "Preserve me, O God," for He will be as a wall of fire round about you to guard you from all evil! And though you are now in the midst of those who would drag you down to their level if they could, or turn you aside from the paths of righteousness—the Lord, in whom you have put your trust, will never leave you, nor forsake you, but will bring you in His own good time to that blessed place of which He has told you in His word! And there—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in"—

you shall be preserved from all evil forever, and faith shall be blessedly exchanged for sight! God grant that everyone of us may be able to pray the prayer of our text, and to use the plea, "Preserve me, O God: for in You have I put my trust," for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.

Can there be found in all the records of mankind, in all the documents that have ever been preserved, anything that can match this record of our Savior's great intercessory prayer? He seems to pray here as if He already stood within the veil—not pleading in agony as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, but speaking with that authority with which He is clothed now that His work on earth is done! There is as much of the divine as of the human in this prayer, and it is remarkable that in it our Lord does not make any confession of sin on account of His people. He does not come before God, as it were, in *forma pauperis*, with many pleas, but the burden of His prayer is that He may be glorified, and that His Father may be glorified in Him. The words of the prayer are among the most simple that could have been selected, but oh, the depths that

lie hidden beneath them! I do not think that this side of heaven any of us can know to the fullest the meaning of this wondrous chapter. May the Holy Spirit graciously grant us a glimpse of the glorious truths of God that are revealed here!

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven*—Not His hands, as we do who are poor suppliants, but His eyes, indicating where His thoughts went. He "lifted up His eyes to heaven"—

1. *And said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* No mere man would have dared to pray such a prayer as this! Jesus asks that He may be glorified by His Father that He also may glorify His Father. He put the two things together—"Father, glorify Your Son that Your Son may also glorify You." This is not a plea that is fit for merely human lips. It is Jesus, the Son of God, who, in receiving glory from His Father, is also able to return it to His Father!

2, 3. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* [See Sermon #2396, Volume 41—ETERNAL LIFE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See how He puts Himself side by side with God as no mere man might dare to do? Only He who was equal with the Father could venture to plead thus, claiming power over all flesh—that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. Here we learn that it is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent!

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* "My teaching is all done, My ministry is finished and though there are still some arrears of suffering, yet those shall be fully discharged in due time. 'I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.'"

5. *And now, O Father, glorify You, Me, with Your own Self with the glory which I had with You before the world was.* You must try and think of who it is that is thus pleading, for so you will get at least some faint idea of the intercession of our great High Priest in heaven, for after this fashion He still prays to His Father before the eternal throne of God.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your word.* "They were Yours, my Father, under Your direct government, but You have transferred them to My mediatorial sovereignty, and You have given them up to be Mine in a very special sense, beyond all the rest of mankind, and this is one of their distinguishing characteristics, that 'they have kept Your word.'"

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them*—Is it so with You, dear friend? Have You received Christ's words—the very words which the Father gave to Him,

and which He has in His turn given to you? O soul, You are indeed happy if this is the case with you! "I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them"—

8, 9. *And have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world"*— [See Sermon #2331, Volume 39—CHRIST'S PASTORAL PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is, not in the same special sense as He prays for His people, not with that personal pleading which He offers on behalf of His own chosen ones—"I pray not for the world"—

9. *But for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* In the 6th verse, Jesus had said to His Father, "Yours they were." And here, in this 9th verse, He says, "They *are* Yours." They still belonged to the Father, the transference of them mediatorially to the Son having made no change in the Father's relation to them!

10. *And all Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* I can understand a man saying to God, "All mine are Yours." But no man, unless he is something more than man, dares to say to God, "Yours are mine." But Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, gives all that He has to God, and all that God has belongs to Him, so that He can truly say, "All Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them."

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* It has been well said that this expression, "My Father," is a binding up of the Old and New Testaments in one. The Old Testament reveals the holiness of God, but it is the New Testament that is peculiarly the revelation of God as the Father. We put the two together, as Jesus does, and thus He speaks, "Holy Father, make My people one, and keep them one." Let us close up our ranks, brothers and sisters. Let us love each other more and as Christ has prayed that we may be one, let us constantly seek to manifest our oneness among the sons of men!

12-17. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth.* [See Sermon #1890, Volume 32—OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE'S SANCTIFICATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How wondrously our Savior's prayer advances! He asks for His people's unity. He asks for

their joy. He asks for their preservation. And now He asks for their purification, their sanctification—"Sanctify them through Your truth."

17-20. *Your word is truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone.* "For these who are already converted—I pray also for those who are not yet called by grace."

20-22. *But for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them*—Who among us knows the full meaning of that wondrous declaration? "The glory which You gave Me I have given them"—

22, 23. *That they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, and You have loved Me.* [See Sermon #1472, Volume 25—THE GLORY, UNITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a glorious assurance that is! It amazes us to know that the Father has loved us even as He loved His Son!

24-26. *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. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them and I in them.* [See Sermons #1378, Volume 23—THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER KNOWN AND LOVED and #1667, Volume 28—"LOVE AND I"—A MYSTERY—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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THE BROAD WALL

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1911.

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

"The broad wall."
Nehemiah 3:8.

IT seems that around Jerusalem of old, in the time of her splendor, there was a broad wall which was her defense and her glory. Jerusalem is a type of the church of God. It is always well when we can see clearly, distinctly and plainly that around the church to which we belong there runs a broad wall.

This idea of a broad wall around the church suggests three things, *separation, security* and *enjoyment*. Let us examine each of these in its turn.

I. First, the SEPARATION of the people of God from the world is like that broad wall surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem.

When a man becomes a Christian, he is still in the world, but he is no longer to be of it. He was an heir of wrath, but he has now become a child of grace. Being of a distinct nature, he is required to separate himself from the rest of mankind, as the Lord Jesus Christ did, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The Lord's church was separated in His eternal purpose. It was separated in His covenant and decree. It was separated in the atonement, for even there we find that our Lord is called "the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." An actual separation is made by divine grace, is carried on in the work of sanctification and will be completed in that day when the heavens shall be on fire and the saints shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air—and in that last tremendous day He shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats! And then there shall be a great gulf fixed, across which the ungodly cannot go to the righteous, neither shall the righteous approach the wicked.

Practically, my business is to say to those of you who profess to be the Lord's people, *take care that you maintain a broad wall of separation between yourselves and the world*. I do not say that you are to adopt any peculiarity of dress, or to take up some singular style of speech. Such affectation genders, sooner or later, hypocrisy. A man may be as thoroughly worldly in one coat as in another—he may be quite as vain and conceited with one style of speech as with another. No, he may be even more of the world when he pretends to be separate than if he had

left the pretense of separation alone. The separation which we plead for is moral and spiritual. Its foundation is laid deep in the heart and its substantial reality is very palpable in the life.

