THE VOICES OF OUR DAYS
NO. 3283

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I said, Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."
Job 32:7.

IN the discussion between Job and his three friends, Elihu was present, but though by far the wisest man, he remained quiet. Sometimes a still tongue proves a wise head. In our text he gives his reason for refraining from speech. He felt inclined to deliver his mind, but being the younger man he modestly said, "These grey-headed men ought to know better than I. Perhaps if I speak, I shall display my ignorance and they will say, "Be silent, boy, and let your fathers teach you." Therefore he said to himself, "Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

Elihu had, however, been disappointed. His words plainly say that he had heard but little wisdom from the three ancients. And he added, "Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment." He was not the only man who had been disappointed when looking to his seniors for wisdom, for it is a sorrowful truth that the lapse of years, apart from the grace of God, will not make us wise. Though with the teaching of the Holy Spirit, every year's experience will make the Christian riper, yet without that teaching it is possible that each year may make a Christian not more ripe, but more rotten. Among all sinners the worst are those who have been longest at the trade and among saints he is not always the best who has lived long enough to grow cold. We have known some exhibit ripeness of experience in their very youth through divine teaching and by growing on the sunny side of the wall of fellowship—while others who have been far longer on the tree are still sour because they hang out of the blessed sunlight of the divine presence in the cool shade of worldliness. You cannot measure a man's wisdom by the baldness of his head, or the grayness of his hair—and yet, if the Spirit of God were with us to sanctify each day's experience, it ought to be so—"Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

This, then, is our New Year's theme—the teaching of our years as they pass over our heads. What are we learning from them?

I. Our first remark shall be that DAYS HAVE A VOICE. Elihu said, "Days should speak." Every day, as a day, has its own lesson. "Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge." The sun never breaks upon the earth without light of a superior order for those

who have intelligence—especially for those who have the Holy Spirit. For instance, the mere fact of our beginning another day teaches us to adore the mercy which kept us alive when the image of death was on our faces during the night—an extraordinary mercy, indeed—for sleep is near akin to death, and waking is a rehearsal of the resurrection! When the day begins, it tells us that God has already provided us with mercies, for there are our garments ready to put on and there, too, is the morning meal. Each day in its freshness seems to hint that the Lord would have us attempt something new for Him, or push forward with that which we have already commenced, or draw nearer to Him than we have ever been before. The Lord calls us to learn more of Him, to become more like He, to drink more fully into His love and to show forth that love more clearly. Every hour of the day teaches us its own lesson and till the shadows fall, the voices speak to us if we have ears to hear. Night, too, has its teaching. Does it not bid us pray the Lord to draw a curtain over the day and hide the sin of it, even as He draws the curtain across the sky and makes it easier for us to fall asleep? Do we not delight, as we go to our beds, to ask to be unclothed of all our sins, even as we are stripped of our garments? And should we not pray to be prepared to fall asleep and lie in our last bedchamber, till the everlasting morning breaks upon us and we put on our glory robes? Did we but exercise sanctified thought, each day would bring its precious power of wisdom and make us better acquainted with the Lord.

What a message do our Sabbaths bring to us! To those who toil all the week long, the light of the Lord's Day seems fairer and fresher than that of any other day. A person at Newcastle who had a house to let, took an applicant for it to the top of his house. He spoke of the distant prospect and added, "We can see Durham Cathedral on a Sunday." "On Sunday," said the listener, "and pray why not on a Monday?" "Why," he said, "because on the weekdays great furnaces and pits are pouring forth their smoke and we cannot see as far—indeed, we can scarcely see at all! But when the fires are out, our view is wide." Is not this a true symbol of our Sabbaths when we are in the Spirit? The smoke of the world no more clouds the heavens and we see almost up to the golden gates! Such days do speak, indeed, and tell of the rest which remains. They sing in our ears with soft and gentle voices and tell us that we shall not always need to bow like galley slaves, tugging at the oar of this world's work, but may even now look up to the place where our home awaits us and the weary are at rest! These peaceful Lord's Days call us away to the top of Shenir and Hermon, where we may view the land of our inheritance! They cry to us, "Come up higher!" They beckon us to commune with Him "whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory." All days speak, but Sabbaths speak best—they are orators for God! These resurrection days, these days of the Son of man—these have angel voices. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear."

While each day speaks, some days have peculiar voices. Days of joy speak and bid us bless the Lord, and magnify His name. Days of sorrow speak and cry, "Arise and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted." Days of communion with God speak saying, "Abide with Me," and days of lost communion cry in warning, "Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?" Days of health say, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." And days of sickness say, "In the day of adversity, consider." Each day, whether bright or dim, clear or cloudy, festive or desolate, has its own tone and modulation and speaks its own message. Some of these days are great preachers, and from them we have learned more than in months before; solemn days of decision when sins have been abandoned; joyous days of manifestation when Christ has been precious; triumphant days of victory in which God has been exalted—these speak, indeed—and like prophets claim a hearing in the name of the Lord. Whether common or special, each day is to us a new page of sacred history, a new window into the truth of God, another rest stop in the march to the celestial city!

Here let us add that *all our days have had a voice to us.* There were youthful days and we thought they said, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth"—and we listened all too eagerly—yet we misunderstood those voices. Had we hearkened to the end of their sermon, we would have heard them say, "But know you that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." To some of us, our youthful days were full of blessed teaching, for they called us to seek Him early in whom we have rejoiced and found our all in all. Days of middle life have a voice which we hear as we buckle on our harness for stern fight and find but little space for rest—and none for self-congratulation. What do these days say to us but "Work while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work"? Those gray hairs scattered upon our brows warn us that our sun will not remain at noon for long. I hear a voice which cries to me, "Quick! Quick! Quick! The night comes!" As to those later days, to which our text more pointedly alludes, they say to you, dear brothers and sisters who have reached them, "Make sure work for eternity. Hold time loosely. Lay hold on eternal life." The declining strength, the teeth long gone, the limbs trembling, the eyes needing glasses to aid them, the hair snowy with many winters—all these are messages of which the purport is—"Be you also ready, for the Bridegroom comes." Knowing our frailty, each day sounds in my ear the trumpet call, "Boot and saddle! Up and away! Linger no longer. Press on to the battle!"

One of the loveliest sights in the world is an aged believer waiting for the summons to depart. There is a lovely freshness in the green blade. The bloom upon the ripening corn is also fair to look upon, but best of all we delight in the gold ears drooping down from the very weight of ripeness, expectant of the sickle and the harvest home! We have some among us who are so lovely in their lives and heavenly in their conversation that they seem like shining ones who have lingered here a

little late—they ought to be in heaven, but in mercy to us they tarry here to let us see what the glorified are like! I have heard of stray sunbeams and these are such. It is well when our old age is such a voice from heaven! But with the unconverted man or woman, how different are all things! To them we must tenderly but faithfully give warning. "You *must* soon die. The young *may* die, but you *must*—you know you must. Be wise, therefore, and prepare to meet your God." The eleventh hour with iron tongue calls to you— give heed to it, or you will have to hear it sound your condemnation forever!

"Hasten, sinner, to be wise,
Stay not for the morrow's sun—
Longer wisdom you despise,
Harder is she to be won.
Hasten mercy to implore.
Stay not for the morrow's sun
Lest your season should be over
Ere this evening's stage is run!
Hasten, sinner, to return,
Stay not for the morrow's sun
Lest your lamp should fail to burn
Ere salvation's work is done!
Hasten, sinner, to be blest,
Stay not for the morrow's sun
Lest perdition you arrest
Ere the morrow is begun."

Our days all have a voice and those which mark the different stages of our life and the flight of time have voices which demand special attention. Birthdays, as often as they come, have a chiding voice if we are lingering and loitering—and they also have a voice appealing to us for gratitude for years of mercy past. They have a voice calling to us for more strenuous exertions and bidding us draw nearer to God than before. There is always a buoyancy and gladness about the first days of the year—they speak of thankfulness and call us to devote ourselves anew to God—and ask for new grace to make the coming year more holy than the rest. The dying hours of the last day of the year are well kept as a watch, for by their fewness we see their precariousness. There are also last days to a life—and it will depend upon what that life is whether they will be rung out with joyous peals or knelled with despair.

Let days speak, then, for they have much to say to us!

II. The next thing in our text is that INCREASING YEARS SHOULD INCREASE OUR WISDOM—"multitude of years should teach wisdom." A man ought not to be at this moment as foolish as he was 12 months ago. He should be at least a little wiser. Christians ought to learn several things by the lapse of years.

We ought to learn *to trust less to ourselves.* Self-confidence is one of the most common faults of the young—they judge themselves to be better than their fathers and capable of great things. Untried strength always appears to be greater than it is. For a man to trust himself in the

beginning of his Christian career is very unwise, for Scripture warns him against it! But for him to trust himself after he has been 20 or 30 years a Christian is surely insanity, itself—a sin against common sense! If we have spent only a few years in the Christian life, we ought to have learned from slips, follies, failures, ignorance and mistakes that we are less than nothing! The college of experience has done nothing by way of instructing us if it has not taught us that we are weakness, itself. To rest upon yourself, or upon any particular virtue which you possess or upon any resolution which you have formed is vanity itself! Brothers and sisters, has the spider's thread already failed you so many times and do you still call it a cable? Has reed after reed broken beneath you and do you still rest on them as though they were bars of iron? Are you an aged Christian and yet self-confident? Surely this cannot be!

Age should teach every man *to place less and less confidence in his fellow men.* I do not mean that we are to lose that legitimate confidence which we should place in our fellow Christians and in the moral integrity of those we have tried and proved. I refer to that carnal confidence which makes flesh its arm—this should be cured by age. When we begin the Christian life, we are like feeble plants needing a support. We cling to our minister and everything he says is gospel, or we follow some superior person and place our admiring confidence in him. Alas, it often happened that helpers fail—and unless we have, in the meantime, learned to do without them, the consequences may be very serious! In the course of time, I think most Christians find their idols among men broken before their eyes. They at one time said, "If such a man were to fall, I should think that there was no truth in Christianity." But they have now learned better! God will not have us make idols of His saints or ministers—and years prove to us that those are cursed who trust in man—but he is blessed that trusts in the Lord!

We ought to learn, again, that *there is no depending upon appearances.* Have you not found, as far as you have now gone, that the direst calamity that ever overtook you was your greatest mercy? And have you not found that what you thought would have been a choice blessing had really been a terrible danger to you if it had been bestowed? You have judged the Lord according to your folly—by the outward manifestation of His providence! Have you not now learned to believe in His tried fidelity and to trust Him at all times, let Him do what He may? In this, age should instruct us. We ought not to be afraid because the day is cloudy but remember that if there were no clouds, there would be no rain—and if no rain, no harvests! Surely it is time that we had done judging each inch of time by itself and began to see things upon a broader scale! We would neither be too much depressed nor too exultant because of our immediate present condition if we knew that things are not what they seem.

Years should also teach us *greater reliance upon the divine faithfulness.* It ought every day to be easier for a Christian to trust in

God. The young believer is like a young swimmer who, for the first time feels his feet off the bottom and scarcely knows what will become of him. But the old swimmer feels like a fish in its native element—he is not afraid of drowning. The little waves which in his boyhood he thought would swamp him, he takes no notice of whatever! And even if huge billows roll, he mounts them like a sea bird! Oh, it is a grand thing to be established in the faith, grounded and settled, so as to be able to say, "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth is removed." So it ought to be with us—"Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."

And truly, dear friends, we ought to attain *a deeper insight into the things of God* as every year rolls over our heads. The conversation of mature Christians is always very delightful. Young Christians sparkle, but old Christians are diamonds of the first water! You may get good fruit from a young and earnest Christian, but it lacks the mellowness and full flavor of the ripe believer. I love to talk with aged Christians even when they are uneducated people. Many holy women may be met with among the poor of the church who know a world of sound divinity—and if you will but listen to them, you will be surprised. They do not deal in theories—they tell you matters of fact. They do not explain points like the schoolmen, but they illustrate their experience! They have been instructed by living near to God, by feeding upon His truth, by lying in Jesus' bosom like the poor man's ewe lamb which did eat of his bread and drink of his cup—this makes men wise unto salvation and, in such cases, years sanctified by divine grace teach them wisdom!

I shall have to speak a long time if I have to show in what respects Christians ought to grow wiser. They ought to grow wiser with regard to themselves, to be more watchful against their besetting sins, more intent in that particular department of service for which they find themselves most qualified. They ought to be wiser towards Satan—more aware of his devices and of the times when he is likely to assail them. They ought to learn how to work better with others, to manage more easily people with odd tempers, to get on better with those who are under them, or with them, or above them. They should be learning how to deal with trembling sinners, with hard hearts and with tender consciences—with backsliders, with mourners and the like. In fact, in all things every year we ought to be more fully equipped and, under the blessing of God's Spirit, years should teach us wisdom!

Brothers and sisters, if we are Christians, we ought to learn if we remember who it is that has been teaching us. It is the Holy Spirit Himself! If your boy goes to a school two or three years and does not make progress, you do not feel satisfied with the master. Now, you cannot, in this case blame the teacher—then let the pupil take much of the blame to himself. "Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom," since the Holy Spirit dwells in us who are converted to God! Let us remember how sweetly He has taught us by means of the

choicest mercies. They used to teach their children the alphabet in the olden times, by giving them A B C on pieces of gingerbread—and when the boy knew his letters he ate the gingerbread for a reward! That is very much like the way in which we have been taught doctrine—it has been sweet to us and we have learned it by feasting upon it! I know it has been so with me. The mercy of God has been a divine instructor to my soul. "Your gentleness," says one of old, "has made me great." With such sweet teaching, kind teaching—loving teaching, forbearing teaching—we ought to have learned something in all these years!

And then, sometimes, how sharply the Holy Spirit has taught us; I have heard say that boys do not learn so well now because the rod is so little used. I should not wonder, for in God's school the rod has never been put aside! Some of us do not go long without a stroke or two—if you have been very much tried and troubled, and yet have not learned my dear brother, my dear sister—what can be done with you? What? With this smarting, with all this sickness, and with all these losses and crosses, and yet no profiting? O vine, with all this pruning, are there so few clusters? O land, with all this plowing and harrowing, is there so slender a harvest? Let us mourn before God that it should be so!

And let us remember, again, how much teaching we have had from the ministry under the blessing of God's Holy Spirit. I should not wonder if some Christians do not profit—their Sabbaths are very dreadful days to them. All the week they are hard at work and on Sunday there is nothing to feed upon in what they hear, so they come home from public worship dissatisfied and troubled. Now, if your souls have been fed—if you have often said, "Surely God was in this place and I knew it," and you have gone home with your souls fed with the finest of the wheat—should there not be some wisdom to show for it? Consider the position which some of you occupy as teachers of others, as heads of families and instructors. If you do not *learn*, how are you to *teach*? And if there is no learning with you, you cannot wonder if your scholars make no progress under your instructions! With God as our teacher, if we do not learn, we cannot blame others if they do not learn from us who are but men and women! May God grant that instead of wasting time in frivolities, or "killing time," as the worldling calls it, we may seek to increase in the knowledge of God and in likeness to Jesus, so that every day we may be better heirs of heaven!—

"So let our lips and lives express
The holy gospel we profess!
So let our works and virtues shine
To prove the doctrine all divine!
Thus shall we best proclaim abroad
The honors of our Savior God,
When His salvation reigns within,
And grace subdues the power of sin!"

III. My last word shall be a short one. And it is this—according to my text, THOSE WHO HAVE WISDOM SHOULD COMMUNICATE IT TO OTHERS.

"I said, Days should speak"—not be silent—"and multitude of years should teach wisdom." That is to say, those who have days and multitude of years should try to teach the younger folks what they know! Now, it is a fault with some of our brothers and sisters that they do not teach our young people enough. They are too quiet. I should not like them to die and go to heaven without having told us all they knew. And yet, when a venerable saint is buried who has been very reticent in speech and has never used his pen, what a mint of teaching is buried with him! It always seems to me to be a pity that anything should be lost through the hand of death—it should rather be a gain! There are some of us who have told people all we know and we are always repeating it, so that if we die, no secrets will sink into oblivion. But there are others of the opposite sort—a great deal goes into them—there must be a deal of wisdom in them for none ever comes out! Doubtless many believers have been walking with God and enjoying the means of grace for so long a time that they are quite able to teach others—but they are of small service to us because they are so retiring. I never like to see a Christian like an old-fashioned moneybox into which you put the money, but from which you cannot get it out again unless you break it! It ought not to be so. Does not our Savior tell us that the well of water in us is to become rivers of water streaming out from us? As we receive, we should give! The more we learn, the more we should teach—and if God teaches us, it is because He expects us to instruct others.

Now, brothers and sisters, I presume to speak to those who are older than I am. Try and teach somebody! Ask yourselves how did you learn what you know? You were *taught*. Return the blessing by teaching somebody else. You were taught. Did your mother teach you? Are you a mother? Then teach your children. Did you learn from your father? Then father, be not ungenerous to your family; hand on the inheritance—what your faith gave you, pass on to your sons, that they may teach the same to their heirs! Or did you learn from a Sunday school teacher? Be a Sunday school teacher, yourself, and teach the rising generation. Remember that according as you have ability, you are a debtor to the church of God by whose means you received the truth of God—and to the church of God pay back, in the shape of instrumentality, the teaching which you have received by teaching those around you!

Note, next, that you are bound to do it, for without this, the truth of God cannot be propagated in the land. There is not a tree that stands at this moment leafless and bare in the winter's blast but has within itself preparation for casting its seed into the earth next year. Take off a bud and you will find concealed within it the flower and everything preparatory for the creation of another tree like itself when the fullness of time shall come! The violet and the foxglove in the hills are waiting for

the time to cast seed abroad, that the species may be continued on the face of the earth, each after its kind. In like fashion should each believer, by having known the truth of God, secure a succession of the faithful among men. Are those of ripe years among us attending to this as they should?

Again, remember that the devil is always teaching and his servants are always busy! When the sons of Belial invent some new blasphemy, their lips ache to tell it! Let but a loose song be sung in any music hall in London and before many hours it will have a thousand voices occupied with it. The devil has his missionaries ready to teach iniquity wherever they go—and they neither lack for zeal nor courage! And shall Satan have such busy servants and Christ's cause languish for want of agents? God forbid! If you have learned a great truth, go and tell it! If you have found out something that is fresh to you concerning the Lord and His love, do not wait till the morning light, but tell it at once! If you have found the Savior, tell about Him! Tell about Him! Tell about Him with all your might whenever you have opportunity! And spread abroad the gladsome news of His salvation! Remember that to tell others what you have known is often the very best way of deepening and increasing your own knowledge. Holy occupation is one of the most important things for our spiritual health. If you see a church sinking low, the last persons to leave that church are the Sunday school teachers and others who are practically occupied with serving God—and the first to go are those fluffy professors who are neither useful nor ornaments, but cling to a church like dust to your coat! Very largely will you find that in proportion as you serve Christ, Christ will serve you—therefore seek you to feed His lambs—and He will feed you!

At the beginning of this year I would urge each one of you to say, "Cannot I make this year better than the last? Can I not pray more, believe more, love more, work more, give more and be more like Christ?" Was last year an improvement upon the previous one? Whether it was so or not, let this year be an advance upon last year! It ought to be, for it is a year which lies somewhat nearer heaven than its predecessors! If you have lived up till now without a Savior—end that dangerous state! Listen to the gospel message, "Believe and live." Ere New Year's Day is over, look unto Jesus Christ and be saved! He will have glory and you shall have happiness—and thus shall you begin aright another year of our Lord—and His Holy Spirit will make it to you a year of divine grace!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 13:21, 22; 14.

We are going to read once more the familiar story of how the Lord relieved His people from the power of Egypt after He had brought them out of the house of bondage.

Exodus 13:21-22. *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them*

light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

Exodus 14:1-2 *And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it you shall encamp by the sea.* It might have been sufficient for the pillar of cloud to move that way, but it was really such an extraordinary thing for the Lord to lead the people right down to the sea that He gave a special command as well as the movement of the cloud! That Moses himself might not be staggered by what would seem to him to be such strange guidance, the Lord tells him what to say to the people and then gives him this explanation—

3, 4. *For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land; the wilderness has shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall follow after them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh, and over all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.* Those four words, "And they did so," though they are very short and very simple words, express a great deal! Oh, that it might always be said of all of us whenever God commands us to do anything, "And they did so."