Every Christian, it seems to me, should be more scrupulous than other men *in his dealings*. He must never swerve from the path of integrity. He should never say, "It is the custom—it is perfectly understood in the trade." Let the Christian remember that custom cannot sanction wrong and that its being "understood" is no apology for misrepresentation! A lie "understood" is not, therefore, true. While the Golden Rule is more admired than practiced by ordinary men, the Christian should always do unto others as he would that they should do unto him. He should be one whose word is his bond and who, having once pledged his word, swears to his own hurt, but changes not. There ought to be an essential difference between the Christian and the best moralist, by reason of the higher standard which the gospel inculcates and the Savior has exemplified. Certainly the highest point to which the best unconverted man can go might well be looked upon as a level below which the converted man will never venture to descend!

Moreover, the Christian should especially be distinguished *by his pleasures*, for it is here, usually, that the man comes out in his true colors. We are not quite ourselves, perhaps, in our daily toil, where our pursuits are rather dictated by necessity than by choice. We are not alone—the society we are thrown into imposes restraints upon us. We have to put the bit and the bridle upon ourselves. The true man does not then show himself—but when the day's work is done, then the "birds of a feather flock together." It is with the multitude of traders and commercial men as it was with those saints of old, of whom, when they were liberated from prison, it was said, "Being let go, they went unto their own company." So will your pleasures and pastimes give evidence of *what* your heart is and *where* it is. If you can find pleasure in sin, then in sin you choose to live and, unless grace prevents, in sin you will not fail to perish! But if your pleasures are of a nobler kind and your companions of a more devout character; if you seek spiritual enjoyments; if you find your happiest moments in worship, in communion, in silent prayer, or in the public assembling of yourselves with the people of God, then your higher instincts become proof of your purer character and you will be distinguished in your pleasures by a broad wall which effectually separates you from the world!

Such separation should be carried, I think, *into everything which affects the Christian*. "What have they seen in your house?" was the question Isaiah asked of Hezekiah. When a stranger comes into our house, it should be so ordered that he can clearly perceive that the Lord is there! A man ought scarcely to tarry a night beneath our roof without gathering that we have a respect unto Him who is invisible and that we desire to live and move in the light of God's countenance. I have already said that I would not have you cultivate singularities for singularity's

sake, yet as the most of men are satisfied if they do as other people do, you must never be satisfied until you do more and better than other people, having found out a mode and course of life as far transcending the ordinary worldling's life as the path of the eagle in the air is above that of the mole which burrows under the soil!

This broad wall between the godly and the ungodly *should be most conspicuous in the spirit of our mind*. The ungodly man has only this world to live for—do not wonder if he lives very earnestly for it. He has no other treasure—why should he not get as much as he can of this? But you, Christian, profess to have immortal life, therefore your treasure is not to be amassed in this brief span of existence. Your treasure is laid up in heaven and available for eternity. Your best hopes overleap the narrow bounds of time and fly beyond the grave—your spirit must not, therefore, be earthbound and groveling, but soaring and heavenly! There should always be about you the air of one who has his shoes on his feet, his loins girded and his staff in his hand—the air of a pilgrim ready to be off and away to a better land! You are not to live here as if this were your home. You are not to talk of this world as though it were to last forever. You are not to hoard it and treasure it up as though you had set your heart upon it—but you are to be on the wing as though you had not a nest here and never could have—but expected to find your resting place among the cedars of God, in the hilltops of glory!

Depend upon it, the more unworldly a Christian is, the better it is for him. I think I could mention several reasons why this wall should be very broad. *If you are sincere in your profession, there is a very broad distinction between you and unconverted people*. Nobody can tell how far life is removed from death. Can you measure the difference? They are as opposite as the poles. Now, according to your profession, you are a living child of God, you have received a new life, whereas the children of this world are dead in trespasses and sins. How palpable the difference between light and darkness! Yet you profess to have been "sometimes in darkness," but now you are made "light in the Lord." There is, therefore, a great distinction between you and the world if you are what you profess to be! You say, when you put on the name of Christ, that you are going to the Celestial City, to the New Jerusalem—but the world turns its back upon the heavenly country and goes downward to that other city of which you know that destruction is its doom—your path is different from theirs. If you are what you say you are, the road you take must be diametrically opposite to that of the ungodly man. You know the difference between their ends. The end of the righteous shall be everlasting glory, but the end of the wicked is destruction. Unless, then, you are a hypocrite, there is such a distinction between you and others as only God, Himself, could make—a distinction which originates here and is to be perpetuated throughout eternity! When the social diversities occasioned by rank and dependency, riches and poverty, ignorance and

learning, shall all have passed away, the distinctions between the children of God and the children of men, between saints and scoffers, between the chosen and the castaway, will still exist! I pray you, then, maintain a broad wall in your conduct, as God has made a broad wall in your state and in your destiny!

Remember again, *that our Lord Jesus Christ had a broad wall between Him and the ungodly.* Look at Him and see how different He is from the men of His time. All His life long you observe Him to be a stranger and a foreigner in the land. Truly, He drew near to sinners—as near as He could draw—and He received them when they were willing to draw near to Him. But He did not draw near to their sins. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." When He went to His own city of Nazareth, He only preached a single sermon and they would have cast Him headlong down the hill if they could. When He passed through the street, He became the song of the drunkard, the butt of the foolish, the mark at which the proud shot out the arrows of their scorn! At last, having come to His own and His own having received Him not, they determined to thrust Him altogether out of the camp, so they took Him to Golgotha and nailed Him to the tree as a malefactor, a promoter of sedition. He was the great dissenter, the great nonconformist of His age! The national church first excommunicated and then executed Him. He did not seek difference in things trivial, but the purity of His life and the truthfulness of His testimony roused the spleen of the rulers and the chief men of their synagogues. He was ready in all things to serve them and to bless them—but He never would blend with them. They would have made Him a king. Ah, if He would but have joined the world, the world would have given Him the chief place—as the world's prince said on the mountain—"All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me." But He drives away the fiend and stands immaculate and separate even to the close of His life! If you are a Christian, be a Christian! If you follow Christ, go outside the camp! But if there is no difference between you and your fellow man, what will you say to the King in the day when He comes and finds that you have on no wedding garment by which you can be distinguished from the rest of mankind?

Moreover, dear friends, you will find that *a broad wall of separation is abundantly good for yourselves*. I do not think any Christian in the world will tell you that when he has given way to the world's customs, he has ever been profited thereby. If you can go and find an evening's amusement in a suspicious place and feel profited by it, I am sure you are not a Christian, for, if you were really a Christian, it would pain your conscience and unfit you for more devout exercises of the heart! Ask a fish to spend an hour on dry land and I think, did it comply, the fish would find that it was not much to its benefit, for it would be out of its element—and it will be so with you in communion with sinners. When you are compelled to associate with worldly people in the ordinary course of business, you find much that grates upon the ear, that troubles the

heart and annoys the soul. You will be often like righteous Lot, vexed with the conversation of the wicked—and you will say with David—

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long!
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong."

Your soul will pine and sigh to come forth and wash your hands of everything that is impure and unclean. As you find no comfort there, you will long to get away to the chaste, the holy, the devout, the edifying fellowship of the saints! Make a broad wall, dear friends, in your daily life! If you begin to give way a little to the world, you will soon give way a great deal. Give sin an inch and it will take a mile. "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves," is an apt motto of economy. So, too, guard against little sins if you would be clear of "the great transgression." Look after the little approaches to worldliness, the little giving in towards the things of ungodliness—and then you will not make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Another good reason for keeping up the broad wall of separation is that *you will thereby do most good to the world*. I know Satan will tell you that if you bend a little and come near to the ungodly, then they also will come a little way to meet you. Yes, but it is not so! You lose your strength, Christian, the moment you depart from your integrity. What do you think ungodly people say behind your back if they see you inconsistent to please them? "Oh," they say, "there is nothing in his religion but vain pretense! The man is not sincere." Although the world may openly denounce the rigid Puritan, it secretly admires him. When the big heart of the world speaks out, it has respect to the man that is sternly honest and will not yield his principles—no, not a hair's breadth! In such an age as this, when there is so little sound conviction, when principle is cast to the winds and when a widespread tolerant laxness, both of thought and of practice, seems to rule the day, it is still the fact that a man who is decided in his belief, speaks his mind boldly and acts according to his profession, is sure to command the reverence of mankind! Depend upon it, woman, your husband and your children will respect you none the more because you say, "I will give up some of my Christian privileges," or, "I will go sometimes with you into that which is sinful." You cannot help them out of the mire if you go and plunge yourself into the mud! You cannot help to make them clean if you go and blacken your own hands. How, then, can you wash their faces? You young man in the shop, and you young woman in the workroom, if you keep yourselves to yourselves in Christ's name, chaste and pure for Jesus, not laughing at jokes which should make you blush, not mixing up with pastimes that are suspicious, but on the other hand, tenderly jealous of your conscience as one who shrinks from a doubtful thing as a sinful thing, holding sound faith and being scrupulous of the truths of God—if you will so keep yourselves, your company in the midst of others

shall be as though an angel shook his wings and they will say to one another, "Refrain from this or that just now, for so and so is here." They will fear you in a certain sense. They will admire you in secret. And who can tell but that, at last, they may come to imitate you?

Would you tempt God? Would you challenge the desolating flood? Whenever the church comes down to mingle with the world, it behooves the faithful few to fly to the ark and seek shelter from the avenging storm! When the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair to look upon, *then* it was that God said it repented Him that He had made men upon the face of the earth—and He sent the deluge to sweep them away! A separate people God's people must be and they shall be! It is His own declaration, "The people shall dwell alone; they shall not be numbered among the nations." The Christian is, in some respects, like the Jew. The Jew is the type of the Christian. You may give the Jew political privileges as he ought to have. He may be adopted into the State as he ought to be. But a Jew he is and a Jew he must still be. He is not a Gentile, even though he calls himself English, or Portuguese, or Spanish, or Polish. He remains one of the people of Israel, a child of Abraham, still a Jew, and you can mark him as such—his speech betrays him in every land. So should it be with the Christian! Mixing up with other men, as he must in his daily calling. Going in and out among them like a man among men. Trading in the market. Dealing in the shop. Mingling in the joys of the social circle. Taking his part in politics, like a citizen, as he is. But, at the same time, always having a higher and a nobler life, a secret into which the world cannot enter and showing the world, by his superior holiness, his zeal for God, his sterling integrity and his unselfish truthfulness—that he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world! You cannot tell how concerned I am for some of you that this broad wall should be kept up, for I detect in some of you, at times, a desire to make it very narrow and, perhaps, to pull it down altogether! Brothers and sisters, beloved in the Lord, you may depend upon it that nothing worse can happen to a church than to be conformed unto this world! Write "Ichabod" upon her walls, then, for the sentence of destruction has gone out against her. But if you can keep yourselves as—

"A garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground"—

you shall have your Master's company, your graces shall grow, you shall be happy in your own souls and Christ shall be honored in your lives!

II. Secondly, the broad wall round about Jerusalem INDICATED SAFETY.

In the same way, a broad wall round Christ's church indicates her safety, too. Consider who they are that belong to the Church of God. A person does not become a member of Christ's church by baptism, nor by birthright, nor by profession, nor by morality. Christ is the Door into the sheepfold! Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is a member of the true

church. Being a member of Christ, he is a member, consequently, of the body of Christ which is the church. Now, around the Church of God—the election of grace, the redeemed by blood, the peculiar people, the adopted, the justified, the sanctified—around the church there are bulwarks of stupendous strength, munitions which guard them safely. When the foe came to attack Jerusalem, he counted the towers and bulwarks, and marked them well. And after he had seen the strength of the holy city, he fled! How could he ever hope to scale such ramparts as those? Brothers and sisters, Satan often counts the towers and bulwarks of the New Jerusalem! Anxiously does he desire the destruction of the saints, but it shall never be. He that rests in Christ is saved! He who has passed through the gate of faith to rest in Jesus Christ may sing with joyful confidence—

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes!
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

The Christian is surrounded *by the broad wall of God's power*. As God is omnipotent, Satan cannot defeat Him. If God's power is on my side, who shall hurt me? "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

The Christian is surrounded by the broad wall of God's love. Who shall prevail against those whom God loves? I know that it is vain to curse those whom God has not cursed, or to defy them whom the Lord has not defied, for whomever He blesses is blessed, indeed! Balak, the son of Zippor, sought to curse the beloved people and he went first to one hilltop and then to another, and looked down upon the chosen camp. But, aha, Balaam, you could not curse them, though Balak sought it! You could only say, "They are blessed, yes, and they shall be blessed!"