5. *And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?* Nothing but the grace of God will truly humble men! These Egyptians had been crushed by terrible plagues into a false kind of humility, but they were soon as proud as ever! Nothing but the omnipotent grace of God can really subdue a proud and stubborn heart.

6-8. *And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.* They were resolute and brave as long as they realized that God was with them! And the Egyptians behind them were bold and proud although God was *not* with them! There were two high hands that day—the high hand of the proud, puny Pharaoh—and the high hand of the ever-blessed omnipotent Jehovah!

9, 10. *But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon and when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sorely afraid.* Forgetting what God had done for them and promised to them, they became timid at the sight of their old masters! They knew the cruelty of the Egyptians in time of war, and their hearts failed them.

10. *And the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.* Ah, dear friends, if they had cried to the Lord in true believing prayer, they would have been worthy of commendation—but they did not do so! They cried out unto the Lord in an unbelieving complaint, as the next verse plainly shows—

11, 12. *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.* What cowards they were, and how faint-hearted! Were these the people that were to conquer Canaan? Were these God's chosen people? Ah, judge them not, for you and I have often been quite as faint-hearted and quite as fickle as they were! May God forgive us as He again and again forgave them!

13-15. *And Moses said unto the people, Fear you not, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians, whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.* [See Sermon #548, Volume 10—FORWARD! FORWARD! FORWARD!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Moses was no doubt praying in his heart, though it is not recorded that he uttered any words in prayer—but it was not the time for prayer—it was the time for action! When people sometimes say, when they know their duty, "We will make it a matter of prayer," they generally mean that they will try to find some excuse for not doing it! You need not pray about any matter when you know what you ought to do—go and do it!

16-20. *But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get Me honor over Pharaoh, and over all his host, over his chariots, and over his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten Me honor over Pharaoh, over his chariots, and over his horsemen. And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them: and the pillar of the cloud went before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.* God was like a wall of fire between them and their enemies—so that they had no cause for fear even though the Egyptians were so near!

21-25. *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea: and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel*

went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. And took of their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians. They were now in the midst of the sea between the two high walls of water, and before they could flee see what happened to them—

26-31. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its full depth when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the water returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the hosts of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptian dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses.* And well they might! Yet how soon they murmured both against the Lord and against Moses!

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THE SEQUEL TO DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY
NO. 3284

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 4, 1866.

"The LORD reigns; let the people tremble."
Psalm 99:1.

"The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice."
Psalm 97:1.

NO doctrine in the whole Word of God has more excited the hatred of mankind than the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God. [See Sermon #77, Volume 2—DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The fact that "the LORD reigns" is indisputable—and it is this fact that arises the utmost opposition in the unrenewed human heart. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." We know what the Lord thinks of their rebellion against Him—"He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure." Let us, beloved, not be among those who refuse to believe this great truth of God, but may we humbly bow before that dread sovereign who does as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world—

"God is a King of power unknown;
Firm are the orders of His throne!
If He resolves, who dare oppose,
Or ask Him why, or what He does?"

God has the right to act thus, first, because He is the source of all created existence. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and everything else that exists is the product of His creative power! As the writer of the 100th Psalm says, "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves." So He has the absolute right to do with us whatever He pleases. It rested with Him to make us or not to make us. And when He determined to create, it was according to His own will that He made one creature a worm and another an eagle, one an ant crawling upon its little hill and another a leviathan making the deep to boil. It was by His decree that there were almost boundless variations among the great family of mankind. In constitution, disposition and temperament—

in the very appearance of our bodies, in the strange diversities of our mental capacities, in our position upon the globe or our place and circumstances in any particular country and nation—we see traces of the sovereign purpose and will of God. It is true that our ancestors, parents and surroundings have exerted certain influences upon us, but there are peculiarities about each one of us which can only be ascribed to the sovereign good pleasure of God. That one should be a silent and unobtrusive traveler through life's pilgrimage, and that another should be so eloquent as to speak in words that find an echo the wide world over—that one should sweat and toil all his days, and that another should be dandled upon the knee of luxury—we may say what we will about all this, but whether we agree with it or not, we cannot deny that it is according to divine appointment and order and, therefore, we must submit to it—

"The Lord is King; who them shall dare
Resist His will, distrust His care,
Or murmur at His wise decrees,
Or doubt His royal promises?
The Lord is King, child of the dust,
The Judge of all the earth is just—
Holy and true are all His ways,
Let every creature speak His praise."

Not only do we believe that God being the creator, has the right to make His creatures according to His own will, but we also believe that He has another right over us acquired from our sinful nature. We may say, though we speak it with bated breath in the presence of His awful majesty, that even creatures have their rights at their creator's hand. For instance, every creature may claim from its creator that it should not be punished if it does not offend—and that it should be made happy if it is obedient to His commands. Such rights Jehovah has always acknowledged and has never violated. But you and I, dear friends, have lost all the rights of creatureship, for we have all sinned! A subject of this realm has the right of freedom to go where he pleases and do what he pleases as long as he does not offend against the law of the land. But if he commits high treason, or robbery, or some other crime and so is brought under the condemnation of the law, he immediately loses all right to his freedom and is put in prison with other criminals.

Now the law of God's universe, a most equitable and just law, runs thus, "The soul that sins, it shall die." And we have all sinned—the sentence of death is recorded against every soul born of woman—and that any of us are still permitted to live is due to the clemency of the great King! Some of us, blessed be His holy name, have been pardoned by Him. And having been pardoned, we shall never again be condemned—but others are put off during their majesty's pleasure and that respite is an act of divine sovereignty. Had He executed the sentence

pronounced upon us as soon as we had sinned, we might have bewailed His severity, yet we could never have impeached His justice, for we should have deserved the utmost penalty that could have been demanded by His righteous law! So that, by virtue of our sinnership, God has the right to punish us if He pleases to do so. But if He can consistently, with the principles of eternal justice, pardon us, He has the right do so! You noticed that I said, "consistently with the principles of eternal justice," for God will never violate those principles. He can always do as He wills, but He always wills to do what is right and, by the atonement of His dear Son, He has made a way by which He can satisfy all the claims of His inflexible justice and yet can take infinite delight in bestowing His mercy upon the guilty! Then surely, as mercy is not only God's prerogative as King, but also had to be so dearly bought by the precious blood of His well-beloved Son, we ought not to be backward in confessing that He has the right to bestow that mercy whenever He pleases. At all events, whether we believe it or not, this declaration is still thundered forth from the throne of the eternal, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Observe then, three rights which belong to God—as creator, as judge, having the right to punish the guilty, and as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, having the right to pardon sinners and to do it without, in the slightest degree, violating His justice. These are high doctrines from which some turn away in despair. It is true that they are high, as high as the throne of God Himself! When I think of them, I feel like the prophet Ezekiel when he looked upon those wheels that were so high that they were dreadful. Yet, beloved, as they are true, let us bow before them with awestricken spirits, yet with believing hearts knowing that the judge of all the earth is certain to do that which is right!

Moreover, the sovereignty of God is also displayed in His distribution of gifts among His own people—and surely He has the right to do this because the gifts are His own. If we could claim them as ours, they would not be gifts—they would be rightly due to us like anything else that belonged to us. If any man has a valid claim upon God for mercy, then it is not mercy that he should claim, but justice! If any man, by virtue of his own works, deserves to be saved, then salvation is of works and not of grace—but this the Scriptures distinctly deny! If you come to God expecting to receive from Him spiritual gifts because of certain rights vested in yourselves, you come to Him on a footing that He cannot tolerate for a moment! He will say to you, "May I not do as I will with My own?" And He will give nothing to you who claim it as a right. But He will give all they need to those who come to Him confessing that they have no right to His mercy and entreating that it may be bestowed upon them through the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus—

"Justice upon a dreadful throne
Maintains the rights of God
While mercy sends her pardons down,
Bought with a Savior's blood."

I have thus reminded you of the truth of God which is not only stated in our two texts, but is revealed in many other Scriptures—the truth that "the LORD reigns." As He reigns in creation and providence, so does He reign in the realm of His grace. Taking the two texts together, I want, earnestly and affectionately, first *to address the unsaved sinner.* And then *to speak to the saved believer,* endeavoring to invoke in each soul the twin emotions of rejoicing and trembling—"The LORD reigns, let the people tremble." "The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice."

I. So, first, LET ME SPEAK TO THE UNSAVED SINNER.

Sinner, it is an unspeakable mercy for you that the Lord reigns, for *it is because He reigns that you are yet alive.* If God were not King, the sentence of justice must be executed swiftly, surely, mercilessly! And every sinner, the moment that he sinned, must die. But, sinner, He who is King is very gracious and He says to the officer of justice, "Spare that man. Let him live." He has spared some of you thirty, forty, fifty, sixty—it may be even 70 years! You would not have spared any of your fellow creatures who had offended you as long as that. If a man provoked you to your face, your anger would wax hot against him long before 20 years! Some of you would not bear with him even for 20 *minutes*—yet you have provoked the Lord year after year—but the long-suffering patience in the heart of God has borne with you even until now! He has said concerning you, again and again, "Spare him! Spare her!" When fever shot its hot darts at you, God turned them aside! And when the poison of disease was actually in your blood, He removed it with His healing hand. The Lord who reigns has spared you—therefore rejoice!

Yet tremble at the same time, sinner, for this great King can as readily slay as He can spare. One turn of His hand, no, not as much as that—He need not even lift His little finger—He has but to will your death and then where would you be? He who has been so strong to spare can be just as strong to smite! He has not yet taken up the axe, but when once He lifts it and its sharp edge falls upon the tree that is still barren, what will become of it? "The LORD reigns; let the people tremble." If He were to come to you tonight and lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, it would be all in vain for you to attempt to resist Him! The breath of your nostrils is so absolutely under God's control that all the physicians in the world could not extend the lease of your life if He were to say to you, "This night shall your soul be required of you." So tremble at the recollection that "the LORD reigns," for you are as completely in His power as a moth would be in yours if you held it in your hand knowing that you could crush it any moment that you pleased!

Another instance of divine sovereignty which may cause you both to rejoice and to tremble, is this—*God has sent the gospel to you.* Think of this fact, my hearer! There are millions upon millions of your fellow creatures who have never heard the gospel and who are going down to their doom in utter ignorance of the great salvation! Their idol gods cannot save them. Their blocks of wood and stone cannot hear their cry of hopeless sorrow. But unto you is the word of this salvation sent! Many in this great London of ours are born and nurtured amid scenes of vice and iniquity—they never enter the house of prayer and possibly even the voice of the street preacher never reaches their ears. But some of you heard the name of Jesus mingled with the hush of your first lullaby! You were dandled on the knee of piety, and carried even as a baby in the arms of earnest prayer. It is a most gracious sovereignty that has accorded you such great privileges as these! It is the Lord, the Lord who reigns, to whom you owe all this! Therefore rejoice, yet tremble as well, for these high privileges involve corresponding responsibilities—and He will require of you a strict account of the way in which you have used these advantages which others have not possessed. One of these days He will make inquisition and will say to you, "I gave you light—did you rejoice in it? I sent the gospel to you—did you listen to the joyful sound, or did you shut your ears to it and turn away from it with contempt and provoke Me to anger against you?" Besides, sinner, although you are able to hear the gospel, today, you may not be allowed to hear it tomorrow! Instead of the message to you being as it is today—"believe and live," tomorrow it may be—"depart you cursed." Instead of the entreaty being addressed to you as it is today, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" Tomorrow the dread sentence may be pronounced by Jehovah the King, "Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would have none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof." Mercy's day lasts not forever! God's gospel shall not always be trifled with! You may for a time remember to listen to the loving, tender, wooing voice of the Savior, but I would have you remember that He will not always quietly submit to your rejection of His gracious invitations! Tremble, I beseech you, lest the music of the silver trumpet of the gospel should give place to the harsh clangor of the knell announcing that you have been driven from the presence of the King to that dread prison where the voice of love and mercy shall never be heard! Thus I bid you rejoice in your present privileges, but also tremble, lest if you do not prize them and use them aright, they may rise up in judgment to condemn you!

There are many in this place who may well thank the King for His sovereign mercy to them for *they are the subjects of the strivings of His Holy Spirit.* There are many here who cannot listen to the gospel without

being, to some extent, impressed by it. They have been seen to shed tears because of their consciousness of sin— and there have been times when it has been exceedingly difficult for them to continue in the service of Satan. Some of you cannot sin with impunity as others can, and it has sometimes been a question with you whether you dare occupy these seats unless you resolve to give up your darling sins! Well, if the Holy Spirit has thus strived with you, thank God, for this is another instance of His sovereignty! Yet remember how early in the history of mankind God had to say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." In a moment the sovereignty of God may take away all those melting and gracious influences! And do you know what would happen to you then? Your conscience would be seared as with a hot iron and your natural hardness of heart would be followed by a judicial hardness which would be still more terrible! You might then continue to hear the gospel, but it would be as though it were being preached to the dead—you would sit in your pews and experience no more feeling than a row of statues could—and you would live only to walk away and forget that you had been listening to the truth of God. I tremble as I look around upon some of you! I cannot help fearing that you have already reached this dreadful state and that God has said concerning you, "They are joined to their idols, let them alone." I see some here who once made a profession of religion and who would even speak in God's name, but they turned aside! Then they professed to repent, but afterwards turned aside again. And now no message ever seems to startle them. They have listened to the gospel until they have become gospel-hardened—that which should have been the means of their salvation has become the means of their damnation! That same gospel, which has been a savor of life unto life to many others, has become a savor of death unto death to them! Take heed, sinner, for He who melts can harden—and if you have long resisted the strivings of the Spirit, it may be that the Lord will allow you to go on sinning unrebuked—until you have filled up the measure of your iniquity and received the due reward of your evil deeds!

Let me also remind those of you who are unconverted that you have a further proof of divine sovereignty in the fact that *God has promised to hear prayer.* There are many promises like these, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." God in mercy invites you to come to Him—and this is a subject for heartfelt rejoicing—but it is also a cause of trembling, for the door of His mercy will not always remain open and, "when once the Master of the house is risen up and has shut the door and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us! He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are." *Tonight* Jesus is lifted up in the preaching of the gospel as once

He was lifted up upon the cross, and He bids us cry to you, "Look and live! Look and live," for it is still true that—

"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."

But if you refuse to obey the gospel invitation, what must become of you? Surely captain execution, with the sharp axe in his hand, will come forth and take you to your well-deserved doom! If God were to deal with you according to your deserts, what hope would there be for you? Yet He bids you repent and He speaks to us as He said to Ezekiel, "Say unto them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Isaiah's message is still true— "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 turn unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Sinner, I am happy in standing here as the ambassador of my King—and yet while I rejoice, I tremble lest you should reject the message that He has sent to you in the greatness of His grace, for my King is not to be trifled with—He deals severely with those who spurn His mercy! Nothing provokes Him more than slights cast upon His dear Son! To turn away from the blood of His atoning sacrifice will bring down upon you the indignation of the Most High! Oh, venture not upon such a perilous course, but with those trembling lips of yours kiss the Son, trust in Him, depend upon Him and you shall find salvation now to the praise and glory of God's good grace!—

"Long the gospel you have spurned,
Long delayed to love your God,
Stifled conscience, nor have turned
Wooed though by a Savior's blood!
Wretched, ruined, helpless soul,
To a Savior's blood apply—
He alone can make you whole,
Fly to Jesus, sinner, fly!"

II. Thus have I spoken to sinners; now I am briefly TO SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

You "precious sons on Zion, comparable to fine gold," look by faith to your King as He sits upon the throne! And first, *rejoice that you are His.* It is the King who has saved you! Your pardon is signed by the royal hand—it would be worthless to you if it were not so signed! It is sovereignty that puts the crown upon every other attribute of God! It is the King who has chosen you, the King who has saved you!

Yet, beloved, while I bid you rejoice, I would have you *rejoice with trembling* while I suggest to you the question—are you sure that the Lord

has saved you? I put the question to myself—My soul, are you sure that the Lord has saved you? Have you made your own calling and election sure before exhorting others to seek the Lord? It is well for all of us to examine themselves and see whether we are in the faith or not. My brothers on the platform, you who are officers in the church, I evoke you to make sure work for eternity! You fathers in Israel, presume not upon your gray hairs, but search yourselves, or, better still, let each of us pray David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." You parents who have been for years members of the church—and you young men and maidens who have not long joined our ranks—rejoice with trembling and each one of you pray, "O Lord, by Your Holy Spirit witnessing with my spirit, assure me that I am born to God!"

I have been thinking of these two texts in connection with ourselves who are members of this church. What a notable instance of sovereignty is exhibited in the usefulness of the members of this church! Some of us have, in a very distinguished manner, been made the parents of spiritual children and our seed has become very numerous. Here is sovereignty in which I, for one, do exceedingly rejoice! And there are brothers and sisters here who also rejoice in it. But I, for one, must tremble as well as rejoice. What if the Master should take back the power which He has up to now lent us? What if our preaching should become sapless and savorless to God's people and lifeless and powerless to sinners? O my God, let me die before that should become my unhappy lot! I could never endure to live as some ministers seem content to do. To be a cumberer of the ground, to see no sign of God's hand being made bare—oh, this would indeed be misery! May the Lord preserve us from ever having that sad experience! I trust dear brothers and sisters that you all feel that it would be far better for you to die as far as your bodies are concerned than to die in the sense of being no longer spiritually fruitful. Therefore, while we rejoice over the great blessing with which the Lord has so long enriched us, let us tremble lest we give Him cause to withhold it for the future! Unless we put every wreath of laurel upon the King's own head, He will speedily withdraw any power with which He entrusted us—and we shall be as weak as Samson was when the Spirit of God had departed from him.

What a remarkable instance of divine sovereignty we have in this church, itself, as well as in individual members of it! We were among the least in Zion, but the Lord has multiplied us greatly. Why is this? Why has He blessed us so wondrously and passed by others who scarcely ever hear the cry of a newborn convert? What other reason can we give than this—because it seemed good in His sight? Therefore let us rejoice, but let us also rejoice with trembling lest the Lord should take away from us

such blessed experiences! Well do I recollect the words of that man of God who is now in heaven—dear Mr. Jonathan George—at the opening of this building. Quoting Jeremiah 33:9, "They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." He said that the more blessing and prosperity the Lord gave us, the more humble must we be—and the more anxious not to provoke Him to jealousy—or else He would take away His presence from us. I trust that many of you, beloved, cherish this holy anxiety lest we should grieve the Spirit and drive Him away from us. At all events, I know one who, without being unbelieving, is always very anxious that "Ichabod" ("the glory is departed") should never be written on these walls. What if the Lord should allow your zeal to grow cold, your doctrines to become unsound and your lives unholy? What if, instead of ardor there should be lethargy? Instead of love there should be bickering? Instead of harmony there should be division and instead of mighty wrestling with the Most High there should be sad contentions with one another? May these eyes be sealed in death before such a wretched state of things as that should come! And I know that many of you are saying, "Amen," as far as you, also, are concerned! Yet all this is possible, for the King who gives can take away, and He who now blesses can withhold the blessing! And He will do it unless as a church, we are faithful and true to Him. Go you now to the cities of Asia Minor where once the seven golden candlesticks brought such glory to God, and how much light will you find there? Where is Pergamos? Where is Laodicea? Where are the churches of Philadelphia and the rest? Have not the most of them ceased to be because they left their first love and turned back unto the world? If we have any Achans in the camp, we would not stone them, but we would pray for them—and we would plead with them to repent and turn again unto the Lord—lest the whole church should suffer through them as Israel did through the sin of Achan.

This solemn truth of the sovereignty of God rests very heavily on my heart. Let it rest very heavily on yours, also, so that together we may rejoice because of all the goodness that the Lord has bestowed upon us and, at the same time, let us tremble lest we should in any way provoke Him to anger and cause Him to withdraw His presence from us, and say to us, "I will work no more through you, but I will leave you to your own devices that you may find out what you can do when I have gone away from you." God forbid that this should ever happen to us!

Now as we come to the table of our Lord, let us come with deep solemnity remembering that there is sovereignty here, also. The observance of this ordinance may be very dull and dreary to you—or God make it a time of most blessed fellowship with Him and with one another. The means of grace are not always equally profitable to us. The pipes are always golden, but the holy oil does not always flow in our direction.