God's law is a broad wall around us and so *is His justice*. These once threatened our destruction, but now the justice of God demands the salvation of every believer. If Christ has died instead of me, it would not be justice if I also had to die for my sin. If God has received the full payment of the debt from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, then how can He demand the debt again? He is satisfied and we are secure!

The immutability of God, also, surrounds His people like a broad wall. "I am God, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." As long as God is the same, the rock of our salvation will be our secure hiding place.

Upon this delightful truth of God we might linger long, for there is much to cheer us in the strong security which God has given in covenant to His people. They are surrounded by the broad wall of *electing love*. Does God choose them and will He lose them? Did He ordain them to eternal life and shall they perish? Did He engrave their names upon His heart and shall those names be blotted out? Did He give them to His Son to be His heritage and shall His Son lose His portion? Did He say, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels," and

shall He part with them? Has He who makes all things obey Him, no power to keep the people whom He has formed for Himself to be His own peculiar heritage? God forbid that we should doubt it! Electing love, like a broad wall, surrounds every heir of grace!

And oh, how broad is the wall of *redeeming love*! Will Jesus fail to claim the people He bought with so great a price? Did He shed His blood in vain? How can He revive enmity against those whom He has once reconciled unto God, not imputing their transgression unto them? Having obtained eternal redemption for them, will He adjudge them to everlasting hell? Has He purged their sins by sacrifice and will He then leave them to be the victims of Satanic craft? By the blood of the everlasting covenant, every Christian may be assured that He cannot perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ's hands! Unless the cross was all a gamble, unless the atonement was a mere speculation, those for whom Jesus died are saved through His death! Therefore "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

As a broad wall which surrounds the saints of God is *the work of the Holy Spirit*. Does the Spirit begin and then not finish the operations of His grace? Ah, no! Does He give life which afterwards dies out? That is impossible! Has He not told us that the Word of God is the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever? And shall the powers of hell or the evil of our own flesh destroy what God has pronounced immortal, or cause dissolution to that which God says is incorruptible? Is not the Spirit of God given to us to abide with us forever—and shall He be expelled from that heart in which He has taken up His everlasting dwelling? Brothers and sisters, we are not of their mind whom are led by fear or fallacy to hazard such conjectures! We rejoice to say with Paul, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." We delight to sing—

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins.
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy never forsakes."

Almost *every doctrine of grace* affords us a broad wall, a strong bastion, a mighty bulwark, a grand munition of defense! Take, for instance, Christ's suretyship engagements. He is surety to His Father for His people. When He brings home the flock, do you think that He will have to report that some of them are lost? Not so!

"Here am I," will He say, "and the children that You have given Me. Of all whom You have given Me, I have lost none." He will keep all the saints even to the end! The honor of Christ is involved in this matter. If Christ loses one soul that leans upon Him, the integrity of His crown is gone—for if there should be one believing soul in hell, the prince of darkness would hold up that soul and say—"Aha! You could not save them all! Aha! You captain of salvation, You were defeated here! Here is one poor little Benjamin, a Ready to Halt, that You could not bring to glory, and I

have him to be my prey forever!" But it shall not be! Every gem shall be in Jesus' crown! Every sheep shall be in Jesus' flock! He shall not be defeated in any way, or in any measure, but He shall divide the spoil with the strong, He shall establish the cause He undertakes, He shall eternally conquer! Glory be unto His great and good name!

III. The idea of a broad wall—and with this I close—SUGGESTS ENJOYMENT.

The walls of Nineveh and Babylon were broad—so broad that there was found room for several chariots to pass each other. Here men walked at sunset and talked and promoted good fellowship. If you have ever been in the city of York, you will know how interesting it is to walk around the broad walls there. But our figure is drawn from the Orientals. They were accustomed to come out of their houses and walk on the broad walls. They used them for rest from toil and for the manifold pleasures of recreation. It was very delightful, when the sun was going down and all was cool, to walk on those broad walls. And so, when a believer comes to know the deep things of God and to see the defenses of God's people, he walks along them and he rests in confidence. "Now," he says, "I am at rest and peace. The destroyer cannot molest me. I am delivered from the noise of archers in the place of the drawing of water and here I can exercise myself in prayer and meditation. Now that salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks, I will sing a song unto Him who has done these great things for me. I will take my rest and be quiet, for he that believes has entered into rest. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Broad walls, then, are for rest, and so are our broad walls of salvation!

Those broad walls were also *for communion*. Men came there and talked with one another. They leaned over the wall and whispered their loving words, conversed of their business, comforted one another, related their troubles and their joys. So, when believers come unto Christ Jesus, they commune with one another, with the angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus Christ their Lord, who is best of all! Oh, on those broad walls, when the banner of love waves over them, they sometimes rejoice with an unspeakable joy in fellowship with Him who loved them and gave Himself for them! It is a blessed thing, in the church of Christ, when you get such a knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel that you can have the sweetest communion with the whole church of the living God!

And then the broad walls were also intended for *prospects and outlooks*. The citizen came up on the broad wall and looked away from the smoke and dirt of the city within, right across to the green fields, the gleaming river and the far-off mountains! They delighted to watch the mowing of hay, or the reaping of corn, or the setting sun beyond the distant hills. It was one of the common enjoyments of the citizen of any walled city to come to the top of the wall in order to take views afar. So,

when a man once gets into the altitudes of gospel doctrine and has learned to understand the love of God in Christ Jesus, what wide views he can take! How he looks down upon the sorrows of life! How he looks beyond that narrow little stream of death! How, sometimes, when the weather is bright and his eyes are clear enough to let him use the telescope, he can see within the gates of pearl and behold the joys which no mortal eye has seen and hear the songs which no mortal ear has heard, for these are things, not for eyes and ears, but for hearts and spirits! Blessed is the man who dwells in the church of God, for he can find on her broad walls places from which he can see the King in His beauty and the land which is very far off!

Ah, dear friends, I wish that these things had to do with you all, but I am afraid they have not, for many of you are outside the wall! And when the destroyer comes, none will be safe but those who are inside the wall of Christ's love and mercy. I would to God that you would escape to the gate at once, for it is open. It will be shut—it will be shut one day, but it is now open. When night comes, the night of death, the gate will be shut and you will then come and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But the answer will be—

"Too late, too late!
You cannot enter now."

But it is not too late yet! Christ still says, "Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it." Oh, that you had the will to come and put your trust in Jesus, for if you do, you shall be saved! I cannot speak to some of you about security, for there are no broad walls to defend you. You have run away from the security. Perhaps you have been patching up with some untempered mortar a righteousness of your own which will all be thrown down as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence. Oh that you would trust in Jesus! Then would you have a broad wall which all the battering rams of hell shall never be able to shake! When the storms of eternity shall beat against that wall, it shall stand fast forever!

I cannot speak to some of you about rest, and enjoyment, and communion, for you have sought rest where there is none. You have got a peace which is not peace. You have found a comfort which will be your destruction! God make you to be distressed and cause you by sore stress to flee to the Lord Jesus and so to get true peace, the only peace, for, "He is our peace." Oh, that you would close in with Christ and trust Him! Then you would rejoice in the present happiness which faith would give you! But the sweetest thing of all would be the prospect which should then unfold to you of the eternal happiness which Christ has prepared for all those who put their trust in Him!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 71.

Verses 1-8. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in Your righteous, and cause me to escape: incline Your ear unto me, and save me. Be You my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For You are my hope, O Lord GOD, You are my trust from my youth. By You have I been held up from the womb: You are He that took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You.* David had enjoyed the mercy of God from his very birth. We are apt to forget the tender care of God over our infancy, but we ought to remember it—and it will be a great comfort to us if we come to a second childhood, to remember how kindly God took care of us in the first!

7-11. *I am at a wonder unto many, but You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails. For my enemies speak against me, and they that lay wait for my soul. They take counsel together, saying, God has forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.* Surely that ought to have been the reason for letting him alone! With right minded persons it would have been so, but the devil and his children are arrant cowards and their argument is, "Persecute and take him: for there is none to deliver him." You might as well expect tenderness in a wolf as anything like bravery and chivalry in a persecutor!

12-14. *O God be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise You more and more.* [See Sermons #2318, Volume 39—GOD'S PUPIL, GOD'S PREACHER—AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY and #3271, Volume 57—GOD, THE CHILDREN'S TEACHER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How was he going to do it? Already his mouth was filled with God's praise, so, surely he would fill his whole life with it, and his actions which would speak more loudly than his words, would bear daily testimony to the goodness of God.

15, 16. *My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God*—"This shall be my praise; my very movements, my goings, my progress shall be in the 'strength of the Lord God.'"

16, 17. *I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only. O God, You have taught me from my youth.* Here is the same kind of argument again—"O Lord, I went to school to You, so I must teach others what You have taught me."

17. *And until this time have I declared Your wondrous works.* "You made me a preacher, and I have stuck to my word. Until this time have I declared Your wondrous works.'"

18-20. *Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not until I have showed Your strength unto this generation and Your power to everyone that is to come. Your righteousness, also, O God, is very high, who has done great things: O God, who is like unto You? You, who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again.* "You shall not merely deliver me from my great and sore troubles, but You shall give me more life, You 'Shall quicken me again.'" Divine quickening is the best remedy for a troubled heart.

20. *And shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth.* "Though I seem to be like a man buried in the depth of the earth, You will bring me up again."

21, 22. *You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. I will also praise You*—God blessing us and we in return blessing Him—so it ought to be. The more God does for us, the more we ought to do for Him! Is it not so, brothers and sisters? Is not this a good argument? Are you carrying it out? Let your conscience answer.

22, 23. *With the psaltery, even Your truth, O my God: unto You will I sing with the harp. O You Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You.* Singing unto God ought to be the happiest of exercises! When it is done in a doleful, dolorous way, it is not singing, but groaning.

23. *And my soul, which You have redeemed.* "The sprinkled blood is on my soul and, therefore, it shall leap for joy. Rescued from captivity, bought back from slavery, "my soul, which You have redeemed, shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You."

24. *My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the daylong: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.*
[See Sermon #998, Volume 17—MORE AND MORE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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PREPARING FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER
NO. 3282

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 3, 1864.

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and then was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."
Revelation 8:3, 4.

I SUPPOSE that there will be very little doubt among you that the "angel" mentioned here was either our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, or a special angelic messenger sent to represent Him. You remember that under the Mosaic dispensation, there was to be an altar of shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, and that Aaron was to burn sweet incense thereon every morning and every evening. In like manner, our great High Priest is here represented as standing at the golden altar which is before the throne of God, having in His hand a golden censer full of incense, the fragrance of which would give acceptance to the prayers of the saints for His sake—

"Great advocate, almighty friend,
On Him our humble hopes depend—
Our cause can never, never fail,
For Jesus pleads and must prevail."

I am going to talk to you, first, concerning *the prayers of the saints.* Secondly, *concerning the intercession of Christ.* And then we shall notice *the result of the sending of Christ's intercession with the saints' prayers.*

I. So first, I am to speak about THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS. What a very interesting and delightful spectacle the Christian church will present during the coming week of united prayer! It is an everyday sight to see Christians at prayer, for believers are to "pray without ceasing." But doubtless, as long as the church exists and men and women are what they are, there always will be special seasons when the fervor of the suppliants becomes more ardent than at ordinary times, when their desires grow more intense and their prayers, therefore, ascend in a greater volume before the eternal throne of God. We sing that—

"Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees—

then how much more must he tremble when he sees thousands upon thousands of the people of God drawing near with one heart to the throne of the heavenly grace! Next to the angels in heaven praising God, I

think the fairest sight that ever was seen is that of the *saints of earth*, of almost all names and denominations, gathered in concert around the mercy seat! Notwithstanding all the divisions among Christians, there are certain truths upon which they are all agreed, and this will be plainly manifested during the coming week. We shall see, meeting together in the same house of prayer, brothers and sisters holding various sentiments. We shall see some who love the Lord Jesus Christ in the established church and others who are outside the establishment uniting heartily in prayer. We shall see those who worship God in a liturgical sense and those who worship Him without a liturgy, joining with one heart and mind in imploring a blessing upon the one common cause of Jesus Christ and upon the world at large.

Moreover, these united prayers will be going up all over the world—at least it will be so to a very large extent. You may journey round the globe with the sun, and wherever you go you shall see brothers and sisters assembled in prayer. It is said of the Queen's dominions that the sun never sets upon them—and it may be said this week of the earnest united cries of the Lord's people that they will arise from practically every land on which the sun shall shine! God shall be worshiped day and night, not merely by a few stragglers here and there, but by the great bulk of the—

"One army of the living God."

This is true every day, to a greater or lesser degree, but it will be made more apparent during the days of this week, and I, for one, rejoice that the prayers of the saints shall thus together ascend before the throne of God!