There is blessing to be had at all times, but you cannot always get it. Ask the King to give you divine grace to recognize His right to give or to withhold the blessing—and then plead with Him, for Jesus' sake, to remember you for good! God grant that it may be so, for His dear name's sake! Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72
A Psalm for Solomon.

This was David's dying bequest to his son, Solomon—but a greater than Solomon is here, for this Psalm concerns the reign, triumph and everlasting dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Verses 1, 2 *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with judgment.* It is the distinguishing mark of Christ's kingdom that He cares so much for the poor—whereas in other kingdoms they are generally pushed to the wall—and men of great estate and consequence get all the good positions. In Christ's kingdom the poor are exalted!

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to Your people and the little hills, by righteousness.* Those mountains, in whose caves robbers lurked, and from whose heights enemies often came down and swept away the little estates of the lowlanders—even these shall bring peace and comfort—

"No strife shall vex Messiah's reign!"

When Jesus Christ comes a second time to this earth, we shall see these prophecies literally fulfilled—but until then we delight to know that the reign of Christ is a reign of peace!

4-6. *He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.* After being mown, the grass is tender—should there be a long period of burning sunshine—the roots left exposed might soon be dried up and the lower portion of the stem, bereft of moisture, might become hard. Never does rain seem so refreshing to the grass as just after the mowing! So is it in Christ's kingdom. Upon you whose broken hearts are like mown grass. Upon you who have been cut down by the sharp scythe of affliction and who have seen your hopes withered before your eyes—Jesus shall come on gently like rain upon the mown grass. And as the showers fertilize the barren earth, so shall the presence of Christ make your hearts to be fertile and fruitful. If any of us are like the parched earth or the mown grass, may we have this gracious promise fulfilled to us!

7. *In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.* Under other kings sinners have flourished and great oppressors have walked in public. But in Christ's days, the righteous shall flourish, "and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." There have been some times of truce. There have been some periods when the temple of Janus has been shut. But when Christ comes, the Lord shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder—not lay them by in store for days of warfare in the future—but break them up as there will be no further use for them!

8, 9. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust.* The Arabs, the wandering Bedouin tribes, unconquered and untamable, "shall bow before Him." And His enemies shall not merely be beaten once or twice, but they "shall lick the dust"—they shall be so entirely broken that there shall be no fear of their rebelling in the future!

10. *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.* Britain and some of her sister islands shall do homage to this great Solomon.

10. *The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.* Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God. And men of swarthy skin shall acknowledge the King of the Jews as Lord over all!

11. *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.* There is a great future for you, Christians, a glorious future for our holy religion! The handful by the side of the lake shall yet become an all-conquering host! As it was when that cake of barley bread fell into the midst of the camp of Midian and overthrew the tent, so that it lay along, and as it was when the shout was heard, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon," so shall it be with us before long. God's people having no strength of their own shall, nevertheless, break the power of their enemy when the war-cry shall be heard, "The sword of Christ and of the Lord of Hosts!"

12, 13. *For He shall deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him that has no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.* [See Sermon #1037, Volume 18—THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Now, needy one, here is a promise for you! Is there one here that has no helper? Then let that one know that Christ is the friend of the friendless and the helper of the helpless!

14-16. *He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised. There shall be an handful of corn on the earth*—[See Sermon #717, Volume 12—PRAY FOR JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Only a handful? O

you birds of the air, how you long to eat it all up! O you thorns, how soon would you choke it to death! It is only a handful of corn—

16. *Upon the top of the mountains.* That is a bad place for corn—surely it will die there—the winter snows will chill it and, exposed to every stormy blast it will never fill the arms of the reaper. But is it so? Listen—

16. *The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.* Just as there are peculiar noises heard in a great forest when the wind sweeps through it—there is an allusion to this in the Hebrew—there should be such an abundance of fruit from this handful of corn that as when the forest bows its head before the whirlwind, so shall there be heard a sound as of God rushing among the multitude of His saints!

16. *And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.* They shall be so many that one might as well attempt to count the blades of grass as to reckon the number of God's saints!

17-20. *His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended.* [See Sermons #27, Volume 1—THE ETERNAL NAME; #2187, Volume 37—JESUS—"ALL BLESSING AND ALL BLESSED"; #2451, Volume 42—"BLESSED IN HIM" and #129, Volume 3—DAVID'S DYING PRAYER—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He had nothing more to pray for! He had his heart's highest and best wish and, therefore, he closes his prayer where God had given him all that he could ask.

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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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GOOD CHEER FROM CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER THE WORLD
NO. 3285

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
John 16:33

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1327, Volume 22—CHRIST THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD and #1994, Volume 33—SWEET PEACE FOR TRIED BELIEVERS—read/download both sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE believer is in two places, and he lives two lives. In the text there are two places spoken of—"in Me" and, "in the world."

The saint's noblest life is "hid with Christ in God." This is his new life, his spiritual life, his incorruptible life, his everlasting life. Rejoice, beloved, if you are in Christ, and enjoy the privilege which belongs to that condition—"that in Me you might have peace." Do not be satisfied without it! It is your right through your relationship to the Prince of Peace. Because you are in Christ, your life of lives is always safe and should be always restful. Your greatest interests are all secure, for they are guaranteed by the covenant of which Jesus is the surety. Your treasure, your eternal portion, is laid up with Him in heaven where neither rust nor robber can enter. Therefore, be of good cheer! Be restful and happy, for you are in Christ and He has said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace."

You are sorrowfully conscience that you also live another life, for you dwell in the midst of evil men, or, as the text puts it, you are "in the world." I need not enlarge upon that fact, for probably, dear friend, every time you go out to business or to daily labor, you find by the ungodly speeches of graceless men, that you are in the world which lies in the wicked one. Even while you dwell in the sweet seclusion of domestic life, though your family has been graciously visited, and your dear ones are all believers, yet even *there* matters occur which make you feel that you are "in the world—a world of sin and sorrow. You are not yet in heaven—do not dream that you are. It would be a pity for a sailor to expect the sea to be as stable as the land, for the sea will be the sea to the end and the world will be the world to you as long you are in it.

The Savior warns His people, "In the world you shall have tribulation." That is to say, your condition will at times be as unpleasant as that of wheat under the flail, for the Latin word, "tribulation," signifies threshing. Many blows of the flail are needed to separate your chaff from your wheat and, therefore, while you are in this world, you are on the threshing-floor. The Greek word which Jesus used is not quite of the same import as our English-Latin word, but it means pressing grief and searching trial. You must at times experience trial while you are in the world, though not always to the same degree, for God gives some of His people much rest even while here below—but this does not arise out of the world—it is His own special gift. "In the world you shall have tribulation" is as sure a fact as that in Christ you shall have peace!

Now, because of this tribulation and the sorrow which is likely to come of it, our Savior gives us the words of good cheer to which our attention is directed in the text. We have first to show *what sorrow the comfort is aimed at* and, secondly, *what is the actual comfort here bestowed.*

I. WHAT IS THIS TRIBULATION IN THE WORLD AT WHICH THE SAVIOR'S WORDS OF COMFORT ARE AIMED?

It includes *the afflictions which come upon us because we are men living among men* and not yet at home among angels and glorified saints. We dwell among beings who are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Between other men and us there are many points of difference, but we share with them in the common infirmities, labors, sicknesses, bereavements and necessities of our fallen race. We are outside of Eden's gate with the rest of Adam's family. We may be greatly beloved of God and yet be poor. God's love to Lazarus did not prevent his lying at the rich man's gate, nor hinder the dogs from licking his sores. Saints may be sick as well as other men—Job and David and Hezekiah felt sore diseases. Saints go into the hospital as well as sinners, for their bodies are liable to the same accidents and ailments. Such diseases as men bring upon themselves by vice, the godly escape and, therefore, as a rule, God's people have a great advantage over the reckless and reprobate in point of health. But, still, in this respect the best of men are only men and it will often be said, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." Upon the bodies of the godly the elements have the same power as upon others—upon them the hot desert wind blows, or through their garments the cold penetrates—the sun scorches them in the fierceness of its summer heat, or chilling dampness threaten the flame of life. In this respect, one event happens unto all, though not without mysterious and blessed differences. No screen is set around the godly to protect them from physical suffering—they are not living in the land of Goshen so that light cheers their dwelling while the dense fog hangs over the rest of the land! Scant is the need to dwell up this theme, for it is well known that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," because they are in a world which, for a while, is made subject to vanity.

Nor may we forget that we endure a second set of tribulation *because we are Christians.* Ishmael was not mocked, but Isaac was, for he was born after the promise. Esau's posterity never suffered bondage in Egypt, but Israel must be trained by hard service. *Persecution is for the righteous,* wicked men are in honor among their ungodly associates. Slander shoots her poisoned arrows, not at the vicious, but at the virtuous. Birds do not peck at sour fruit, but they wage war upon the sweet and ripe. Holy men must expect to be misrepresented, misinterpreted and often willfully maligned—while hypocrites have their reward in undeserved homage. Carry what load you choose upon your shoulders and no one will notice it unless, indeed, they obey the good old rule and "respect the burden." But if you take up Christ's cross and bravely bear it, few will respect the burden, or praise the bearer! Graceless men will add weight to your load, for the offense of the cross has not ceased. The seed of the serpent still has enmity against the seed of the woman, and one and another will commence biting at the heel which treads the sacred way of Christ. It is the nature of the wicked to hate the righteous, even as the wolf rages against the sheep. This world cannot be the friend of the friend of God unless, indeed, Belial can have concord with Christ—and this we know is impossible! In one form or another, the Egyptian will oppress the Israelite till the day of the bringing out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. If today the enmity is restrained in its manifestation, it is because the law of the land, by the good providence of God, does not now allow the rack, the stake, or the dungeon. Our Lord said to His first disciples, "In the world you shall have tribulation," and He explained it to mean that men would put them out of the synagogues. Yes, that the time would come when those that *killed* them would think that they did God service! Tribulation of that sort remains up to the measure in which it is not hindered by divine power. The spirit out of which it sprang cannot die till men are renewed. A man's foes are still they of his own household. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Nor is the opposition of the world confined to persecution. It sometimes takes the far more dangerous form of flattery—pleasing baits are held out and allurements are used to decoy the believer from his Lord. Many have been grievously wounded by the world when it has met them with the kiss of Judas on its lips and a dagger in its right hand wherewith to slay the soul! Woe unto those who are ignorant of its devices! This is a sore trouble under the sun, that men are false—their words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords! This has often surprised young Christians. They imagined that since the godly were charmed at the sight of their early graces, all others would be equally pleased. They are dumbfounded when they find that their good is evilly spoken of. Is any hearer of mine one of these raw recruits? Let him

learn that to be a soldier of the cross means real war—not a sham fight! He is in an enemy's country and the time will yet come when, as a veteran warrior, he will be surprised if he lives a day without a conflict, or is able for an hour to sheathe his sword—

"Must I be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?
Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood
To help me on to God?
Surely I must fight if I would reign—
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pains,
Supported by Your word"

Certain tender hearts are not only surprised, but they are daunted and grieved by the world's opposition. Gentle, loving spirits who would not oppose anybody if they could help it, keenly feel the wanton assaults of those whom they would rather please than provoke. The sensitiveness of love renders the choicest characters the most susceptible of pain under cruel opposition—especially when it comes from beloved kinsfolk. To those who love God and man, it is at times an agony to be compelled to appear as the cause of strife, even for Christ's sake. We would gladly follow peace with all men, yet are we often forced to cry—

"My soul with him that hates peace
Has long a dweller been!
I am for peace, but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.
My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troubles vex no more."

We are sent forth as sheep among wolves—and this jars upon our gentleness which loves far better to lie down in the green pastures near the shepherd and in the midst of flock.

We are most of all grieved to think that men should not love Christ. It makes us deeply sorrowful that they should not see the beauties of the man of sorrows. In our inmost hearts we are wounded when they wound our Well-Beloved. That they oppose *us* is little—but that they stumble at the great foundation stone upon which they will surely be broken, is terrible to perceive! They sin against light and love. They sin against their own souls—and this is a tribulation which bruises every holy heart and causes every loving spirit to bleed.

This calls for constant watchfulness, since our very love to men might become, unless salted by the grace of God, a cause of decay to our purity. Some spirits love fighting and are never more happy than when they can denounce, resist, secede and contend. These are members of

the church militant in another than the best sense. When the grace of God enters their hearts and consecrates their obstinacy into firmness, they make fine men in a way, but if we measure them by the scale of love, and that, I take it, is the standard of the sanctuary—for he is most like God who loves most and he has come nearest to the image of Christ whose heart is fullest of tenderness—these rougher spirits turn out to be rather dwarfs than giants in the kingdom of God. We must have backbone and must be prepared to contend earnestly for the faith, but yet the more love we exhibit, the better! And, therefore, the more pain it will cost us to be continually at war with unloving spirits. This is a part of the tribulation which we must endure—and the more bravely we face it, the more thoroughly shall we win the battles of peace and purity!

Is not this enough upon the darker side of the picture?

II. Let us now consider WHAT THE COMFORT IS WHICH JESUS GRACIOUSLY OFFERS US. "Be of good cheer," He says, "I have overcome the world." This is a glorious sentence spoken by the greatest conqueror that ever lived—in whom all His people shall yet be "more than conquerors."

Here let us view our Lord in His blessed person, for there is much of good cheer in the contemplation. Remember, first, that *our blessed Lord was a man.* Believe all that this means, for many are apt to think that because He was God as well as man, therefore He was not so fully a man. The tendency is to separate Him from the race and so from ourselves, but I pray you, friend, to respect that Jesus was in some respects more a man than any of us!

There are some points in which no one man is all that manhood is—but Jesus was the summary of all manhood. I might almost venture to say that He had about Him the whole nature of mankind as it respects to the mental conformation of both man and woman, for He was as tender as woman though as strong as man. Holy women, as much as godly men, find in Jesus all that is in their own souls. There is nothing effeminate in Him and yet all the loveliness which is feminine—read His life story and see. He was man in the broadest sense of the term, taking up in one the whole genus. Men are of certain ranks and grades, but Christ is without limit, save only that in Him was no sin. Though a Jew, He bore no special national peculiarity, for Gentiles find in Him their next of kin. You apply no descriptive word to the son of man, except that you call Him "the man of sorrows." He was a man who greatly suffered in body and in mind, and displayed His manhood by the bravery of His endurance—a man rejoicing in man's joy, depressed in man's grief—a man who ran up the entire scale of humanity, from its deepest to its highest tone. Now, if a typical man has overcome the world, then man has done it and man can be enabled to do it again! This inspires courage and vanishes despair. It was the mighty power of the Holy Spirit dwelling

in Him by which Jesus overcame the world—and that same quiet power, if it dwells in us, will make us win the same victory by faith. The arch enemy has been conquered by man and our hearts may be comforted by the conviction that by God working in us, we, too, shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly!

It is cheering to remember that wherein our Lord's was a special case, it is to our comfort, for He, as man, entered into the conflict under serious disadvantages which we cannot labor under. He was weighted with a care unique and unexampled. Be our charge what it may, it cannot be comparable to His heavy burden as the shepherd of souls. We think ourselves overburdened and speak of life as though it were rendered too stern a conflict by the load of our cares and responsibilities. But what comparison is there between our load and that of Jesus? A pastor with a great flock is not without his hourly anxieties, but what are those to the cares of the chief shepherd? He watched over the great multitude which no man can number—who were committed to Him by the Father—and for these He carried all their grief! Here was a burden such as you and I, dear friend, cannot even imagine! And yet, without laying aside the weight, He fought the world and overcame it! Let His name be praised and let His victory be the comfort of all that labor and are heavy ladened—

"His is the victor's name,
Who fought our fight alone!
Triumphant saints no honor claim—
His conquest was His own."

Remember, next, that He was loaded with substitutionary sorrows which He bore for us. These are not ours. He came into the world to suffer griefs that were not His own. He had human guilt laid upon Him to bear and, because of that, He was bowed down till He was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. Some seem to think we are to imitate Christ in being men of sorrows as He was. No, no! The argument is the other way! Because Jesus took our sorrows, we may leave them all with Him, rolling our burden upon the Lord. Because He was grieved for me and in my place, it is my privilege to rejoice with unspeakable joy in full redemption! No weight of sin remains to press us to the dust! Christ has carried it all away—and in His sepulcher He has buried it forever! Yet never let us forget what an inconceivable pressure our sin put upon Him, for remembering this, it becomes the more a comfort to us that, notwithstanding all, He could say, "I have overcome the world."

Remember, again, that our Lord in the battle with the world, was the center of the attack. When the whole host marches to the fight, we, each one, take our place in the ranks and the war goes on against us all. But where, do you think, the arrows fly most thickly? Where were the javelins hurled one after the other, thick as hail? "The standard-bearer among ten thousand" was the chief target! It seems to me as if the prince of

darkness had said to his armies, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel," for He was tempted in all points like as we are. You and I encounter some temptations, but He endured them all! I have mine and you have yours, but He had mine and yours, and such as are common to all His saints—and yet, standing in the thick of the fray, He remained unwounded and cried aloud—"I have overcome the world." Divine grace, then, can also clothe us with triumph, for against us no such supreme charges of hosts upon hosts will ever be led. The whole band has gathered together against Him—but never against any one of His feeble followers!

Remember, also, that the Redeemer was, in many respects, a lonely man. If we need spiritual succor, we know someone to whom we can go. If we need converse with a superior mind, we can find such an one among our brothers and sisters. But our blessed Master could scarcely find a kindred spirit, and never an adviser. Like some lone mountaintop which towers above all surrounding heights, He stood alone where winter's snowstorms beat full upon Him, spending all their fury on His unshielded height! We are but valley dwellers and rise not to His loftiness. To whom could He tell His secret grief? To Peter, James or John? As well might a mother whisper to her babe the throes that rend her heart! He did once, in deep distress, resort to the three noblest spirits among the 12 apostles, but they slept for sorrow and could not watch with Him one hour! O lonely Christ, if You did overcome this world alone, how surely shall Your warrior brothers and sisters overcome it when they stand shoulder to shoulder, cheering each man his fellow and, above all, when You are in the field communicating Your victorious valor to the whole host!

I have not finished this setting forth of the disadvantage under which the Savior lay, for I beg you to notice that there were possibilities about our Lord that were never ours. A man who does not know his letters is little tempted to be proud of his learning. And the man who lives from hand to mouth and never has a penny to lay by can hardly be tempted to be purse proud! We poor creatures could not be tempted to the same degree as our great Lord. The multitude would have taken Him by force and made Him a king—no, more—all the kingdoms of the earth were proffered Him and instead of suffering poverty and yielding Himself up to death, He might have pushed Caesar from his throne! The world with all its honors, the cattle on a thousand hills and secret mines, and rocks of gold and silver were all His—and He might have left His life-work to be the greatest, richest, mightiest monarch that ever reigned—had He not been Jesus, to whom such things are the dirt beneath His feet! But none of us have such great offers and brilliant opportunities and, therefore, we have not such a battle to fight as He had. Shall we not, by His help,

overcome the lesser temptations, since He went on to victory over the greatest that can be imagined?

Remember, too, that the intense zeal that burned in His spirit, had He been capable of ever yielding to a temptation, might have suggested to Him in a hundred ways, a turning aside from His own line of action by which He had resolved to conquer the world. He came to vanquish evil by the force of love and truth through His Spirit. If some of His followers had been girt with His power, they would not have kept to His order of battle! I stood in Rome, one day, at the bottom of the Santa Scala, and watched the poor votaries of superstition creeping up those so-called sacred steps upon their knees, imagining them to be the very stairs which our Lord descended when Pilate said, "Behold the man." As I saw certain priests watching their dupes, I longed for a thunder bolt or two with which to make a clearance of Pope, cardinals, and priests! But the spirit our Lord Jesus was not so hot—for when James and John asked, "Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" their Lord replied, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of." We may never have been tempted to ask fire from heaven because we knew that we could not get it—but our Lord had only to ask His Father and He would presently have sent Him legions of angels! See with grief what a part of the church has done—certain professors easily fell into the snare which their Lord avoided!