It is interesting, too, to notice the subjects that have been selected as themes for special prayer. I think the Lord has guided the committee of the Evangelical Alliance in the selection. We are requested on Monday to present "penitential confession of sin and the acknowledgment of personal, social, and national blessings, with supplication for divine mercy through the atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ." This is a good beginning for the week of prayer—it should rightly commence with repentance. The salty tears of penitence will be an acceptable offering, just as, under the Levitical law it was commanded, "With all your offering you shall offer salt." Then on Tuesday we are asked to pray for the conversion of the ungodly, for the success of missions among Jews and Gentiles, and for a divine blessing to accompany the efforts made to evangelize the unconverted of all ranks and all around us." What a comprehensive subject, taking in both Jews and Gentiles, both bond and free, and including those who are abroad with those who are around us at home! Then on Wednesday our supplications are asked "for the Christian church and ministry; for Sunday schools and all other Christian agencies; and for the increase of spiritual life, activity and holiness in all believers." Here again is a comprehensive subject. How much we who are in the ministry need your prayers! "Brethren pray for us." The whole church needs prayer, but especially the captains in the

Lord's ranks who have to be in the thick of the fight with the shots of the enemy flying all around them! Then on Thursday the subjects for intercession are "for the afflicted and oppressed; that slavery may be abolished; that persecution may cease; and that Christian love may expand to the comfort and relief of the destitute in all lands." I do not know how some professing Christians will be able to join in the supplication that slavery may be abolished, but we can fervently unite in it with a pure heart! May the Lord graciously hear that prayer. And if He shall hear it from the battlefields of America, we shall bless his name even for the scourge of war if that accursed slavery can be ended! Then on Friday we are urged to pray "for nations, for kings, and all who are in authority; for the cessation of war—for the prevalence of peace; and for the holy observance of the Sabbath." And then to conclude, on Saturday, "generally for the large outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the revival and extension of pure Christianity throughout the world."

Now when the church comes before God with such large requests as these, I do earnestly trust that the united supplication will be the means of bringing down one of the greatest and richest blessings that the world has ever received! God grant that it may be so!—

"Who but You, Almighty Spirit,
Can the heathen world reclaim?
Men may preach, but till You favor,
Heathens will be still the same.
Mighty Spirit,
Witness to the Savior's name!
All our hopes, and prayers, and labors,
Must be vain without Your aid,
But You will not disappoint us.
All is true that you have said—
Gracious Spirit,
O'er the world Your influence spread."

But turning away from that aspect of the church's prayers which will be presented during the coming week, I want you to notice some points suggested by the text concerning the prayer of the saints. The first is the communion of all prayer. What does the angel do with the prayers of all saints? Does he put one of them here and another there? Does he put one on the altar and another under the alter? No, no—he puts them all into the golden censer! Here comes a prayer full of faith from a warm and loving heart filled with ardent desires for God's glory! And behind it comes another, a poor starveling prayer. It is sincere, but it comes from the lips of Mr. Little Faith. There is not much fervor about it, but it is as much as that feeble brother could pray. Both these prayers are put into the some golden censer. Some of you Christian people have believing friends in Australia—they pray, and their prayers get into the censer. You pray, and your prayers get there, too. Our fathers prayed, and their prayers were put into the golden censer. We pray, and our children will pray after us, but our prayers and theirs and our fathers' shall all go into the same censor! What communion there is here, then, among all

believers in Jesus! When you really draw near to God and other saints draw near to Him, you also draw near to *them*. No, more, since Jesus Christ, Himself, prays when you pray, you have fellowship with Him! And as the Holy Spirit inspires your prayers if they were according to the mind of God, you also have fellowship with the Spirit and through Him with the Father! Thus prayer becomes a glorious bond which binds God and all His people together in one sacred bundle of life! And to be without prayer is to be outside that blessed bundle.

The next thing I ask you to observe is the universality of prayer. The incense was given to the angel "that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." I have already pointed out to you that Jesus Christ takes the prayers that come from all sorts of saints. Now I want you to notice that he takes all the true prayers that come to Him. There are some prayers that are so little and so feeble that you would think that they never could get to God at all—but it is with them as it was with some of the creatures in Noah's Ark. I never can comprehend how the snails managed to get into the ark, yet they did. They must have started very early. There are some people's prayers which seem to travel almost as slowly as those snails did, yet they do get to heaven and they are presented by Christ with all the rest of the saints' prayers before His Father's throne. If you take a single drop of water from the sea and analyze it, you will find that the same elements are in it that are in the whole ocean. So if I can breathe but one sincere desire towards heaven, if my prayer is merely—

"The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near"—

all the elements of prevailing prayer are in that one desire or that one childlike glance! A diamond is a diamond be it ever so small. It may be so tiny that the Queen would not put it into the most prominent place in her crown, still it might be permitted to glitter somewhere. Being a diamond, it must not be thrown away, for it has its value. So, my brother, your prayer may never edify your brothers and sisters. It may not be suitable to be presented in public, but if your soul is in it, if your heart goes out towards God through your poor feeble prayer, it will be so precious in His sight that He will not have it thrown away! In the day when Christ makes up His jewels, that tiny gem shall be presented to His Father as well as the greatest and costliest jewels under His charge! I say this because I am aware that there are many Christians who think their prayers are not heard because they are such poor things. But we are not impartial or wise judges of the value of our own prayers. I am persuaded that often, when we think we have prayed as we ought, we have only been feeding our own vanity—and that at other times, when we have found that we could not pray, that we could hardly express a single desire, but could only sigh and groan before the Lord—then we have really prayed and God has heard our prayer! Whatever our own feelings may be about the matter, it is certain that every true prayer gets into the golden censer that our great High Priest swings before the eternal throne

of God. There is not one of those birds that we send up towards heaven which does not really reach its destination. If its own wings are not strong enough to bear it up so high, Christ reaches His almighty hand down and lifts it all the rest of the way! Somehow all the true prayers of all the saints must get into the golden censer in Christ's hand.

Note also *the acceptability of prayer*. God has made provision for ensuring the acceptance of His people's prayers. "There was given unto the angel much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." It is that incense which makes our poor prayers acceptable to God—it is not the merit of our prayers that secures the gracious answers to them, but the power of Christ's prevailing intercession! Our pleas would be useless if they were presented by themselves—it is His plea that always avails with His Father. Jesus Christ has been appointed to this high office so that He may take our supplications and present them before the throne of the Most High. When our government appoints certain officers to look after the affairs of the poor people of this land, there ought not to be any needy ones applying in vain to them for help. And, Christian, as Jesus Christ has been entrusted with the task of presenting your prayers acceptably before His Father, you may rest assured that He will accomplish it—so be of good courage and know assuredly that He will add the "much incense" of His intercession to your supplications—and so shall they ascend acceptably before God in a cloud of sweetly smelling smoke! No true prayer from the heart of a true child of God shall miss its mark—all shall reach the heavenly target. Your petition, my brother or sister, shall meet with acceptance as well as mine. Do not think, believer, that God will ignore your heartfelt supplications even though you are almost unknown among your fellow Christians and you feel yourself to be the least of all saints. If you dare to think that you are numbered among the saints at all, do not imagine because you could not put two sentences together at the prayer meeting that, therefore, your prayers do not reach the ear and heart of God. I can assure you that your petitions are put into the golden censer just as surely as were those of John, the beloved apostle to whom this wondrous revelation was given! And when the sacred fire is applied to them, they yield as sweet a fragrance to the Most High as do the supplications of the greatest and noblest of the Lord's children. According to the text, the smoke of the incense ascended up before God with the prayers of all the saints—none of them would have been acceptable without the incense—but with the incense all ascended up before God.

II. Now, secondly, I must speak briefly concerning JESUS CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

And first I beg you to notice *what a fit person Jesus Christ is to intercede for us*. He is man. He knows the imperfection of our prayers, He understands our needs and frailties and can sympathize with us in presenting our petitions before His Father's throne. He is man who has

finished His own work and can, therefore, take our work into His hands and bring it to perfection. He is always acceptable to His Father, so that when He presents our case before His Father's throne, He has such a claim to be heard because of all that He has done and suffered—that His advocacy of our case must prevail! Moreover, He is also God, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." If I can have the well beloved Son of God to plead for me, what other intercessor can I need? Is He not the best advocate of whom your heart can conceive? No, more—if He had not told you that it is so, could you have ever dreamed that He, who is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, would have condescended to become intercessor for such worthless worms as we are? O You glorious Christ, in Your wondrous person as both man and God we worship You with all our hearts! And we bless the Lord that You are our great High Priest with the golden censer, into which our poor prayers shall be put and then, when perfumed with the much incense of Your wondrous intercession, shall be presented acceptably before Your Father in heaven!—

"Immense compassion reigns
In our Immanuel's heart!
He condescends to act
A mediator's part.
He is our friend and brother, too,
Divinely kind, divinely true!"

Having noticed the fitness of our intercessor's person, consider next, *the fitness of the place where He pleads*. He is represented as standing at the altar when He pleads for us with His Father. It is on the ground of His own atoning sacrifice. When He stands at the altar He does, as it were, say to His Father, "I am He that lives, and was dead. My hands and feet were pierced by the nails and My side by the soldier's spear. Hear Me on behalf of those for whom I laid down My life." Thus our great intercessor speaks with authority when He pleads for us before His Father's throne. Believer, you are never so prevalent in prayer as when you stand at the altar of atonement! Your supplications are sure to succeed when you plead the precious blood of Jesus! So you may be certain that Jesus will not stand at the altar in vain. Shall the Father see His Son's blood shed for many for the remission of their sins, and yet not yield to His intercession? O God, can You remember Your Son's agonies and groans in Gethsemane and yet refuse His requests? Can You think of all that He endured at Golgotha and yet not hear Him when He intercedes for those for whom He there laid down His life? Oh, no, that is impossible! Jesus must succeed when He stands at the altar and presents the prayers of His people before His Father's throne—

"Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered His blood, and died!
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone;
And now it pleads before the throne."

Note next how *Christ presents the prayers of the saints to His Father*. He does not offer them just as they are, but He adds to them that "much incense" which makes them acceptable to God. One thing that Jesus does with our prayers is to make them correct where they are in error. Sometimes, dear friends come to me and ask me to send petitions for them to certain people who may be able to help them. But I often find that the words are not spelled correctly, the grammar is faulty, and the petition, itself, is not very plain. So I say to the petitioners, "I know what it is that you need, so I will write out your petition and add my own name to it, and then it may succeed." So, dear friends, we bring to Christ our poor petitions, all blotted and misspelled, but He does not present them as they are—He knows what we mean and what we need—so He writes them out for us, puts His own signature at the bottom and thus they become prayers upon which God can look with approval!

The text says that there was given to the angel "much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." There is little enough of our prayers in the golden censer that is in Christ's hand, but He adds much of His merit to them and so makes them acceptable to His Father. As the smoke of the incense ascends up before God, perhaps you say, "I never thought that my prayer would smell as sweetly as that." No, it would not have done so by itself, but Jesus Christ added the "much incense" to it and *that* make it so fragrant. When you say, "My prayer is so poor that it will never prevail with God," you do not know what it will be when Christ has added His intercession to it! If you could pray a prayer that seemed to you a thousand times better than those you now present, I am not sure that it would not really be any better. If you said to yourself, "There, that prayer will do, it will find its way to God all by itself," I am certain that it would never reach the throne of God! But if, when we have prayed, we feel that we must have Christ's intercession to make our prayers acceptable, He will add the "much incense" to our poor petitions and so they shall prevail with God!

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly, notice THE RESULT OF THE BLENDING OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION WITH HIS PEOPLE'S PRAYERS.

When the "much incense" was offered with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne of God, we are told that "the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God." And, Christian, you may have what you will of God if you know how to get the "much incense" of Christ's intercession put with your prayers! Church of God, you may utterly rout your foes if you can pray after this fashion! If our prayers have prevailed with God, they will certainly prevail against all our adversaries! The Spartans called their spears their walls, and Christians may well call their prayers their walls. There is a secret of prevailing in prayer which you may know to your heart's comfort if you will learn the lesson of our

text, and then, as your prayer is presented by Christ to His Father, the answer will come down in blessings which many others will be glad to share with you.