Suppose the Lord Jesus had been made a king and had marshaled an army? He might have set up an established church and have maintained it by the power and wealth of the state. A temple might have been built in every parish in the Roman empire and the heathen might have been compelled to pay tithes for the support of the ministry and apostleship. By the help of imperial prestige and patronage, nominal professors of the faith would have been multiplied by millions and, outwardly, religion would have prevailed! Would it not have been as great a blessing as our established church is to us? But the Lord Jesus Christ did not choose this method, for His kingdom is not to be set up by any force than by that of truth and love! It was His purpose to die for men, but not to lift the mailed hand of power, or even the jeweled finger of rank to bring them into subjection. Jesus *loves* men to Himself—love and truth are His battle-ax and weapons of war. Thus He overcame the world which was in that most insidious form of worldliness—the suggestion to make alliance with it and set up a mongrel society, a kingdom at once earthly and heavenly, a state church, a society loyal both to God and mammon, fearing the Lord and serving the high court of Parliament! It might have appeared to us to be the readiest means to bless the world—but it was not His Father's way, nor the way of holiness—and, therefore, He would not follow it, but overcame it! No force may be put on conscience. The altar of God must not be polluted by forced offerings. Caesar must not

step beyond his province. However great the proffered benefit, the Lord never did evil that good might come!

Let us now observe that the main point of the comfort lies in the fact that not only did our Lord overcome the world as an individual, but *He vanquished it as the representative man.* Clear a space! Clear a space! A deadly fight is to be fought! Here comes into the battle, stalking along, a monster man towering high above his fellows. He is for Philistia! Here comes the champion of Israel, a ruddy youth. These two are to decide the day. Anxious eyes are turned towards the field of duel. Philistia, look to your champion! Israel, watch your stripling with beating heart! O maids of Judah, lift up your prayers for the son of Jesse, that he may play the man this day! As we watch that fight and see the stone sink into the champion's brow, and behold the youth taking off the giant's head and bringing it to the camp, we are ready to join in the dances of the jubilant women, for David has won the victory! See the result of his deed—the victory of David is the triumph of every man in Israel's land! It was a *representative* conflict—Israel against Philistia—and when Philistia's hero fell, Israel was the conqueror. Up to the spoil, O sons of Jacob! The uncircumcised are utterly routed! They fly! Pursue them and scatter them as dust before the whirlwind! Even so, when Christ overcame the world, the victory was won on the behalf of all His people and today we face a vanquished foe. Up and spoil the enemy! Let your infirmities become the subject of your glorying! Let your tribulations become the themes of your thanksgivings! And if you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, do not whine and whimper as though some dread calamity had come upon you, but rejoice that you are made participators of the honors of prophets and saints—and of your great leader who won the battle as your champion!

In closing, let us remember that here we have not merely representation, but also *union.* "I have overcome the world," means more than, "I overcame in your name." All believers have virtually overcome the world, for they are one with Christ! Did my hands win the victory? Then my feet triumph! Did my head achieve the conquest? Then my heart shares the honor! The soles of my feet are victorious when my head is crowned. When Jesus Christ, the head of the church, was victorious over the foe, every member of His mystical body, even the most uncomely, was, virtually, a conqueror in the conquering head! So let us shout the victory and wave the palm branch, for we are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us! Said He not well when He bade us be of good cheer, for He had overcome the world? Therefore, struggling brothers and sisters, obey His word, and—

BE OF GOOD CHEER!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 12:20-50.

Our Lord had gained a sudden popularity through raising Lazarus from the dead. And the people had attended Him with great enthusiasm as He rode through the streets of Jerusalem. For the time, things looked very bright with Him, but He knew that He was soon to suffer and to die. And the overshadowing of that great eclipse was already upon His heart. Note how He looked forward to it and how He spoke concerning it.

Verses 20-22 *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and entreated him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.* Probably these persons were proselytes to the Jewish faith. They had renounced their idols and they had come to worship the only true God. And now they had a wish to see Jesus—not out of idle curiosity, but because they felt a certain degree of respect for Him. They wanted to know more of His teaching and to learn whether He was, indeed, the promised Messiah. The disciples encouraged these seekers—they would not have brought mere curiosity-mongers to their Master, but they saw that there was something better in these Greeks—so they consulted together and their opinion was that they must tell Jesus about them.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified.* He was about to die, yet He speaks of His death as *being glorified*. For the joy that was set before Him, He seems to overlook the intervening humiliation in the prospect of the glory that would come of it through the salvation of multitudes of strangers from the very ends of the earth! He looks on these Greeks as the vanguard of a great army of Gentiles who would continue to come to Him and pay Him homage. Hear what He says next—

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* [See Sermon #3024 Volume 53—CHRIST'S DEATH AND OURS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He knew that He must die, for His living, preaching and miracle-working would never produce such results as His death would accomplish! He must go down into the ground, out of sight, and there must lie like a buried grain of wheat, that out of Him there might spring a great harvest to the glory of God! And these Greeks were like a first handful, a wave-sheaf unto God, a promise of the great harvest that would be the result of His death—"If it dies, it brings forth much fruit."

25, 26. *He that loves his life shall lose it: and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serves Me, him will My Father honor.* [See Sermons #463, Volume 8—CHRIST'S SERVANT—HIS DUTY AND REWARD; #2449, Volume 42—THE RULE AND REWARD OF SERVING CHRIST; #2651, Volume 45—THE CHRISTIAN'S SERVICE AND HONOR and #2874, Volume 50—PRECEPTS AND PROMISES—Read/download all these sermons, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is an honor to be allowed to serve Christ, but God will bestow still further honor upon those who faithfully serve Him!

27-29. *Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him.* How ready they were to find an explanation for that "voice from heaven" which they could not comprehend! Some "said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him." But here is Christ's own interpretation of the mystery—

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* Satan may have thought that he had triumphed when Christ was crucified, but that death upon the cross was the deathblow to the devil's usurpation!

32, 33. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.* [See Sermons #139, Volume 3—CHRIST LIFTED UP; #775, Volume 13—THE GREAT ATTRACTION and #1717, Volume 29—THE MARVELOUS MAGNET—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is no magnet like the death of Christ! He is still able to draw men unto Him because of the attractive force of His atoning sacrifice.

34-36. *The people answered Him, We have heard from the law that Christ abides forever: and how say You, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.* At first sight, this may not seem to have been an answer to their question, "Who is this Son of man?" Yet it was a very direct answer, for He was "the light of the world" and, as the light was soon to be withdrawn from them, there was all the greater need of Christ's injunctions, "Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

37-41. *But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the sayings of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when He saw His glory, and spoke of Him.* [See Sermon #1844, Volume

31—ISRAEL AND BRITAIN—A NOTE OF WARNING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Isaiah was sent upon a painful errand to tell the people that they would hear, but they would not understand—that they would see, but they would not perceive. And so it happened to Israel as a nation, and to this day Israel rejects the true Messiah. Oh, that none of us may imitate their evil example by negligence and contempt of the revelation of God, lest after playing with Scripture and trifling with the Christ of God, the Lord should at last in anger declare that we should see, but should not perceive, that we should hear, but should not understand!

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* Are there any here who believe in Christ, but who have never confessed Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue and lose the praise of men? Are you afraid of your family, your father, or your husband? Or is there some friend who would be angry with you if you confessed Christ? If so, be no longer such a coward, I pray you, but come out boldly and confess Him who will not be ashamed to confess you before His Father and the holy angels!

44-50. *Jesus cried and said, He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that sees Me sees Him that sent Me. I am come as a light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hears My word and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.*

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THE FEAR OF DEATH
NO. 3286

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1912,
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"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."
Hebrews 2:14, 15.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verse 14, *is No. 166, Volume 4, in The New Park Street Pulpit, "The Destroyer Destroyed."*]

BEFORE speaking upon the main subject of the text, I cannot help drawing your attention to those two words, "the children." Hear that sweet expression again, for it is one of the choicest descriptions of the saints, "the children." "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." What a wonderful influence the children have in the house! How many of the arrangements are made especially with a view to them! How much of the wear and tear of life to their parents is for their sakes! And we may truly say, concerning our Father in heaven, that His plans, His arrangements, His actions, His gifts are very emphatically for the children! He uses all things in this great house of His for the education of the children—and when their education shall be finished—He will clear all these things away just as the builder takes down the scaffolding around the house when it is complete.

This name of "the children" is such a blessed one; it seems to indicate a simple, sweet and gracious character. "Be not children in understanding," but in all else be—

"Humble, teachable and mild,
Like unto a little child."

I. But this is only by the by—the main theme on which I am going to speak is the *fear of death*. And, first, I observe that THE FEAR OF DEATH IS NATURAL TO MAN AS A SINNER. So long as there was no sin in the world, there was no death and no fear of death, but as soon as sin entered, God said to Adam, "Dust you are and unto dust shall you return." The echo of these words still rings throughout the world and Adam's children, as sinners, fear death, but this is rather a blessing to them than otherwise. To most unconverted men, the fear of death has often been made to subserve the highest purpose of divine mercy. Many a

man would, at least outwardly, have been guiltier than he is if the fear of death had not, to some extent, held him in check. The knell from the old church tower has often spoken to those who other preachers could not reach—and an open grave has had an eloquent voice which has been more alarming than the polished sentences of the golden-mouthed orator.

It is well that there should be such a thing as the fear of death in the world! But for it, sinners would be more outrageously wicked than they already are. This earth would soon become like Sodom and Gomorrah if men were not restrained by the fear that they must soon depart this life. No doubt, too, the fear of death answers very wise and important purposes in the economy of humanity. If men were in peril, they would probably give themselves up without making any strenuous exertions for their preservation if there were not an indefinable dread of death which creeps over them and makes them put forth what strength they have in order, if possible, to prolong their lives. Being afraid to die, they tug, toil, labor and strive so as to put off the dreaded day as long as they can! Even Satan spoke the truth when he said, "All that a man has will he give for his life." Our streets might be crowded with idlers who would starve rather than work if the fear of death did not drive them unwillingly to their labors!

Certainly the fear of death has often been the means of preventing the crime of suicide. You know how Shakespeare represents Hamlet as talking of a man making his quietus with a bare bodkin—

"But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of."

No doubt it has often been the case that this "dread of something after death" has prevented men from rushing into the presence of their Maker red-handed with their own blood! The fear of death, though itself part of the punishment of sin, is a wise and beneficent arrangement in the commonwealth of humanity.

II. But, secondly, while the fear of death is natural to the sinner, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO THE SAINT. For all the purposes of which I have spoken, the fear of death is not necessary to a Christian. He does not need it to restrain him from sin, for he hates sin with a perfect hatred. Other checks, of far greater importance here, in the hand of infinite love, restrain the Christian from going into sin. Nor does he need the fear or death to keep him from suicide—why should he have any desire to commit that terrible crime? Christians have, even here, joy and peace through believing and though their best portion is in the world to come, yet even now it may be said of them, "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the LORD?" The clanking fetters of the fear of death are not intended for God's freemen to wear! Let the slave of sin

and Satan wear them if they will restrain them from suicide and other evils, but the true born child of God needs no such check as this. He lives the life of faith upon the Son of God and the love of Christ so graciously constrains him that it both holds him back from sin and urges him on to duty.

But though the fear of death is not necessary to Christians and the grace of God has been manifested in giving Christ to deliver them from it, yet it is true that some of them are still subject to bondage through this wholly unnecessary fear! They not only fear death, but they fear it to such an extent that it brings them into bondage. It is not merely a dark cloud that passes over them and is soon gone, but it abides with them—they are, "all their lifetime subject to bondage" through the fear of death! They shall not perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hands, but they have not that restful assurance of safety which Christ's sheep ought to enjoy. I am sorry to say that I know some who profess to have been Christians for years, but who still, at times at any rate, are in bondage through fear of death. I do not speak of this as a phenomenon, or an experience that is uncommon—I wish it were, but I am obliged to say that there are very many whom one must judge to be the children of God—who are frequently, if not always, in a state of despondency, doubt and dread through this fear of death which seems to rest upon them like a pall.

Many of these persons have been so long in this sad state that they have almost come to believe that it is impossible for them to escape from it. There is such a thing as sitting so long on the cold stone of despair that you and the stone almost seem to be one. There is such a thing as wearing the yoke of despondency until that yoke and your shoulders become so closely united that you cannot take it off. Just as valor fights till its sword grows to its hand, so despair burdens you till it grows into your spirit. I would not roughly tear it out, but if I might kindly perform an act of spiritual surgery, I would be glad to be made the instrument through which the Master would perform His blessed work of delivering those who are in bondage through fear of death!

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, there is no need that you should be afraid to die! It is even possible for you to look upon death as your best friend! You may yet come to be familiar with the shroud, the mattock, the grave—and find the cemetery to be no place of gloom and may even rejoice in the prospect of death and—

"Long for evening to undress
That you may rest with God."

According to our text, it appears that *in order to remove this fear of death from His people, our Lord Jesus Christ became man*—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same." And as flesh and blood have about them the element of mortality, the flesh and blood of Christ partook of the same character. It is true that in Him was no sin, but in all other respects His

flesh was like ours and, therefore, was liable to death even as ours is. Now, the very fact that Jesus Christ became man should remove from us the fear of anything which is incidental to humanity because it was incidental to Christ as well as to ourselves—

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

"Fear not," said Caesar, to the trembling boatman, "you carry Caesar and all his fortunes." And, in like manner, standing in the vessel of our mortality, Christ says to us, "Fear not, you carry Christ and all His fortunes; you are partakers of flesh and blood and He Himself likewise shared in the same." If one had to be a soldier on the field of battle, it might be a very great assistance to one's courage to stand side by side with the hero of a thousand fights who had always been victorious! If tonight you had to journey along some dark and lonely road and an angel came from heaven to walk beside you—and you were quite sure that it was an angel—I should think you would be altogether free from fear! With such a companion you might even wish that the way were still more dangerous so that you might have the delightful experience of passing through it unharmed under the care of such a glorious protector!

But you have a better protector than any angel could be, even the Lord of the angels, your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, so what cause have you for fear? He will be with you all through life. He will be with you when you are called to die and the pledge of that is that He is a partaker of that very flesh and blood which will bring you down to death. But we not only know that Jesus partook of flesh and blood—we have this further comfort—*Jesus did actually die.* The cross of Calvary was a witness to no phantom grief, no sham expiring. The Roman soldier with his spear pierced Christ's side and so proved the fact of His death. He went through the valley; He ascended the mountain on the other side and He, in due time, went up into heaven—and all this He did as the representative of His people! Whatever Christ did, He did for His whole church and for each one who, believing in Him, is a member of that church! So, if you are a believer, you died in Christ and you rise in Christ. Christ died, you, too, must die. As Christ rose, you, too, must rise. What Christ has done, He has done for you in such a way that you, also, do it—

"As Christ the Savior rose,
So shall His followers must."

There is further cause for comfort in the fact that, *through death, Christ destroyed the devil.* The persons who always interpret the word, "destroy," as meaning, "annihilate," would do me a very great favor if they could really prove to me that Jesus Christ annihilated the devil! I have very mournful proof in my own experience that he is *not* annihilated and many of you, also, know that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." Alas, the devil is still alive, but his power in this world has received its death blow! Jesus Christ has

trodden on the old serpent's head and, to the Christian, in the matter of death; the devil is completely destroyed, for he that believes in Christ shall never die! Death seemed to be all black and evil, like Satan, himself, seething into which he had put his most venomous sting! But now, to believers in Jesus, death is an angel from our Father in heaven calling us home to Him—not a black angel, striking terror in our heart—but one who is exceedingly bright and fair, coming to bid us fly away to realms of light and love!

Remember, Christian, "the sting of death is sin," but that has been destroyed for you. And remember, too, "the strength of sin is the law," but that has been fulfilled for you! Rejoice, therefore, that both are gone so far as you are concerned—and that your greatest causes for fear are entirely removed!

III. Now let us spend a few minutes in thinking of THOSE THINGS CONNECTED WITH DEATH WHICH USUALLY CAUSE DREAD.

I borrow the list of them from a popular commentator. There are some things connected with death which even the best of men naturally fear and the first is *the death-pang.* It is generally supposed that there is exquisite pain associated with the act of death, but I am persuaded that this is mistaken and that there is no pain whatever in dying—the pain is in *living*. The man who has a long sickness previous to his departure must not lay the pain he has to endure at the door of death, for the pain afflicts the living, *not the dying*. If life would but give way, death would inflict no pain. The departure out of life is, one would judge, the *cessation* of pain, the ending of the strife. But if we take the popular view for granted—that death involves some extraordinary pain—then Jesus Christ partook flesh and blood, died and destroyed the devil, so far as we who believe in Him are concerned, in order that we might not have any fear of this pain.

He says to each one of us, "My child, whatever pain there may be about your death, I have endured it with an emphasis. I died, not as you probably will, on your bed, but upon a cross. Instead of sympathizing friends around Me, I had mocking foes. Instead of soft pillows, I had cruel thorns—and tearing nails instead of cooling draughts and sustaining cordials. Men gave Me vinegar to drink mingled with gall. I died under far more trying circumstances than can possibly surround your deathbed, so now, My child, are you now willing to do at your Fathers' bidding what I have done? The cup passed not from Me, I drained it to the dregs—why, then, should it pass from you—why should you wish it to pass from you?"

I have sometimes seen a mother, when her child has had medicine to take which it could not bear, sip of the cup and then say, "Drink it, my child, it is for your good and it is not so bad as you think. Mother has tasted it herself." And then the little one, not always with cheerfulness, but still with submission, drinks it up. "So Jesus brings us the cup and says to each one, "Drink, My child. I drank of this cup, so why should

you fear to drink of it? There can be nothing deadly in it, for it has not destroyed Me. It has been to Me a gain and it shall be a gain, also, to you, for it shall take you from your humiliation to your glory even as it took Me."

But to some others this may not be their particular phase of death that they dread. *They fear the darkness and gloom which sometimes attend departed out of this life.* There are different ways of taking down the earthly atonement. There are certain forms of disease which seem rather to increase the sufferer's joy than to diminish it, while there are others which so affect the brain and the whole nervous system that depression is a melancholy symptom of the disease. Some are constitutionally so nervous that they are afraid that when they come face to face with death they will be easily vanquished. But many of us must have noticed that the very people who are most depressed in anticipation of trouble are frequently those who bear it best when it does come! So it may be with you, my poor nervous friend. My observation warrants me in remarking that the most of Christians, when they die, are either in a deep calm or else triumphant in an ecstasy of delight.

But if it should not be so with you, if gloom surrounds your spirit, yet remember that Jesus Christ became a partaker of flesh and blood in order to deliver you from the dread of death. It is flesh and blood that fear the gloom; it is flesh and blood that shrink from the despondency—and Jesus Christ passed through that experience when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"—and later, when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" You cannot possibly have such gloom surrounding you as He had to pass through! He went down deeper than you will ever have to go and you will always have His almighty arm to sustain you! Besides, the remembrance that Christ suffered for you, that He has destroyed Satan's power over you and that He has opened the gates of resurrection and of glory for you should take away from you all the gloom that you dread! You are making the mistake of looking at that part of death which belongs to this *world*. I pray that the Holy Spirit may anoint your eyes with heavenly eye salve so that you may see that death is but the gate of life, the porch to paradise and may no longer fear to enter the portals through which you shall pass into the presence of your Lord who went that way before you!

I know other believers who do not so much dread the pain as they do *the mystery associated with death.* The handwriting upon the wall troubled Belshazzar, not only because of the appearance of the fingers that wrote the message, but also because no one could interpret the writing until Daniel came. It was the *mystery* that terrified the impious monarch! When traveling among the Alps in a dense mist, we have seemed to see vast lakes without a shore, crags that appeared like the battlement of heaven and awful depths that thrilled us with horror! Yet much of that mystery was only caused by the mist, for, when we journeyed the same way on a bright morning, the great lake proved to be

only a little pond! The mighty battlement was a crag that a child could climb and the vast depths that had made us shudder with terror were gentle slopes which we could have descended with ease.

It is the mysteriousness of death that alarms you. That the soul should be divorced from the body to which it has been so long united is something that startles you. Yes, but as the light dissipates the terrors of the mountains, so the fact that Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to light will scatter all your gloom! There is no "undiscovered country" to you, Christian, for your Master has returned from the land of death-shade and He has told you all you need to know concerning it! He has come back to tell you that, for you, there is no such thing as death! Everything that constitutes death has been abrogated so far as you are concerned and your portion is to be everlasting life! If you would only believe all that is revealed in the word concerning believers in Jesus, the mystery associated with death would no longer alarm and terrify you.

There are some Christians who are *afraid of the grave.* I must say that I like the thought of sleeping in the cemetery, with green grass and flowers and shrubs growing all around—and winding walks upon the rising ground far away from the busy city! I say I like the thought of all that, yet, when I stand by an open grave, as I so often do, and see the cold clods of clay and think of the chill and silence of the night, the cemetery appears in another light! But, after all, what does it matter where the poor body is laid? If it could lie in state, surrounded with light and music, you know that very soon even the chief mourner would have to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight!" When we think of those who are sleeping in Jesus—I speak, of course, only of their *bodies*—it does seem appropriate that they should be wrapped in their white robes, as men are when they go to their beds, and lovingly committed to the care of mother earth from which they sprang. I do not think there is any need to be troubled about all this—much of it is mere sentimentalism and certainly, as far as Christians are concerned—when we remember that the blessed body of Jesus was laid in the tomb, we are quite content in that matter to be even as He was.

I am afraid that I have not hit the center of the target even yet, for *some of "the children" are afraid of the judgment seat of God.* Does this remark surprise you? It ought to do so, for it ought to be *impossible* for a child of God to tremble at the thought of meeting his Father anywhere! Why is it that some of us are thus afraid? It is, beloved, because they have a dark suspicion that they are not *really* in Christ, not *really* saved—and this indicates a greater evil than the dread of death—while it also points out the remedy for that evil. If I have the divine assurance that I am washed from every sin and that, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, I am without spot, or wrinkle, or any such things, how can I give way to fear? It is the dreadful doubt, the doubt whether it is so, that causes the dread of death and of judgment! It is *unbelief* that is at the bottom of it!

If we would take such Scriptures as these—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "By Him all that believe are justified from all things." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—and if we really trusted in the Savior of whom they speak, we would have no fear of either death or judgment, but would cry with the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." No doubt there are some professing Christians who *ought* to be afraid of death—there are some members of Christian churches who *ought* to dread the judgment seat! There are deacons and elders and ministers who *ought* to tremble at the thought of the world to come because their profession of Christianity is a mere profession without any real work of the Spirit of God at the back of it!

When you have doubts about your eternal state, do not say that they come from the devil! It may be that the Spirit of God is striving with you to bring you to see the hollowness of all the religion in which you have put your confidence! Never be afraid of self-examination, but obey the apostolic injunction, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves." Better still, pray David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Those who have only a name to live, but who are spiritually dead; those who talk about believing, but who have not believed; those who talk about regeneration, but who have not been born again have good cause to be afraid of death! If that is your condition, friend, I pray that you may become still more afraid of death and that God's gracious Spirit may make you so afraid of it that you may turn from it and fly to Him who, by carrying away your sin, shall also take away from you the fear of death.

But as for you, dearly beloved, who are really in Christ Jesus, you ought not to have any fear of death. There is no condemnation for you, for Christ has borne, on your behalf, all the punishment that was due to your sins! The sword of justice has no terrors for you, for it was plunged in the heart of Jesus on purpose that He might die in your place. You need not fear the possibility of being cast away from Christ, for you are members of His body, of His death and of His blood! And unless He were to dismember Himself, He could not cast away any who are thus vitally united to Him. Let the thought that He became a partaker of flesh and blood, died to put away your sin and to destroy your great adversary, the devil, be a quietus to all your fears of death!

It may not be long before some of us will have our faith tested in our dying hour. The preacher may be called away or you may receive the summons first. It would be well if we were all so familiar with death that we could say as one old saint did, "Dying? Why, I have died daily for the last 20 years, so I am not afraid to die, now!" Or, as another said, "I dip my foot in Jordan's stream every morning before I take my breakfast, so I

shall not be afraid to go down into the stream whenever my Lord bids me enter it." May that be your experience and mine, Beloved, and then we shall have no fear of death!

I have told you before of that godly woman who fell asleep in Jesus one night and on her table were found these lines—

Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay!
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

May we all have like precious faith, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-32.

Verses 1, 2. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein you stand. By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.* By which the apostle means, unless they had a false faith, a merely notional faith or, he may also mean, "Unless what I have preached unto you should have been a fable and, therefore, you will have exercised your faith upon nothing real, and so it would have been in vain."

3. *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I, also, received*—the preacher of Christ must not make new doctrines! He is not to be his own teacher. He is first to receive the truth of God and then to deliver it. The Christian minister takes the lamp out of the hands of God and then passes it on to the hands of his people. Think not that any originality is needed in the pulpit! All that is required is that the herald should faithfully deliver his Master's message just as his Master gives it to him. "I delivered unto you first of all that which I, also, received."

3, 4. *How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* There are many passages in the Old Testament which describe the Messiah as dying for sinners, especially the chapter of Isaiah's prophecy. There are others that speak of Him as being buried, yet not corrupting in the tomb. These were facts which the apostle had received upon the testimony of others; now comes the great fact of the resurrection.

5-8. *And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the Apostle and last of all He was seen of me, also, as of one born out of due time.* [*See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 2663, Volume 43—"A Leap Year Sermon."*] The apostle does not attempt to defend the doctrine of the resurrection by an argument fetched from reason, but he proves it by undoubted *evidence*. If I had to prove that there existed such a tree as the cedar, I should not use logical arguments further than

this—I produce a certain number of men who have seen a cedar and the thing is proved by their testimony. If the evidence of honest men is not accepted, then there is an end, not only to Christianity, but to all the sciences—and you and I must wander forever in a maze of doubts. Now, of all the facts recorded in history, there is not one which is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The men who testified that they had seen the risen Christ evidently had no selfish reason for doing so. What is the result of their testimony? They were cast into prison! They were stoned! They were sawn asunder, simply for believing the evidence of their own senses, and testifying what they knew to be true! It is clear that they would have had no interest in publishing this fact if it had not been true—their interest would have lain quite the other way. Besides, it was not as if only a *few* had seen Him, but over 500 brethren at once beheld Him. For 40 days He was gazed upon by different persons and the feat is proved beyond all doubt.

9. *For I am the least of the apostles and am not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.* "God has forgiven me," said a good man once, "but I shall never forgive myself." So was it with the Apostle Paul. He knew that God had forgiven him and honored him by making him an Apostle, but he could not forgive himself and, no doubt, the tears gushed from his eyes when he wrote these words, "I am not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God."

10. *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* [*See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 2833, Volume 49—"Lessons on Divine Glory."*] In what humble tones Paul speaks! He will not deny what divine grace has done in him and by him, but he will ascribe it all to God. Brothers and sisters, you are not to shut your eyes to the gracious change which God's Holy Spirit has worked in you! You may speak of it and speak of it often, but always guard against taking any of the honor to yourselves—and be especially careful to put the crown upon the right head.

11, 12. *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now if Christ is preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* For Christ was the pattern man to all His people. He is their representative. Whatever He did, He did for them and whatever was worked in Him shall be surely worked in them. So if Christ rose from the dead, then all who are members of His mystical body must rise, too, for when the head comes out of the grave, you cannot retain the members in it! Prove that Christ rose and you prove that His people rise, for they are one with Him.

13. *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.* [*See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 2287, Volume 38— "If There Is No Resurrection,"*] Yet it is proved by hundreds of credible witnesses that Christ is risen, therefore there is a resurrection.

14. *And if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* This truth of God is the keystone of the arch—put this away and the whole tumbles down! It is upon this that the whole Christian system rests. If the resurrection of Christ is a mere myth and not a positive matter of fact, preaching and faith are equally vain.

15. *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if it is so that the dead rise not.* The apostle puts the matter strongly, yet not too strongly. He seems to say, "You know me to be an honest and truthful man, having no selfish motive in what I declare unto you. But if Christ did not rise from the dead, I have testified to you a gross falsehood and led you to put your trust in an imposture." So he stakes his own personal character upon the fact of Christ's resurrection.

16, 17. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins.* Yet they knew that they were *not* in their sins, for they had the witness within then that their sins had been pardoned. They knew that sin had no more dominion over them, for they had been made to walk in holiness before the Lord. "Therefore," says Paul, "Christ must have risen, for if He had not risen, you would have remained sinners as you once were."

18. *Then they, also, which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.* A supposition against which both nature and grace revolt!

19, 20. *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that depart.* As they always brought into the Jewish tabernacle and temple, a portion of the harvest which indicated that the harvest was begun, so Christ's going up to heaven was the taking of the first sheaf into God's great garner—and all the rest must follow.

21, 22. *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Not that all shall be *saved*, but all will be raised from the dead! Or else the passage means that as all who were in the first Adam died as the result of Adam's sin, so all who are in the second Adam, that is, Christ, shall live as the result of His righteousness. The question is, Are we in the second Adam? Faith is that which unites us to Christ. If we are trusting in Him by a living faith, then His rising from the dead ensures our rising from the dead. And if not, it is true that we shall rise, but it will be to shame and everlasting contempt.

23-28. *But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is accepted, who did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto*

Him, then shall the Son Himself also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him that God may be all in all. This is a very difficult passage, but I suppose the meaning is this—Jesus Christ, in order to remedy the great mischief of sin, was appointed to a *mediatorial* kingdom over all worlds and that kingdom will continue until all His enemies shall be destroyed and sin shall be trod under His feet. Then Christ—as *Mediator*, mark you, not as Lord—shall deliver up His mediatorial kingdom to His Father and there shall be heard that great shout, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns!" Christ as God, as one of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, will still be as glorious as ever, but His *mediatorial* reign will then be over, seeing that He has accomplished all its purposes.

29. *Otherwise what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?* This is another most difficult passage and many meanings have been given to it, but I think the most likely to be correct is this—As soon as a member of the early Christian church was given up to the lion or to be burned, another convert would step forward and say, Let me take his name and place." Though it was almost certain that they would soon be put to death, there were always found persons bold enough to come forward to be baptized—to take the place of the dead. "Now," says the apostle, "what advantage is there in this if the dead rise not?"

30. *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?* Why were the apostles always subjecting themselves to cruel persecution?

31. *I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I did daily.* [*See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 828, Volume 14—"Dying Daily."*] He was so hunted about everywhere that there was not a day in which he felt secure of his life, so he asks, "Why should I endure this if there is no world to come?"

32. *If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me, if the dead rise not?* It is quite possible that Paul was thrown to the lions in the theater at Ephesus and that he fought with them and came off a conqueror. "But why," he asks, "did I try to save my life for future labor and for future suffering if the dead rise not?"

32. *Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.* This is the best philosophy in the world if there is no life to come. So Paul has proved his point right well by every argument that he has used.

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THE ONLY DOOR
NO. 3287

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

"I am the door: if anyone enters by Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."
John 10:9.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2752, Volume 47—THE DOOR—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE Word of God tells us that in the midst of the great mass of men there are to be found a special people—a people who were chosen of God out of the common race before the stars began to shine—a people who were dear to God's heart before the foundation of the world, a people who were redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus beyond and above the rest of mankind, a people who are the special property of Christ, the flock of His pasture, the sheep of His hand, a people over whom providence watches, shaping their course amid the tangled maze of life—a people who are to be produced at the last, every one of them faultless before the eternal throne and fitted for the exalted destiny which, in the ages to come, He shall reveal! All through Scripture you read about this particular and special people. Sometimes they are called "a seed," at other times "a garden," at other times "a treasure," and sometimes, as in the chapter we have read, "a flock." The common name in the New Testament for them is "the church"—"the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

Now, the all-important question is how can we obtain admission into this church? Where is this community to be found? Who are the members of it? What is the way to become a partaker of the privileges which belong to it? Jesus Christ here tells us two things—First, *How to enter the church.* The way is through Himself as the door. Secondly, *What are the benefits we shall receive through being members of Christ's church*—we shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.

I. HOW A MAN CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF THAT CHURCH WHICH IS ELECTED, REDEEMED AND WILL BE SAVED, IS SIMPLY AND BRIEFLY SOLVED BY OUR LORD'S FIRST ASSERTION.

Christ tells us that *the only way to enter the church is through Himself.* He is the door, the only door. There is no other mode of admission into His church but through Himself. Let it be understood, then, once and for

all, that *we cannot get into the church of Christ through baptism.* There are tens of thousands, yes, there have been millions who have been baptized after a fashion, that is to say, they have been sprinkled—and thousands have been immersed—who never were admitted into the church of Christ! In consideration of the ordinance as it was administered to them with or more commonly, *without* their consent, they were recognized by some persons as being Christians. But let me tell you that unless they came to Christ by true faith, they are nothing better than baptized pagans! They are still just sprinkled heathen! Why, you might hold a man in an everlasting shower, but you could not, thereby, make him "a member of Christ." Or you might drag him through the Atlantic Ocean and if he survived the immersion, yet he still would not be one jot the better! The door is not baptism, but Christ! If you believe in Christ, you are a member of His church. If your trust is stayed upon Christ, who is God's great way of salvation, you have evidence that you were chosen of Him from before the foundation of the world—and that faith of yours entitles you to all the privileges which Christ has promised in His word to believers!

If Christ is the door, then it follows that *men do not get into the church by birthright.* The Society of Friends has been one of the most useful communities in the world and it has maintained a good testimony upon most important points for many years. But it seems to me that the great evil in it—that which has done them the most mischief—is the admission of birthright membership. Do they not receive in their fellowship the children of their members as though they were necessarily proper persons to be received into the visible church? My brothers and sisters, it is a great privilege to have Christian parents. It may prove a very great advantage if you use it rightly. But it involves a great responsibility, and if you use it wrongly, instead of being a blessing to you, it may be a fearful curse! Though you may be one of a long line of saints, "Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The most pious example, the most godly training cannot ensure conversion—and without conversion, depend upon it—you cannot be Christ's. "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Through our not practicing infant baptism, we do not so readily fall into this error as some denominations—still, it is necessary to say even here that you have no right to gospel privileges because of your mothers and fathers. You *must* yourselves be born-again! You have no right to the covenant of grace, nor to the blessings or promises thereof, except as by your own personal and individual faith you come to Christ! It is not your father nor your mother who can be the door into Christ's church for you, but Christ Himself. "I," He said, "I am the door." If you are in Christ, you are in His church. If you have laid hold on Him, you are a member of that secret and invisible community of His elect and His redeemed—but it is not by baptism, nor by birthright that you can ever be so!

Moreover, as Christ is the door, it is evident that *a man does not come to be a member of the church of Christ by making a profession of being so.* He may prove himself to be a detestable hypocrite, but he cannot prove himself to be a genuine Christian by mere profession! Men do not get rich in this world by a lavish expenditure, or by a profession of being wealthy. They must hold the title deeds of their estate and have the cash in the strong box, or else they are poor in spite of all their pretensions! And you cannot become a Christian by coming forward and asking to be admitted into the church, declaring that you believe and avowing that you repent. No, verily, but you must truly repent, or you shall perish! You must truly believe, or you shall have no part or lot in this matter! The mere saying, "Yes, yes, I am willing to profess this, I am willing to say that," no more makes you a Christian than it would make cotton to be silk to call it so, or make mud to be gold by labeling it with that title! Beware of a false profession, for it is doubly hazardous. The man who has no grace is in danger, but the man who makes a profession of having it when he has none, is in double danger, for he is the least likely to be awakened and he is certain, unless sovereign grace prevents, to make his profession a pillow for his wicked and slumbering head till he sleeps himself into hell!

Further, and this may, perhaps, touch the point more closely—*a man does not get to be one of the Lord's people, or to be one of Christ's sheep, by being admitted into any visible church.* He ought not to try to get into any visible church until he is in the *true* church! He has no right to join the external organization until he has first got into the secret conclave by a living faith in Christ. If he leaves the door alone, and climbs over the wall and comes into the outward church without being a believer in Christ—so far from being saved, Christ will say to him, "You are a thief and a robber, for you have climbed up some other way and you came not in by the door." I believe we do rightly to subject the admission of members to the voice of all the church. I believe we do rightly to examine candidates to see whether they make a creditable profession and whether they know what they are doing. But our examination—oh, 'tis nothing better than skin deep! We cannot search the heart and the best judgment of ever so many Christian men, though honest, and deserving to be treated with great respect, would be a very poor thing to rest upon. If you have not Christ, your church certificates are waste paper and your membership with any people, however pure and apostolic they may be, is but a name to live while you are dead—for the only way, the sole way of getting into the real, vital, living church of Christ is by coming to Christ who is Himself the door!

The plain English of this metaphor then, is just this—*to be one of God's people, the essential thing is a simple dependence upon Jesus Christ.* If you have not this—no matter who baptizes you, or who gives you the consecrated bread and wine, or who preaches to you about a hope of salvation for which there is no warrant—you will die in your sins,

notwithstanding all your sacraments unless you come to Christ! No other admittance to heaven can there be but by a simple dependence upon Him who has bled and died on Calvary's cross! The preaching of any other system is a mere delusion against which the warning voice went forth or ever the snare was laid to trap the unwary!

Mark you, simple faith, where it is genuine, makes it plain that you do enter by Christ, the door, because such *faith leads to obedience*. How can you suppose that you are a member of His church if you are not obedient to Christ? It is necessary that the man or woman who trusts Christ should become the servant of Christ. Real faith never kicks at this rule, but rather delights in it. "If you love Me," says Christ, keep My commandments." Unless we keep Christ's commandments out of a principle of love to Him, our religion is vain. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We may talk as we will about inward experiences and believing, but "by their fruits you shall know them." The Spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness. When Christ comes into the soul, all iniquity must be purged out of the soul. You know how Malachi describes His advent. He proclaims to us the promise that the Lord whom we seek shall suddenly come to His temple—that is, seekers shall be finders! Do you know what he adds? "But who may abide the day of His coming? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." Now, the refiner's fire burns up the dross, and fullers' soap takes out the stains—and so, if Christ is in you, you will pass through a refining that will burn up your outward sin—and you will be subjected to a washing like that of the fullers' soap which will cleanse you from all your iniquities. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." If you live after the flesh, you shall die! But if, through the Grace of Christ, you are living in Him, trusting in Him, always serving Him—service being the evidence of trust and trust being the evidence of your election—you have then come into the church through the door—and it is well with you!

Now, if it is so, that Christ is the door into the church, and if we have entered the church through that door, *it does not matter much to us what the old gentleman at Rome thinks of us.* He may excommunicate us. This he is very fond of doing, for he is a rare hand at cursing, but what does it matter? It matters not one jot, if I am a new creature in Christ Jesus, how much the Pope may rail at me! Besides, there are plenty of revilers nowadays who are saying, "You non-conformists are only a pack of heretics! We have the apostolic succession! We have the sacraments and the priests." Ah, they vaunt themselves as being "Catholic," though their claim is disallowed alike by the Babylon which is here below, and by the Jerusalem which is above! Let them vaunt if they will. As long as we have Christ, they may keep their apostolic succession and all their other rubbish! Christ is the door and if we have come through Him, it is well with us!

I like that story of the Sandwich Islanders who had been converted through some of our missionaries and the gospel had been preached to

them for years. At last, two or three gentlemen in long black gowns landed there and the people asked them what they had come for. They said they were come to instruct them in the true faith and to teach them. Well, they said, they should be glad to hear it. If their teaching was true and like the Scriptures, they would listen to them. By-and-by, a little diagram was exhibited to the natives after the similitude of a tree. This tree had many branches. The twigs which were farthest off were the different saints, the believers, those who do good works. Then the limbs, which were a little larger, were the priests. The bigger branches were bishops, the biggest were the cardinals and, at last, these all joined on to the trunk—which was the Pope—and that went all the way down to the bottom till it came to Peter, who was the root, deriving his authority immediately from Christ. So the natives asked about all these twigs, branches and especially about certain rotten branches that were tumbling off into a fire. What were they? They were Luther, and Calvin, and other heretics who had been cut off from the true tree of the church. "Well," said one of the islanders, "and pray what is the root of the tree?" Of course that was allowed to be Jesus Christ. So they clapped their hands at once for joy, and said, "Never mind about the branches, and stems, and twigs—we have never heard of them—but we have got the root, and that will do to grow on." In like manner, brothers and sisters, we can say tonight, if we have Christ, we have got the "root out of a dry ground." We have got the root of the matter, the basis, the sum, the substance of it—

"Let others trust what forms they please,
Their hopes we'll not contest."

Let them go about their business and rejoice in their fancies—but Christ is the door! We have Christ! We have entered by the door! We have believed in Him, we have entered through Him into faith, and into joy, and into peace! We will be content with this—let others clamber up some other way if they please.