I want, in closing, to remind you of the remarkable verses that follow my text. The saints have been praying and Christ has presented their petitions to His Father—what will be the result of their praying and His intercession? If you did not know the context, you would probably answer, "We expect the whole world to be converted." But you know that this was not the case. The first of the seven angels blew the trumpet "and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood." Then the second angel sounded, "and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea." And so it goes on with woe, upon woe, woe upon woe. Is this the answer to the saints' prayer? Yes, it is even so. Whenever the saints are especially earnest in prayer, and whenever their prayers rise up acceptably to God, you may depend upon it that their great adversary, the devil, will not remain quietly at home. What then? Shall we therefore go in fear of the adversary? By no means! He will have all the greater wrath as his time becomes shorter and shorter, but our trust is in Him who is mightier than all the powers of darkness and who will overthrow them all at the appointed time. So be not troubled as you read of all the woes following the blowing of the six trumpets, but go on reading until you come to the seventh! There you will get the true answer to the saints' prayers—all those woes must come first to prepare for the glory that is to follow! At the 11th chapter, and the 15th verse, you will read, "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." So you see that there shall be a glorious end to the prayers of the saints and the intercession of their great High Priest! He shall be proclaimed "King of kings, and Lord of lords," "and He shall reign forever and ever." If, during this coming year, we should see more sin, more superstition, more Popery and more infidelity then we have ever seen before, shall we say that God did not hear His people's prayers? Oh no! All these evils must reach their climax and then shall come their downfall! It is not altogether an evil thing to have the devil thoroughly awakened. If we should again have a time of persecution, with more blasphemy and more wickedness than we have ever yet known, the Lord's people would be stirred up to pray more earnestly than ever, to work with greater zeal for His cause and to fight the good fight of faith as they have never yet done! Sound the trumpet, wake up the warriors of the cross, let every good soldier of Jesus Christ gird his sword upon his thigh, for the first result of prayer is battle, storm, terror, earthquake and woe upon woe! But the end is that to which the eye of faith looks forward when the reeling, and the shaking, and the tempest, and the whirlwind are all over! Then shall come the everlasting calm and the triumphant reign of Jesus. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." "Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be

you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." And also, "continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

There may be some here, and doubtless there are some who have never truly prayed in their lives. What a blessed beginning it would be to the week of united prayer if they would begin to pray tonight! But, my brother, or my sister, it is no use for you to attempt to 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." And what is faith? Why, faith is trust, confidence, reliance upon Christ! If anyone among you will trust the Lord Jesus Christ tonight. If you will put your whole confidence in Him. If you will rely upon Him for time and eternity—especially if you trust to the merit of His great atoning sacrifice, He will prove Himself to be worthy of your trust and He will save you with His everlasting salvation! No, more than that, for if you trust Christ, you are saved, for, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Then when you are saved, you can join your believing prayers to the prayers of all the rest of the saints—and your prayers shall be put with theirs in the golden censer in the hand of our great High Priest—and He will add to them the, "much incense," of His intercession and so they shall ascend acceptably before the throne of God! May the Lord graciously teach you the holy arts of faith and prayer for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 21:22-27; 22

Verse 22. *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* It has a temple, that better state, that land of the Well-Beloved, but not a material temple that John could see, yet he knew that it had a temple "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Where They are is the holy place where all the tribes of the spiritual Israel shall be gathered at the last, to go no more out forever. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" have a glory far greater than Solomon's temple ever had and far greater even than that later temple which excelled even his in glory!

23. *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* We have need of both the sun and the moon while we are in this world. If it were not for the great central luminary, the solar system would cease to be and this earth and the moon and all their sister planets would die out in darkness. But when the sun has been turned into darkness and the moon into blood, it shall still be said of this holy city, the New Jerusalem, that the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. See how blessedly God and the Lamb are linked together, for Father and Son are truly one. It is also pleasant to reflect that He who is "the light of

the world" is also the light of the world that is yet to be revealed—"the Lamb is the light thereof."

24. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.* This is the church of the latter days—the beginning of the heavenly state, a true type of what the eternal glory of the saints will be. The church will no longer, like her Lord, be despised and rejected of men, but the highest and greatest among men shall count it an honor and glory to be permitted to share its blessings and triumphs.

25. *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* Well did Dr. Doddridge sing—

"No rude alarms of raging foes
No cares to break the long repose!
No midnight shade, no clouded sun
But sacred, high, eternal noon."

The saints will then be able to bear that eternal noontide, for the sun shall not smite them by day. And they will have no need of the night which is now so necessary for resting our wearied bodies and minds, so "there shall be no night there." There will also be no night of sorrow, no night of sin, no night of death in that blessed land of light!

26, 27. *And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.* [See Sermon #1590, Volume 27—THE BARRIER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That holy city would itself be defiled if anything that defiles could enter into it. Only they who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life shall be found in the glorious city of which He is the light—

"Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame.
None can obtain admittance there
But followers of the Lamb."

***Revelation 22*—Verse 1.** *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.* Here again we have God and the Lamb uniting in giving that "water of life" which flows down to us by God's grace through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

2. *In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* [See Sermon #1233, Volume 21—HEALING LEAVES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The fruit of this "tree of life" is for all those who have partaken of the water of life—and the tree provides medicine as well as food—"the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

3-5. *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord*

God gives them light and they shall reign forever and ever. This is the climax of the saints' blessedness—"they shall reign forever and ever." Thus are they to be like their Lord, for "He shall reign forever and ever." As they shared His reproach, they shall also share His glory.

6-9. *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the saying of the prophecy of this book. And I, John, saw these thing, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See you do it not: for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.* It was a pardonable mistake that John made, but it was a mistake, for even the highest angel in heaven must not be accorded the worship that is due to God alone!

10, 11. *And he said unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* If your character is not what it ought to be, you must not delay your appeal to Him who alone can change it, "for the time is at hand" when your character and state will be fixed forever. As when there is a sharp frost, the water in the brooks are soon congealed, so are there influences at work which are consolidating character. Beware lest Christ's coming or the summons through death should find you unprepared and so cause you to remain forever just as you now are.

12. *And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* There will be no change possible when Christ comes as the judge of all mankind! If you are then filthy, you will be filthy forever! If you are then holy, you will be holy forever! The delusion of universal salvation must be banished from the minds of all who believe the Word of God!

13-17. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* [See Sermons #279, Volume 5—COME AND WELCOME; #1331, Volume 22—THE TWO "COMES"; #1608, Volume 27—THE DOUBLE "COME" and #2685, Volume 46—THE OFT-REPEATED INVITATION—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This "Come" seems to sound both ways—from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven. Christ says to us, "Come," and we cry to Him, "Come." Oh, that sinners would be obedient to the

divine "Come," and "take the water of life freely," for then would the second coming of Christ be full of joy to them and not a matter of dread!

18, 19. *For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.* God's revelation is perfect—to add to it or to take from it would equally mar it—and the terrible threats here given concerning those who do either the one or the other ought to prevent so great a crime against high heaven! Yet, alas, many have dared and still dare to commit it.

20. *He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.* All those centuries ago, Jesus said, "I am coming quickly." How much nearer His coming must be, and how earnestly we, too, should cry, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

21. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* The Old Testament ended with a curse, the New Testament ends with benediction. Oh, that we might all have a share of it!

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END OF VOLUME 57