Before I leave this point, a question suggests itself—*Have we all entered by the door?* We are agreed that Christ is the door, have we entered by the door? You who are growing old—I always feel much pleasure in seeing gray heads, the type of mellowed years, in the concourse of worshipers—have you all believed in Jesus? You know the truth—you would not like to hear anything but the simple gospel preached! But have you laid hold on the gospel? A man my starve with bread on the table if he does not eat. And he may perish with thirst, though he is up to his neck in water, if he does not drink. Have you trusted Christ? If not, how can you remain in a state of unbelief, for "he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"? Men and women in middle life, struggling with the cares of business, have *you* trusted in Christ? I know your thoughts are much taken up and necessarily so, with the world. But have you not time to think upon this question or dare you

neglect it—"Do you believe on the Son of God?" If not, O man, your life hangs on a thread and that snapped, your ruin is certain! And, oh, you young people, what a mercy it is to see you willing to come and hear the word! But have you all heard it with your inward ears? Have you looked to my Master? Oh, it is sweet to come to Christ in the early morning of life, to have a long day of happiness before you! May it be the blessedness of each one of you! It is vain to look at the door unless you enter. God give you grace to come in if you have never entered before!

II. Our Lord and Master tells us WHAT ARE THE PRIVILEGES OF ENTERING THROUGH HIM, THE DOOR.

The man who enters by Christ *shall be saved and he shall go in and out, and he shall find pasture.*

He shall be saved. The man who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved. He is saved and he shall be saved! A man has by accident killed his fellow man. The next of kin to the murdered man will be sure to kill the manslayer out of revenge if he can get at him. Therefore the poor man takes flight as quickly as he can towards the city of refuge. How his heart beats, how his footsteps bound, how he flies with all his might! There is a signpost with the word, "refuge," upon it, and on he continues his way. But, presently, while he is running, he turns his head and finds that the avenger of blood is after him. He sees that he is gaining upon him! He feels that he will probably overtake him. Oh, how he picks his steps lest he should trip on a stone! How he skims the ground, swift as a roe! He runs until he can see the city gates. "That is the fair CITY OF REFUGE, he says. But he does not rest then, for a sight of the city will not secure him—so he quickens his speed as if he would outstrip the wind till he shoots through the archway and he is in the broad street of the city! Now he stops. Now he breathes. Now he wipes the hot sweat from his brow. "Now I am safe," he says, "for no avenger of blood dares cross that threshold. He that once escapes here is delivered." So with the sinner when sin pursues him, when he discovers that he has offended God! He hears the furious coursers of divine vengeance coming on swiftly behind him and his conscience flies, and his soul speeds towards the cross. He gets a little hope. He hears of a Savior, but that is not enough. He will never rest, he will never say he is at peace until he has passed the gate of faith and can say, "Now I do believe that Jesus died for me."

He that enters in by the door shall be saved. Noah's ark was built in the olden times to preserve Noah and his family from the great flood. It could not be said that Noah was saved till he had passed through the door—but when he had done that, a divine hand, quite unseen, shut the door and as Noah heard it fastened and understood that the Lord had shut him in, he felt quite safe. If God shuts us in, the floods from beneath cannot drown us and the rains from above cannot penetrate to injure us. He must be safe whom God shuts in! The moment that a poor sinner trusts in Christ, God shuts the door. There he is and there he shall be till time shall be no more! He is secure. The infernal powers shall

not destroy him and the vengeance of God cannot touch him! He has passed the door and he shall be saved.

I read a story the other day of some Russians crossing wide plains studded over here and there with forests. The villages were ten or a dozen miles from each other, the wolves were out, the horses were rushing forward madly, and the travelers could hear the baying of the wolves behind them. And though the horses tore along with all speed, yet the wolves were close behind and they only escaped, as we say, "by the skin of their teeth," managing just to get inside some hut that stood in the road and to shut the door. Then they could hear the wolves leap on the roof, they could hear them dash against the sides of the hut, they could hear them gnawing at the door and howling, and making all sorts of dismal noises—but the travelers were safe because they had entered in by the door and the door was shut! Now, when a man is in Christ, he can hear, as it were, the devils howling like wolves, all fierce and hungry for him. And his own sins, like wolves, are seeking to drag him down to destruction! But he has got in to Christ and He is such a shelter that all the devils in the world, if they were to come at once, could not harm a single beam of that eternal refuge! It must stand fast, though earth and heaven should pass away!

Now, to every man and woman, Christ says that if they have entered in by the door, they shall be saved. Do not have any doubt about it! Do not let anybody raise the question whether you may be or you may not be—you shall be! Oh, clutch at that blessed, "shall." Sir, if you have been a drunk, yet, if you trust in Christ, you shall be saved! You shall not go back to your old drunkenness, but you shall be saved from it if you believe in Him. O woman, if you have stained your character to the worst, yet if you believe in Christ, none of your old sins shall ruin you, but you shall be saved! Ah, though you are tempted every day of your lives, tempted as none ever were before, yet God is true and cannot lie—if you come through Christ, the door, you shall be saved! Do you understand what it is to come through the door? It is to depend upon Jesus, to give yourselves to Him, to rest on Him. When you hang up your jugs and mugs on the nail in the cupboard, what keeps them from falling? Nothing but the nail! And if that holds well, nothing can fall that hangs on it. Now, you must trust in Christ as the vessel hangs on the nail—and if you do so, He is fastened as a nail in a sure place—and you cannot and shall not perish! That is the first privilege—"he shall be saved."

He that enters in by the door "*shall go in.*" The man who believes in Christ shall go into rest and peace, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He shall go in to secret knowledge. He shall become a scholar and shall be taught by Christ as his rabbi. He shall go in unto God with holy boldness in prayer. He shall go in unto that which is within the veil and speak to God from before the mercy seat. He shall

go in unto the child's place and shall stand as an adopted heir of heaven. He shall go in unto close communion with God. He shall speak with his Maker. The Lord shall lift up the light of His countenance upon him. He shall go in unto the highest attainment in spiritual things. He shall go in to the treasure house of the covenant and say, "All this is mine!" He shall go in to the store house of the promises and take whatever his soul needs. He shall go in, passing from circle to circle, till he comes to the innermost place where the love of God is most graciously shed abroad!

He that enters in by the door shall be saved, and he shall go in. If you know what this means, go in! Go in further. Go in more constantly. Do not stop where you are, but go in till you have got a little more. If you love Christ, come nearer to Him and nearer, and still nearer! But if you want to get into anything that is divine, you must get in through Christ. O you who open your Bibles and want to understand a text—the way to get into the meaning of a text is through the door, Christ! O you who want to get more holiness, come through the door—the way to holiness is not through Moses, but through Christ! O you who would have closer communion with your heavenly Father, the way to come in is not through your own efforts, but through Christ! You came to Christ at first to get salvation—you must still come to Christ to get sanctification! Never look for another door, for there is but one, and that one door will let you into life, love, peace, knowledge and sanctification—it will let you into heaven! Christ is the master key of all the rooms in the palace of mercy! And if you get Christ, you shall go in. Nothing shall keep you out of any of the secret chambers. You shall go in, in God's name, through Christ, the door!

The next privilege is that *he shall go out.* Putting the two together—"he shall go in and out"—they signify liberty. The Christian does not come into the church as into a prison, but he comes in as a free man, walking in and out of his own house. But what does it mean to go out? I think it means this, brothers and sisters: the men that trust in Christ go out to their daily business through Christ, the door. I wonder how many of you ever thought of this? You know sometimes you get up, put on your clothes and go blundering out to work. And then you find yourselves very weak all day. Well, I do no wonder at it, for you do not go out through Christ, the door. Suppose you had given yourselves to Christ for the day and though you had time but for a few minutes' prayer, yet you had put it thus, "Lord, I am Yours. Take care of me today. I am going out where there will be many to tempt me and try me. I do not know what may happen, but, Lord, I am going out in Your name and resting in Your strength. If there is anything that I can do for You, I desire to do it. If there is anything to suffer, I wish to suffer it for Your sake, but take care of me, Lord. I will not go out and face my fellow men until I have seen Your face. And I do not want to speak to them until I have spoken to You, nor to hear what they have to say till I have heard what God the Lord will speak." Depend upon it, it is blessed going out when you go thus through

the door! You will be sure to come home happy when you go out after this sort!

May not this going out also mean to go out to suffering? You and I are sometimes called to bear great bodily pain, or losses, or bereavements. Well now, what a sweet thing it is to go out to suffer these things through the door, and to be able to say, "Now, my Master, this is a cross, but I will carry it, not in my own strength, but in Yours. Do what You will with me—I shall drink the cup because You appoint it." Whenever you can see Christ's hand in it, it makes the bitter sweet and heavy things soon grow light! Go to your sickbed as you hope to go to your deathbed—through the door, that is, through Christ!

And when, as sometimes happens, we have to go out, as it were, away from fellowship with Christ, to fight with our inward sins—the right way is to go out to resist them through the door. If you ever try to fight with sin in your own strength, or on a legal footing, or because you feel that you will be condemned if you do not overcome those sins, you will be as weak as water! The way of victory is through the blood of the Lamb. There is no killing sin except by throwing the blood of Christ upon it. When once the blood of Christ comes into contact with the besetting sin, that sin withers straight away! Go to your spiritual conflicts through the door.

And so, beloved, we ought, in all that we do for the Lord, to go out through the door. It is always sweet preaching for me when I feel that I come forth in the name of my Master—when I do not come to tell you what ideas I have woven out of my own brain, nor to put attractive figures before you, as I would like to do sometimes—but rather, when I come to tell you just what my Lord would have you know, telling it as a message to you from your God and cherishing in my own heart His great love toward perishing sinners. Then, indeed, to minister is joy! You Sunday school teachers will always teach well when you go down to the schoolroom through the door, that is, having been with Christ, having sought and enjoyed His company. I know, my dear brothers and sisters, you who are teaching larger classes, you who are engaged in instructing or exhorting, you who go about any holy work—you always do it well when you have God's smile upon you in the doing of it—and you shall have great success in the doing of it if you always go to it through Christ, the door—if you serve Christ through Christ, and do it not only *for* Him, but *through* Him and *by* Him! Our own strength is perfect weakness, but the strength which comes through simple dependence upon the ever-living Christ who has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—this is the strength which wins the conquest! God give you grace not only to go in, but also to go out through the door.

The last privilege named in the text is, "*and shall find pasture."* I suppose this is what you come here for, you who love the Lord—you come here for pasture. It is a great blessing if when we come to hear the

gospel, it becomes real pasture to us. We do know some who say that the troubles of the week become unbearable because they have such barren Sabbaths. Ah, if you are members of a church that is torn with discord, where the ministry abounds in anything but Christ, you will soon begin to cry out and you will value the privilege of hearing Jesus Christ lifted up among you! But who are the people who get the pasture where Jesus Christ is preached? Not all who hear of Him, nor yet all believers. There are times when you may hear a sermon that is of no use to you—and yet your brother and sister by your side may be greatly instructed and comforted thereby. In such a case, I should not wonder if it was because your friend came in to the service through the door, and you did not.

Do you remember the story of Mr. Erskine and the good lady who went to hear him preach at the Communion? It was such sweet preaching; she thought she had never heard the like. So, after service, she asked who the gentleman was that had preached and, on being told that it was Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, she said, "I will come and hear him again next Sabbath morning." She went, she listened and she thought to herself, "Well, this is very dry, very heavy preaching." She was not at all comforted by it! Then like a foolish woman, as I should think she must have been, she went into the vestry, and said, "Oh, Mr. Erskine, I heard you last Sabbath with much pleasure! Sir, I was never so edified and I came again this morning, but I have been dreadfully disappointed." So the good man said very calmly, "Pray, madam, when you came to the kirk last Sabbath, what did you come for? She said, "I came to Communion, sir." "To have fellowship with Christ, I suppose?" he asked. "Yes, sir." "Well you came for it and you had it. And pray, what did you come here this morning for?" She said, "I came to hear you, sir." "And you had it, woman," he said. "You had it and you had not anything else, because you did not come for anything more than that."

Well now, when people come merely to hear a minister, or for custom's sake, or for form's sake—do they not always get what they come for? If people come to find fault, we always give them plenty of our imperfections to be entertained with, so they need not be disappointed! If others come merely out of custom, they say, "Well, this is my work, I have performed my duty." Of course it is, but if you had come in through the door, that is, looking *to* Christ, looking *for* Christ, desiring not to see the preacher, but the Lord—not to get the word of man, but the Word of God as food for your soul, I believe you would have found pasture! Brothers, the sheep need pasture. No other food will suit them. So your soul needs heavenly truth and if you come to the house of God *through Christ*, you will get it! If you turn to the Bible through Christ, you will find it a rich storehouse! If you come to prayer through the door of Christ, you will find it comforting and so you shall find pasture.

I think the text may mean that he who rests in Christ shall have all his needs supplied. If the text does not mean so, another does, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green

pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." Some of you are very poor, but if you have trusted in Christ, you may plead this promise, "You have said that I shall find pasture. Your word declares that no good things will he withheld from them that walk uprightly. Lord, make this true to me."

I would to God that some who have never yet entered into the fold might now be drawn to Jesus. Oh, that you would come through the door into these four choice privileges! You may never have such another opportunity. You may never feel any of the motions of the Spirit of God again. Oh that, without delay, you would just cast your helpless souls into the Savior's gracious arms, who is able and willing to save, that you might be saved now!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 10:1-18.

Verses 1, 2. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.* The true shepherd cares for the flock. The false ones are thieves and robbers who only care for the flesh or the fleece.

3. *To him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.* [See Sermon #2359, Volume 40—PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] John the Baptist was the doorkeeper who opened the door of Christ's earthly ministry by bearing witness that He was the Son of God.

4, 5. *And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Christ is the great leader of His people and they will never go astray as long as they follow Him. The sheep of Christ recognize their shepherd's voice and come at His call. But "strangers" call to them in vain.

6, 7. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.* No one metaphor can fully describe our glorious Lord, for He is both shepherd and door to the sheep, and all else that they need—

"O my Savior! Shield and sun,
Shepherd, brother, husband, friend—
Every precious name in one,
I will love You without end!"

8-10. *All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* [See Sermon #1150, Volume 20—

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The thief came to take away life, but Christ came to give life—that abundant life which shall last forever and ever! But see what it cost Him to give that life—

11-13. *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.* Just now the contrast was between the shepherd and the thief, here it is between the shepherd and the hireling. The hireling cares for himself. The shepherd cares for the sheep and provides for them and cares for them even at the cost of His life.

14, 15. *I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.* [See Sermon #1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is mutual knowledge between the shepherd and the sheep, and between the Father and the Son.

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: they also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* [See Sermon #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Or, more correctly, "one flock, one shepherd." The flock would never be complete without those "other sheep" which the shepherd says He must bring into the fold, and which He says shall hear His voice. Not one of them will be missing in the day when they pass again under the hand of Him that counts them.

17, 18. *Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.* The voluntariness of Christ's sacrifice is its glory, and well may His Father love Him because of it—and well may we, who are eternally to benefit by His death—also love Him!

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WHY THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN
NO. 3288

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"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost."
2 Corinthians 4:3.

IN this verse and the following one we have a very brief yet very full description of what every minister of the gospel ought to preach. In the first place, he is to preach *the gospel*—not metaphysics, not politics, not mere morality, not simply doctrines as such. He is to preach the gospel, which signifies good news, something new and something good—so good that nothing else can equal it—the glad tidings of mercy for the guilty, the blessed tidings of God coming down to man that man may go up to God, the welcome tidings of atonement made for human guilt! It is also new as well as good—it comes as a strange novelty to the attentive ear. Mythology never dreamed it, human wit could never have invented it, even angelic intellect could not have devised a scheme—

"So just to God, so safe for man."

The business of the Christian minister is to preach this good news, to publish to the sinners the glad tidings that there is a Savior, to point the guilty to Christ and to be constantly saying to each individual sinner, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I care not what may be the learning or eloquence of the minister, though he may speak with the tongue of men and angles, if he does not preach Christ and bid sinners trust in Him, he has mistaken his mission and missed the grand objective for which he was sent!

This gospel is called in the text "*our gospel."* By this expression I understand that the minister must accept it for himself before he can hold it out to others. I am myself to look to Jesus as my own personal Savior—and then I am to cry to others, "Look unto Him, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I must be able to say—

"I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream—

and then, but not till then, I am to cry, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." What a miserable wretch must he be who preaches to others a gospel in which he has, himself, no share! He spreads the table and invites others to come to the feast, while he, himself, is starving! He is like a plague-stricken physician who knows the remedy for the disease and sees others cured by it, yet dies with the remedy in his hand. Ah me, of all the portions, that must be most dreadful in the world to come, as

well as most uncomfortable in this present life! Surely it must be the portion of the man who preaches to others what he has never experienced in his own soul. Paul might well call it "our gospel," for it had saved him, the chief of sinners, and made him a beloved apostle of Jesus Christ. He might well call it "our gospel" for he had held it fast in time of persecution and amid all the perils to which he had been exposed—and he was, at last, to give his life as a sacrifice for it! And it must be "our gospel," too, "to have and to hold," or else we cannot preach it with any power!

In the verse following our text, something more is said about the gospel—it is there called "*the glorious gospel."* There was something in it that aroused and inflamed the apostle's noblest thoughts. Paul was no boaster. "God forbid that I should glory," he said—but there was one exception—"save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He did not stand up as a mere apologist for the gospel, or say, "I can defend it against all comers and maintain that it is reasonable," but he gloried in it as the best and highest truth of God—as wiser than all the Stoic's wisdom and more full of joy than all the Epicurean's pleasure! He gloried in that gospel which brings full and free forgiveness to the penitent! That gospel which takes the meanest and basest of mankind and makes them princes in the court of the King of kings! That gospel which comes to men in poverty, in slavery, in the degradation of superstition, idolatry and crime—and lifts them up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, sets their feet upon the Rock of Ages, cleanses them, clothes them, puts a new song into their mouth, preserves them from falling and, at last, brings them where they shall see the face of God and dwell forever in His presence! It is, indeed, a glorious gospel which can do all this! Yet, alas, the most of men are like the rooster on the dunghill who, when he found a pearl, said that he would sooner have found a grain of barley—they think more of their corn and their wine, their feasts and their mirth, than they do of the inexpressibly glorious things of the kingdom of heaven. Oh, that they were wise enough to perceive the glories of this glorious gospel!

Paul further calls it "*the glorious gospel of Christ."* And well he might, for it is all about Christ from beginning to end! Give me a true preacher of the glorious gospel of Christ and I will gladly listen to him. I would like him to be an educated minister if that is possible, for there is no need for my ears to be tortured by mistakes in grammar, but I do not care so much about that as about the other matter! I would sooner hear Christ's gospel preached ungrammatically than I would hear the best philosophy set forth in the most orderly sentences, but with the gospel of Christ left out. When the table is spread for dinner, it is well to have a clean tablecloth, china, glass and cutlery of all the right sort and in their proper places—but if there is no food on the dishes, all those other things are a mere mockery to the hungry ones who are waiting to be fed! Sooner, by far, would I go to a bare table and eat from a wooden bowl

something that would appease my appetite, than I would go to a well-spread table on which there was nothing to eat! Yes, it is Christ, Christ, Christ whom we have to preach! And if we leave Him out, we leave out the very soul of the gospel! Christless sermons make merriment for hell. Christless preachers, Christless Sunday school teachers, Christless class leaders, Christless tract distributors—what are all these doing? They are simply setting the mill to grind without putting any grist into the hopper—all their labor is in vain! If you leave Jesus Christ out, you are simply beating the air, or going to war without any weapon with which you can smite the foe!

Dear friend, if you are unconverted, let me pause here for a few moments to remind you that this is not a gospel of self, nor a gospel of works, nor a gospel of baptism, nor a gospel of priests, nor a gospel of ministers, but it is "the glorious gospel of Christ!" Forget the men who preach it if you will, but, oh, forget not the bleeding, dying Savior to whom they bid you look. Your hope must be in Him and in Him, alone! To Him would we affectionately point you and we pray the Holy Spirit to shut your eyes to everything but Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin—

"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!
It is not the tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul—
On Him, then, who shed it, believing at once
Your weight of iniquities roll!
We are healed by His stripes—would you add to the word?
And He is our righteousness made—
The best robe of heaven He bids you put on,
Oh, could you be better arrayed?
Then doubt not your welcome, since God has declared
There remains no more to be done!
That once in the end of the world He appeared
And completed the work He begun."

With this rather long introduction, I now come to the three points upon which I am going to briefly speak, but very solemnly, for I think they concern many of you who are here, tonight. So, firstly, I ask, *why is this gospel hidden from some people?* Secondly, *what is the state of those from whom it is hidden?* And, thirdly, *what is to be feared concerning them in the future?*

I. First, then, WHY IS THIS GOSPEL HIDDEN FROM SOME PEOPLE?

It is evident that there are some persons in the world who do not understand the gospel—and I will venture to say that the gospel is never understood until it is received. You might have thought that men could very readily understand anything as simple as, "Believe, and live," yet those of us who have been converted must confess that we did not understand the gospel until we received it. I am sure that I never fully

comprehended the plan of salvation until I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when I did believe, the whole matter seemed so simple that I wondered why I had not understood it before! You notice that the apostle decreed that it was not his fault that the gospel was hidden from some people. And although we would not put ourselves on a level with any apostle, we are as clear upon this point of plain speaking as any apostle who ever lived! If "our gospel" is hidden from any of our hearers, it is not because of the fine language that we use! We fear that there *are some* who, in preaching the gospel, indulge in such eloquent oratory that their gospel is hidden from their hearers—but this is not a sin which can be laid at our door. We use what Whitefield called, "market language." We use a great many more Saxon words than Latin words. If we had to find out the gospel through the types and symbols of the law, we might have a difficulty in understanding it, but the gospel we have to preach is simply this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Trust in Him as suffering as a substitute in your place and you shall be saved." Can anything be simpler than that? We try to use the plainest similitudes so as to bring the truth of God within the comprehension of the weakest of our hearers. We make it a matter of conscience, as in the sight of God, to speak to men very simply so that each one, after he has heard the message, is compelled to admit that it has been delivered to him very plainly. How is it, then, that you do not understand it?

Certainly, *it is not because we hide the gospel in a long roll of ceremonies*. We have never said to you, "You must be christened in your infancy, you must have sponsors to promise all sorts of things in your name and then, as you grow up, you must be confirmed and must take the responsibility upon yourselves." Oh, no! We have never talked like that! We point you to the divinely-inspired Bible and tell you that all you need to know is plainly recorded there. We point you to the eternal word who became incarnate and we say, with all the emphasis of which we are capable—

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

We bid you not to trust in forms and ceremonies, but to look alone to Jesus Christ and Him crucified, so that it cannot be for lack of plainness that the gospel is not understood!

And again, *it cannot be because of any obscurity in the gospel, itself*. I will venture to say that there is no proposition in the world simpler than the one which the gospel sets before us. The formula, "Twice two are four," is so simple that a child's mind can understand it. And the degree of intellect which can comprehend is sufficient—so far a intellect is concerned—to comprehend Paul's declaration, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." As John said, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." To trust Jesus Christ, as far as it is an intellectual act, is a matter that does not require the slightest education—there is no need to sit

down and calculate. Here is Jesus Christ standing in the sinner's place. God punished the sinner's guilt upon Christ instead of upon the sinner—all that the sinner is bidden to do is to trust Christ to save him—and, as soon as he does that, he is saved! What could be simpler than that? I grant you that as the gospel is sometimes preached, there is obscurity in it, but there is no obscurity in the gospel, itself! Well then, if it so, and it is, why is it that the gospel is hidden from some people? And the answer is that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not." Let us see how this is.

First of all, *the gospel is hidden from some men because they have never felt sin to be an evil*. "Why," they say, "do you talk to us about the punishment of sin? Why do you tell us that God punished His own Son in the place of sinners? We believe in the universal fatherhood of God, so we have no need of any doctrine of substitution." So *you* think that it is a small thing to offend the Most High God, but *He* thinks it is a very great thing! You consider that sin is a mere trifle, scarcely worth thinking about, but God regards it as exceedingly sinful—an evil and an accursed thing which He will, by no means, pardon except in them who trust His Son, the divinely appointed substitute and Savior. If you realized what sin is, you would soon understand the gospel! If the Holy Spirit shall teach you that sin is the most deadly and most damnable thing of which you can conceive, you will at once understand the glory of the gospel that shows how you can be completely delivered from its curse, penalty and power through the mercy of God in giving His only-begotten Son to die in your place! You love sin—that is the fact of the matter—and you suppose that one is no more offensive to God than it is to yourself. Fool that you are, you are fascinated by the serpent that has filled your veins with the venom which shall burn in you forever and ever unless you shall look by faith to Him who was lifted up upon the cross even as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness that all who looked upon it might live! May God give you grace to see sin as it really is in His sight, for then will you realize your need of a Savior and you will give heed to the gospel which bids you believe in Him that you may be saved!

Another reason why men do not understand the gospel is that *they do not understand themselves*. Some of you who are here tonight think that you can save yourselves. I know what your thoughts are—they are to this effect—that if you do your best, if you say your prayers, if you attend church or chapel, if you give some to the poor, then you will go to heaven. You have not yet learned that all you do is tainted with the leprosy of sin and, therefore, cannot be acceptable to God! Your best works are bad since you do them with the motive that you may be saved by them—selfishness, therefore, is at the bottom of them all! You are not serving God by your good works! You are all the while trying to serve yourselves. If you knew yourselves better, you would know that all your works are nothing but sin until the Holy Spirit brings you to know your

need of Christ—and then to *know* Christ as the very Savior you need! If I am not in need, I have no need of the gifts of charity. And if you do not know how needy you are *spiritually,* you will never apply to Christ for aid. But once let the real needs of your soul stare you in the face—that you realize that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," then the simple gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," will be so welcome to your soul that it will almost leap out of your body to lay hold of it!

Yet another reason why men do not understand the gospel is *because their will is not subdued*. "We want to know," they say, "why the requirements of the gospel are so strict." Oh, sirs, that is not the language for you to use to your God! The message to you is, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." That hectoring spirit which says, "Why is this the only way of salvation? Why is this precept enjoined? Who is the Lord that we should serve Him?"—that spirit has been the eternal ruin of many! There is no likelihood that you will ever understand the gospel while you are of this humor. Come down, man, come down—there is no blessing for you while you set yourself up high! May the Lord make you know the corruptions and abominations which dwell in your heart that, in the presence of the thrice-holy God, you may demean yourself after another and a humbler fashion! But while that wicked will of yours says, "I will not do what God requires," there is no hope whatever that you will be able to understand the gospel!

There are some who cannot understand the gospel *because it interferes with their worldly interests*. If you take a sovereign out of your pocket and cover the word, "God," in your Bible with it, of course you cannot see the word! There are a great many men who never seem to see anything beyond pounds, shillings and pence—they never look above their ledgers—they never rise to anything that is Godlike and divine. They have no more spirituality than so many pigs at a trough! They say they cannot understand the gospel, but how can they when their understanding has been eaten through and through with the canker of their gold? There are many here to whom I am a stranger, but I should like to put this question to any of you who do not understand the gospel—Is there not in your hearts a desire *not to* understand it? Is it not a sorrowful fact that many of you do not comprehend gospel preachers because you do not want to trouble yourselves by comprehending them or have an uneasy consciousness that gospel truth, and your pleasures will not agree? You are like men who are on the way to bankruptcy, but who dare not examine their books to see how they stand! Yet did you ever know a man retrieve his position by refusing to look his difficulties in the face? Is it not the most sensible plan to know the worst of your case and to know it at once? I have known some who did not want to understand the gospel because they were engaged in a business which would not bear examination. There are others who are hindered by their

besetting sins. If the Lord Jesus Christ would grant pardons and yet allow men to keep their sins, what a host of disciples of that sort He might have! But He says that though sin is as dear to us as our right arm, it is to be cut off—and though it is as precious as our right eye, it is to be plucked out! Yet many will not agree to these conditions and, therefore, the gospel is hidden from them.

II. Now I must try very briefly to answer the second question, WHAT IS THE STATE OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN?

Paul says that *they are lost*—"If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost." But, Paul, are you not very uncharitable in saying that men are lost? Preachers nowadays tell them that they will all get to heaven at last. Ah, beloved, the apostles knew nothing of this modern, maudlin "charity!" They said, as their Master said before them, "He that believes not shall be damned." Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that there was no alternative between believing and being lost. But in what sense are they from whom the gospel is hidden, lost?

Well, first, *they are lost to the church*. You may be a subscriber to the funds of the church, you may attend the service of the church, you may even be an ardent admirer of the preacher and find a certain measure of interest in listening to his discourses. But if the gospel is still hidden from you, if you do not understand it and believe on the Christ of whom it speaks—you are lost to the church of which many around you are members—and if you remain as you are, you will be lost to the one great church of the first-born and will never form a part of the general assembly of the redeemed around the throne of God above!

It is a dreadful thing for anyone to be lost. I do not know if there is a more dreadful word in the English language than that word, "lost." Do you remember, my friend, when you came home from work one night and your wife met you with the sad news that your little Mary was lost, how you hurried from one police station to another? And your poor distracted wife went tearing up and down one street after another seeking for tidings of your lost child! It was her misfortune to be lost in *that* sense, but I hope you may never have a child lost in a sense in which it shall be her *crime* when the mother, night after night, searches the cold streets for any trace of her poor lost daughter! Ah, sinner, *you are lost to God in that sense*. You have turned away from Him who made you. You have despised the love that He has lavished upon you. You have forgotten all the care that He has taken of you. I am quite sure that you are not happy while you are thus lost—how can you be happy? You are not at rest. Your soul is like a ship drifting in a storm with neither a rudder to guide her, nor an anchor to hold her and unless the Lord shall mercifully interpose to save you, you will be lost forever!

What a mercy it is sinner that you are not yet "lost" in the full meaning of that term, as you soon will be if you do not repent of your sin and turn unto the Lord! But even now it is a terrible thing to be lost in

any sense—and if you are not saved, you are lost—you must be either the one or the other, you cannot be partly saved and partly lost! I will ask every one of you again tonight to do what I asked my congregation once before to do. You are either lost or saved, so will you definitely decide which word applies to your case and write it down and sign your name to it? I remember that on the previous occasion when I made this request, there was one brother, who, after sincere heart searching, felt that he was lost, so he wrote down that word and signed his name below it. When he had done so and looked at the word, "lost," written with his own hand, and with his signature appended to it—and felt that it might be brought forward as evidence against him at the last great day, it broke the heart that had never been broken before and brought him as a true penitent to the Savior's feet, so that before that night passed away he could write himself down as, "saved," just as truthfully as he had before acknowledged that he was lost! I pray that this brother's experience may be repeated in many of you here. Do not hesitate to look thoroughly into your own case. If you are saved, it is not difficult for you to know that you are. And if you are not saved, it is well that you should know it at once! If you think you are saved when you are not, your ruin will be all the more terrible because you had not the courage to find out the truth! If there is any doubt about the matter, let it be cleared up at once. Go to Jesus Christ this very moment! Confess your sin to Him and trust to His precious blood to wash it all away! And then you will be no longer lost, but shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

III. Now, in a few closing sentences, let me answer the third question, WHAT IS TO BE FEARED CONCERNING THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL IS HIDDEN?

It is to be feared that in addition to their natural blindness, a second film has been cast over their eyes by "the god of this world." That is a very remarkable expression, "the god of this world." Does this world, then, really worship the devil? There are devil-worshipers in certain far-off lands—and we hold up our hands in horror and say, "What shockingly bad people!" Yet there are also many devil-worshipers in this land! The lover of pleasure—what is he better than a devil-worshipper? It is the devil in his best suit of clothes whom some people worship, but it is still the devil! Worship the devil with the golden hoofs, but it is the same devil all the while! If I were to be lost, it would make little difference to me whether I was lost in a gold mine, or in a coal mine. If I were to break my neck on a slab of gold, it would be no better for me than breaking it upon a slab of stone! So, if you are lost, you will find little comfort in the thought that you are lost in a more respectable way than others are!

When "the god of this world" comes to a man who is already blind by nature, he seeks to "make assurance doubly sure" by bandaging his eyes so securely that the light of the gospel shall be still more completely hidden from him! If such a man attends a place of worship, the devil

persuades him that he is not a sinner, so that he need not take to him the preacher's warnings and exhortations. Another says, "I don't intend to trouble about any of these things—my one aim is to get on in the world." Yes, just so, "the god of this world" has blinded his eyes! So effectually does Satan blind the man that he cannot see his own depravity! O soul, what shall it profit you if you shall gain the whole world, and yet be lost forever? What if you shall die upon a bed of down and wake up among the lost in hell? May God give all of us the grace to look upon the two worlds in their proper light! If the next world is only a trifle, trifle with it! If this world is everything, make everything of it! As you possess an immortal spirit, think well where that spirit is to spend eternity. As all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, you are a sinner and you need salvation, so do, I entreat you, trust in Him who alone can save the guilty, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus—and He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. I said just now that I do entreat you to trust in Him, and so I do, yet this is not half so much my business as it is yours. The preacher of the gospel ought to be in earnest, but when he has faithfully delivered his message, the responsibility is transferred to his hearers. As the Lord lives, I will take no responsibility of yours upon myself—to our own Master you and I must stand or fall! But as your fellow man; as one who devoutly desires that you should not be lost, I do beseech you to seek divine grace from God to get rid of the scales from your eyes so that you may see sin, salvation and everything else as they are in His sight—and may look to Jesus and find eternal life in Him!

Some of you young men are perhaps going to Oxford or Cambridge. Well, study hard, be senior wranglers if you can, but with all the knowledge that you may acquire, do get a clear understanding of eternal things and seek the wisdom that comes from above. When you wear the degrees which earthly knowledge will procure for you, may you also wear the higher degree which God shall confer upon you as the children of the kingdom, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus! Sit at the feet of divines and philosophers if you will, but also sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him, for so shall you have honor and glory that shall last forever! Seek after the honor which comes from God—which can only be found by believing in Jesus and seeking to please Him in all things!

My time has gone and your time for repentance and faith is almost gone. May the realities of eternity be deeply impressed upon us all—and may we be prepared—when death shall summon us to stand before God, to prove that the gospel was not hidden from us, so that we may not be among "those who are lost." May God save us, by His grace, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

2 CORINTHIANS 4; 5:1-9.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2. *Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 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.* Paul's description of his own ministry and also that of Timothy should be true of every servant of Jesus Christ! There must be no dishonesty, or craftiness, or deceit about the minister of the Word of God—and it is by the manifestation of the truth of God that he must commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God! He may not win every man's approval, yet even those who differ from him must perceive his loyalty to his Lord.

3, 4. *But if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* [See Sermons #1663, Volume 28—THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL and #2304, Volume 39—BLINDED BY SATAN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The light of the gospel is so glorious and bright that it is only hidden from those who have been blinded by Satan, "the god of this world." The only hope for them is to believe in Jesus who can give sight to the spiritually blind as easily as He gave sight to the physically blind when He was here in the flesh.

5. *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.* "Christ Jesus the Lord" is to be the great theme of our preaching! And when it is so, we naturally take our right position with regard to our hearers, as Paul and Timothy did—"and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

6, 7. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* God might have put the priceless treasure of the gospel into the golden vessel of cherubim and seraphim—and He might have sent angels who would never suffer, who would never err, who would never sin—to preach the word. But instead of doing so, He has chosen to send the gospel to men by commonplace beings like themselves. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," and this redounds much to God's glory and, dear friends, the great objective of the sending of the gospel into the world is the glory of God! He would manifest His mercy to men that His mercy might be glorified and, therefore, He has committed the gospel not to the trust of perfect men, but to the trust of poor, shallow, earthen vessels like ourselves!

8, 9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.* The apostle is here speaking for himself and all the

members of the apostolic college and, also, for all the early saints. They appear to have been very much troubled and sometimes to have been very much perplexed. I meet with certain brethren, now and then, who have no troubles—they are so supremely wise that they are never perplexed and so eminently holy that they do not appear to belong to the ordinary democracy of Christianity—but are altogether supernatural beings! Well, I do not belong to their clique and it does not seem to me that Paul and the apostles and the early Christians did. Those great pioneers of the church of Christ were men who were troubled on every side—perplexed, persecuted, cast down—in fact, they were men of like passions with ourselves!

10, 11. *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. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life, also, of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* So you see, brothers and sisters, to have an anticipation of death upon one is no hindrance to one's work, but a great help to it—to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus is a great help towards the manifestation of the life of Christ! When we begin to reckon that we shall live long, we are very apt to live loosely. But to live as though tomorrow might be the Judgment Day, or as though today the King might come in His glory—that is the style of living which is the best of all! "A short life and a holy one"—lengthened as God may please, but reckoned by us as short even at the longest—may that be the Christian's motto. As the worldling says, "A short life and a merry one." But we say, "A short life if God so wills it, but a holy one whether it is long or short."

12. *So then death works in us, but life in you.* These apostolic men lived as if they were on the borders of the grave—lived expecting to die a cruel death—and in this way spiritual life was brought to the Corinthians and others who witnessed their holy lives and heroic deaths.

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 who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up, also, by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* As the flesh goes down, so, by God's grace, the spirit goes up! You know that there are heavy weights that keep men down to the earth, but he who understands mechanics knows that by the use of wheels and pulleys those same heavy weights may be made to lift a man—and God often makes the weights and burdens associated with bodily decay lift up the inward spirit.

17, 18. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the*

things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:1, 2. *For we know that if our earthly house of the tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan.* In this poor body it is our lot often to groan, but the groan is a hopeful one, for it is a birth-pang and it will bring joy in due time—"For in this we groan."

2-6. *Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if it is that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident.* That is a blessed experience, "always confident." There are some Christians who are *never* confident and some who are afraid of being confident. I know some who, if they see this holy confidence in other Christians, begin to tremble for their eternal safety. Never mind about them, brothers and sisters—if God gives you a holy confidence in Him, hold fast to it and do not let it go, whatever anyone may say!

6-9. *Knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.* [See Sermon #1303, Volume 22—THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is our main business—whether we live or whether we die is of no consequence at all! But to be accepted of Christ—so to live is to be well-pleasing to God. Be this our heavenly ambition and may the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to attain to it!

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THE SEALED HAND—A WINTER SERMON
NO. 3289

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He seals up the hand of every man; that all men may know His work."
Job 37:7.

WHEN the Lord seals up a man's hand, he is unable to perform his labor. The Lord has an objective in this, namely, "that all men may know *His* work." When they cannot do their own work, they are intended to observe the works of God. This is a fact which I fear many of us have never noticed. When the ground is hardened into iron by the frost. When the land lies deep beneath the snow. When the ox rests in the stall and the servants warm their hands at the fire, then the farmer's hand is sealed up. But I fear the divine purpose is not often heeded. As you look through the frosted pane upon the driving snow, do you say to yourself, "God has taken me off from my own work and given me a holiday which He would have me turn into a *holy* day—let me now turn my thoughts to the Lord's great works in nature, providence and grace. Shut out from my calling, I am also shut in to think of my God and of His work"?

To the most of us, it happens that at sundry times we are set aside from our ordinary service—and it is well if we improve the hour. One is never absent from his desk. Another is regularly behind the counter. A third is always diligent in his traveling but, sooner or later, there comes a day of pain and weakness—when the usual course of life is interrupted and the busiest man lies still. In the sickbed for weeks and months, God seals up the active hand, and thus He presents to the busy a quiet season for reflection! In France, they call the hospital, "the house of God," and it is well when it becomes so. The man who will not think of God if he can help it, while he is busy in the world, is, by sickness blessed with time for consideration and, being set aside from turmoil, he is invited to rise above his engrossing cares! The great Father seems to say, "Lie there alone. Lie awake through the night-watches and think of your past ways and what they lead to. Listen to the tick of the clock and mark the flight of time till you number your days and apply your heart unto wisdom. Your own work you cannot touch. Now, therefore, think of the work of your God and Savior till you obtain the blessing which comes of it." This is the design of sickness and inability to follow our calling! Thus is our hand sealed from its occupation that our heart may be unsealed towards God, heaven and eternal things!—

"It needs our hearts be weaned from earth.
It needs that we be driven

By loss of every earthly stay,
To seek our joys in heaven."

It is clear that God can easily seal up the hand of man if he uses his strength in rebellion or folly, for He has other seals besides sickness. When the wicked are determined to carry out a plan which is not according to His mind, He can baffle them. See the people gathering on the plain of Shinar, bringing together brick and slime that they may build a tower whose lofty height shall mark the center of a universal monarchy! What does God do? By simply confounding their language, he seals every man's hand! No storm, or flood, or earthquake could have more effectually caused the workmen to desist. Look through the loopholes of retreat tonight upon this wicked world and see men urgent with schemes which to them appear admirable. If they are not for God's glory, He that sits in heaven laughs! The Lord has them in derision! With a word He seals up their hand so that it loses all its cunning and their purpose falls to the ground! Sometimes He closes up the hands of His inveterate enemies with the cold seal of death. Walk over the place where Sennacherib's hosts had pitched their tents. They spread themselves upon the face of the earth and threatened to devour Judah and Jerusalem—yes to quickly swallow them up—but "the angel of death spread his wings on the blast," and the sleepers never again rose to blaspheme Jehovah! They lie with their weapons under their heads, but they cannot grasp them! Bows, spears and chariots remain as a spoil to the armies of the Lord! Let us never, therefore, be disturbed by the vaunting of the adversaries of Jehovah! He can seal up their hands and then the men of might are captives! "The Lord reigns"—

"Though sinners boldly join,
Against the Lord to rise,
Against His Christ combine,
The Anointed to despise.
Though earth disdain,
And hell engage,
Vain is the rage—
Their counsel vain."

We will leave that part of the subject and handle the text in another way. Here is, first, a word to *Christian workers.* And when we have so expounded it, we shall turn to *struggling believers* panting for victory—for with both these classes there are seasons when their hands are sealed. Thirdly, we shall speak to *such as are toiling after self-salvation* for it is a happy thing when such an hour comes to them, also, and they cease from their own work and know the work of the Lord!

I. First, then, I speak to YOU WHO ARE GOD'S PEOPLE and have grown into strong men in Christ Jesus.

Do not be surprised if sometimes your Master seals up your hand *by a consciousness of unfitness.* You may have preached for years and yet just now you feel as if you could never preach again. Your cry is, "I am shut up and cannot come forth." The brain is weary, the heart is faint and you

are on the brink of saying, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord." Your seed basket is empty and your plow is rusty—when you get to the granary, it seems to be locked against you. What are you to do? No message from God drops sweetly into your soul and how can your speech among the people distil as the dew? Perhaps some of you who have lately begun to serve the Lord wonder that it should ever be so with us older workers. You will not wonder long, for it will also happen to you! When a farmer sows his field with a seeder, the drill has no aches and pains, for it has no nerves and nothing to prevent the seed shaking out of it with precise regularity. But our great Lord never sows His fields with iron seeders. He uses men and women like ourselves, who are liable to headaches, heartaches and all sorts of miseries and, therefore, cannot sow as they could wish. Comrades in the Lord's work, it is essential that we learn our own inability! It is profitable to feel that without our Lord we can do nothing—but that the Lord can do very well without us! If we cannot break the clods, His frost is doing it. If we cannot water the soil, His snow is saturating it. When man is paralyzed, God is not even hindered. When we feel our own weakness, it is that we may know the Lord's work and comprehend that whatever understanding we have, He gave us. Whatever thought or utterance we have, He worked it in us and if we have any power among men to deliver the precious gospel of Christ, He has anointed us to that end. Therefore, if we have received, we may not boast as if we had not received! It is a great blessing for us to be emptied of self that God may be all in all, for then our infirmities cease to be drawbacks and rise into qualifications through divine grace! This has a world of comfort in it.

Sometimes the Christian worker's hand is sealed, not by his own incompetence, but *by the hardness of the hearts he has to deal with.* Do we not often cry, "I cannot make any impression upon that man! I have tried in several ways, but I cannot find a vulnerable place in him. I cannot get the sword of truth to strike at him"? Have you never mourned that you could not touch those children—they were so volatile and frivolous? Have you not been ready to weep because so many men are so coarse, so drunk and so reckless? Have you not groaned, "Lord, I cannot get at those wealthy people! They are educated and sneer at my mistakes. And they are so eaten up with the conceit of their own position that they will not come to You as the poor do, and receive Your salvation. Truly, my hand is sealed"? This is all meant to drive you to your God in prayer, crying, "It is time for You, Lord, to work!" Oh, for that word which is like a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces! Oh, that the fire would melt and save the sinner!

Another thing which often seals the hand of the worker and leaves it maimed and bleeding, is *the apostasy of any who were thought to be converts.* Oh, how we rejoiced over them! Perhaps just a little, behind the door, we thought how wonderfully well we labored to have such converts.

As we saw them at worship and remembered that they were once drunks and swearers, we almost whispered that a notable miracle had been worked by us. Ah me, how light-fingered we are! How ready to rob God of His glory to clothe self with it! What did the Lord do? He let our precious convert go reeling home and he that prayed at the prayer meeting was heard cursing! Thus all our weaving was unraveled. Then we wept and cried, "We have accomplished nothing at all! We have only bred a generation of hypocrites! They only need to be tempted and they go back again! Alas for us!" We shall return to our work with more tenderness and humility, with more prayer and faith—and looking alone to God we shall see His hand outstretched to save! We shall wonder that we have not gone back, ourselves, and shall be prepared to sing Jude's doxology, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." When the Lord seals up your hand in any way, then, dear Christian worker, consider God's work, and call Him into the field—

"Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!
Your power unconquerable take.
Your strength put on, assert Your might
And triumph in the dreadful fight!
Why do You tarry, mighty Lord?
Why slumbers in its sheath Your sword?
Oh, awaken for Your honor's sake—
Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!
Hasten then, but come not to destroy.
Mercy is Yours—Your crown, Your joy!
Their hatred quell, their pride remove,
But melt with grace, subdue with love."

Some think the text teaches that when God seals up a man's hand, it is that he may know his own work, that is, that he may perceive what poor, imperfect work it is—that he may form a correct estimate of it and not glory in it—that he may observe the scantiness of the sphere of human action and mourn how ineffective, how despicable, how feeble man's efforts are apart from God's power. It is a great blessing to know our own work and to be humble, but still it is a higher blessing to know the Lord's work and to be confident in Him. O brothers and sisters, we must be *nothing*, or the Lord will not use us! If the axe vaunts itself against him that fells trees therewith, he will fling that axe away. If we sacrifice to our own net, the great fisherman will never drag the sea with us again till He has made us more fit for use. Oh, to be nothing! To lie at His feet and then, full of His power, because emptied of our own, to move forward to victory! May the Lord work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure—then shall we work out a glorious destiny to His praise!

II. This Scripture equally applies to THE CASE OF THE STRUGGLING BELIEVER.

The man is earnestly striving. Look at him! *He is seeking to pray.* I sometimes ask young people, "Do you pray?" They answer, "We could not live without prayer." "Can you always pray alike?" I thank God that I usually receive the answer, "No, sir. We wish we could always be earnest." Just so. A steam engine can always do its work with equal force, but a living man cannot always pray. A mere actor can perform the externals of devotion at any time, but the real suppliant has his variations. We have all read of the preacher who, while preaching, used to cry most unaccountably when others were untouched. The reason was that he had put in the margin of his manuscript, "Cry here," and this he had done in the quiet of his study, without considering whether the passage would really produce tears. A man of genuine emotion cannot make himself cry at say, half-past seven in the morning and ten at night. Mighty prevailing prayer is an effect of the inward impulses of the Spirit of God and the Spirit blows where He wishes. We cannot command His influence. We ought always to pray most when we think we cannot pray at all! Mark that paradox. When you feel disinclined to pray, let it be a sign to you that prayer is doubly necessary! Pray for prayer! Yet there are times with me, and I suppose with you, when at the throne of grace I mourn because I cannot mourn, and feel wretched because all feeling has fled. The Lord has sealed up my hand! But that is that I may learn anew how His Spirit helps my infirmities and that I am powerless in supplication till He quickens me. We could as easily create a world as present a fervent prayer without the Spirit of God! We need to have this written upon our hearts, for only so shall we offer those inwrought supplications which the Lord hears with delight.

Look at the struggling believer, next, when *he tries to learn the truth of God.* For instance, in reading the Scriptures, he pants to know the meaning of them. Did you never try to dig into a passage and find yourself unable to make headway? Fetch a commentary! Do you find that it leaves your difficulty untouched? Have you not begun at the wrong end? Would it not be better to *pray your way into the text* and when you have got somewhat through the rind of it, will it not be well to imitate a mouse when he meets with cheese and eats his way to the center? Work away at the passage by prayer and experience and you will tunnel into the secret! Yet you will at times find yourself lost among grand truths of God and quite unable to cut your way through the forest of doctrines because your understanding seems to have lost its edge. God has sealed up your hand that now you may go to Him for instruction, and clearly so that not in books nor in teachers, but in His Holy Spirit is the light by which the word of truth is to be understood by the soul! He seals up our hands that we may sit at His feet—

"Light in Your light oh may we see,
Your grace and mercy prove,
Revived, and cheered, and blessed by Thee,
Spirit of peace and love."

The struggling believer may have *set himself to watch against certain sin*. Possibly he has enjoyed his morning's devotion and he goes downstairs resolved to be patient, whatever provocation may occur, for he wept last night over the evil done by a quick temper. He converses cheerfully and yet, before the breakfast is over, the lion is roused and he is in the wars again! The poor man murmurs to himself, "What will become of me? This hot temper runs away with me." Do not excuse yourself but still learn from your own folly. Does not the Lord thus let you see your own weakness more and more till you gird on His strength and overcome it? Remember, it must be conquered! You must not dare to be the slave of a fierce temper, or, indeed, of any sin! If the Son make you free, you shall be free, indeed! And it is His emancipating hand that you need within. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit of God—only He can accomplish it—and it is for you to cry unto the strong for strength!

Perhaps the struggle is of yet another kind. *You long to grow in grace*. This is a matter worthy of the utmost desire and labor, and yet, as a matter of fact, neither plants nor souls actually grow through conscience effort. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." Children of God, when they grow, grow up into Christ, not by agonies and excitements, but by the quiet force of the inward life renewed from day to day by the Holy Spirit! We have heard some true saints complain that they felt as if they were rather growing downward than upward, for they feel worse instead of better. Thus do many of the plants of our garden grow—and we are joyful that it is so—for we need not the useless top growth, but we prize the root! To grow downward in humility may be the best possible growth—the hand sealed may be bringing us more spiritual profit than the hand at work!

III. I might thus enlarge, but it would come to the same thing and, therefore, I leave the struggling Christians to lend a hand to THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS, whom I would gladly help into a ditch and leave there till the Almighty One shall come to take them out!

If we believe their own statements, there are a great many very good people in this world. True, the Bible says, "There is none that does good; no, not one," but that is an old-fashioned sort of book! Good men are plentiful as blackberries! I hear certain of them bearing witness that they are quite as good as those who make a profession of religion and, in fact, rather better! They are so good that they do not even profess to trust the Lord Jesus Christ! Now, you excessively good people, I am right glad when the Lord seals up your hands so that you cannot persevere in your fine doings and are compelled to try the true way of getting to heaven!

Sometimes that sealing up comes by a discovery that the law of God is spiritual, and that the service of God is a matter of the heart. Here is a good woman! She says, "I never stole a penny. I always pay my debts. I am sober, kind and industrious. I thank God I am not a gossip, or proud, or idle, as so many are." Is she not a superior person? But observe a change! She hears a sermon, or reads the Bible and finds that external

goodness is nothing unless there is goodness in the heart—unless there is love to God and love to men—unless there is the new birth and a consequent total and radical change of nature manifested by a simple reliance upon Christ! Is this the same woman? How different her manner! How changed the tone of her talk! Hear her exclaim, "I am utterly lost! I had no idea that God required the heart and judged our thoughts and desires. What searching truths! A look can make me guilty of adultery. Anger without a cause is murder!" If this fact comes with power to the heart—the hand is sealed and all hope of salvation by works is gone! Oh, that this would happen to all self-justifiers! Oh, that the Lord would wean them from self, that they might know His work, the work of Christ who satisfied the law for all His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him!

Sometimes an actual sin has let in light upon the sinfulness of the heart! I knew a young man who, in his own esteem, was as fine a fellow as ever worked in a shop. He prided himself that he had never told a lie, nor been dishonest, nor a drunk, nor loose in his life—and if the Savior had said to him that he must keep the commandments, he would have replied, "All these have I kept from my youth up." In pushing a fellow workman, he upset an oilcan. It happened to have been upset before, and the master had spoken strongly about the careless waste. The master, coming along on this occasion, called out, "Who upset that can?"" The young man said that he did not know, though he himself was the offender. That passed away. No further question was asked, but in a moment he said to himself, "I have told a lie! I never would have believed myself capable of such meanness." His beautiful card house tumbled down! The bubble of his reputation burst and he said to himself, "Now I understand what Mr. Spurgeon means by the depravity of the heart. I am a good-for-nothing creature! What must I do to be saved?" No doubt outward sin has often revealed the secret power of evil in the heart. The leprosy has come out upon the skin and so it has been seen to be in the system. Thus is pride hidden from man—and his hand is sealed up that he may look for mercy from God, and live!

Yes, I have known God seal up some men's hands *by a sense of spiritual inability*, so that they have said, "I cannot pray. I thought I prayed every morning and night, but I now see that it is not prayer at all. I cannot now praise God. I used to sit in the choir and sing as sweetly as any of them, but I was singing to my own glory, and not unto the Lord. I fear I have been deceiving myself and setting up my righteousness instead of Christ's—and that is the worst form of idolatry. I have dishonored God and I have crucified Christ by claiming to myself the power of self-salvation. I have un-Christed Christ and counted His blood to be a superfluous thing." When a man has come to that, then he—

"Casts his deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus' feet—
To stand in Him, in Him alone,

Gloriously complete!"

"What?" cries yonder friend, "Would you not have us do good works?" Yes, a host of them! But not to thereby save yourself! You must do them *because* you are saved! You know what children do when they are little and silly—they go into their father's garden and pick handfuls of flowers, and make a garden. "A pretty, pretty garden," so they say. Wait till tomorrow morning and every flower will be withered and there will be no pretty garden at all, for their flowers have no roots! That is what you do when you cultivate good works *before* faith—it is a foolish, fruitless business. Repent of sin and believe in Jesus, for these are the roots of good works! And, though at first they look like black bulbs with no beauty in them, yet out of them shall come the rarest flowers in the garden of holiness! Get away with your good works! Get away with your salvation of yourself! This is all proud fancy and falsehood. Why did God send a Savior if you need no saving? What need of the cross if you can be saved by your own works? Why did Jesus bleed and die if your own merits are sufficient? Come, you guilty ones! Come, you weary! Come, you whose hands are sealed, so that you can do nothing more—take the work of Christ and be saved by it at once!

A young sister who I saw just now, told me how a friend helped her to see the way of salvation. She could not believe in Jesus Christ because she did not feel herself to be all that she wanted to be. But the friend said to her, "Suppose I were to give you this Bible for a present." "Yes." "Would it not be yours as soon as you took it? It would not depend upon whether you were good or not, would it?" "No." "Well, then," the friend replied, "the Lord God has given Jesus Christ to you as a free gift—and if you take him by faith, He is immediately yours, whoever you may be." The case stands just so. Accept Jesus as the free gift of God to you and you are saved! And being saved, you will work with all your might to show your gratitude to God your Savior!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 94.

This is the prayer of a man of God in great trouble, standing out for God in an evil day, when the Lord's people were greatly oppressed, and the honor of God was being trampled in the mire. The prayer wells up from an oppressed heart struggling against great difficulty.

Verse 1. *LORD God*—"O Jehovah, EL." Men of God in trouble delight to call upon the name of the Lord. His very name is a stronghold to them! The infinite Jehovah, the strong God. EL. "O Lord God"—

1. *To whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself.* Vengeance does not belong to us! It is not right for any private individual to attempt to avenge himself. But vengeance does belong to the just judge who will mete out to all the due reward of evil or of good. Hence, my appeal is to the Court of King's Bench, or higher still,

to the King, Himself! "O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself." When false doctrine abounds, only God can put it down. All the efforts of the faithful will be futile apart from Him.

2-4. *Lift up Yourself, You judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?* That expression, "How long?" repeated three times, is very sorrowful. It seems to get into a kind of howling or wailing. But a child of God, when he sees things going wrong with his Lord's kingdom, must grow somewhat impatient and he cries out to His God, "How long? How long? How long will You bear it?" The very triumphs of the wicked and the hard things they say, with which they seem to bubble over like fountains, (for that is the force of the term "utter and speak" used here), stir the heart of the man of God to its very depths! He gets alone and grieves before God. And out of a full heart he thus cries to Him, "How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?"

5. *They break in pieces Your people, O LORD*—There is a strong plea in that declaration, for the Lord of Hosts says to His people, He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." In days of persecution the saints can pray in this fashion, "They break in pieces Your people, Jehovah."

5, 6. *And afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.* This made the appeal still stronger, for God is "a Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows."

7. *Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* Yet this very God of Jacob came to the troubled Patriarch at Jabbok and blessed him there. And He said to heathen kings, "Touch not My Anointed, and do my prophets no harm"—so can it be true that He does not see and regard what the wicked do to His people? They dare to say so, and render themselves the more brazen in their sin because of this, their infidelity!

8. *Understand, you brutish among the people.* Here the pleader turn into a prophet and, after having spoken to God, he now speaks to men. Understand, you boors," for so the word may be rendered, "You swine among the people."

9. *And you fools, when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?* [See Sermon #2118, Volume 35—THE PLANTER OF THE EAR MUST HEAR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You say that God does not see, that He does not regard—but how can that be? You are mad to talk so! He that gave men the sense of hearing—cannot He, Himself, hear? He that gave them sight—cannot He see?—

"Shall He who, with transcendent skill,
Fashioned the eye and formed the ear—
Who modeled nature to His will—

Shall He not see? Shall He not hear?
Vain hope! His eyes at once survey
Whatever fills creation's space—
He sees our thoughts, and marks our ways,
He knows no bounds of time and place."

10. *He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?* He judges the nations—read the Book of Providence and see how He deals out justice to nation after nation! So shall He not also correct the individual man?

10. *He that teaches man knowledge*—If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the translators have put in here the words, "shall not He know." They are printed in italics because they are not in the original. The original is very abrupt—it is as if the psalmist had said, "There, I am tired of arguing with you. You can draw your own inference. I will leave you to do that for yourselves. Fools as You are, I need not draw the inference for you." "He that teaches man knowledge." Does man really know anything unless God teaches him? Adam was taught of God at the first—and every particle of true science that man knows has been imparted by God! I do not say that God is the author of the science of today—much of that evidently comes from man—but all true knowledge is imparted to us by God. "He that teaches man knowledge"—do you think—do you *dream* that He does not Himself know everything?

10, 11. *Shall not He know? The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.* He knows that men are vanity, that they are, according to one translation, a vapor! The men themselves are but a vapor, but as for their thoughts, their intellect, their power to think, that of which many men are most proud—what does God think of these? What a wonderful thing "modern thought" seems to be! But listen to this, "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are nothing." Vanity is a negation, it is a bubble—a thing puffed up that has no substance in it—"The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

12. *Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and teach him out of Your law.* [See Sermon #2374, Volume 40—BLESSED DISCIPLINE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] These are two things that go well together—a rod and a book. No man ever learns much without both rod and book. "Blessed is the man whom You chasten." The book is never properly understood without some touches of the rod, but the book must also be there—"and teach" him out of Your law, "for if it were all rod and no book, there would be plenty of scars, but there would be no learning! Have you got the two together, my dear friend? Have you been of late very much with the book in a nook, and very much with the rod upon your bed? Well, then, you are a blessed man, for the psalmist says, "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your law."

13. *That You may give him a rest from the days of activity, until the pit is dug for the wicked.* In these days, the quiet virtues are not prized as much as they ought to be. Men are always busy—they must be ever on

the trot—but blessed is the man who is so taught by the book and by the rod that he comes to a holy quietism and learns to rest! The man or woman most rested is the best worker. He who knows how to sit at Jesus' feet, knows how to work for Jesus better than if he were continually running about and getting cumbered with much service. We never learn the secret of this rest by the book, alone, or by the rod, alone—the rod and the book *together* teach us to rest from the days of adversity. They teach us not to lay the present too much to heart, not to fret because of things as they are today, but to think of what is to be in that day when the righteous shall be rewarded, and when the mighty hunter shall have trapped His adversary and ours—when the pit shall be dug for the wicked and Satan's power shall be forever destroyed!

14. *For the LORD will not cast off His people.* He may cast them *down*, but He will never cast them off!

14. *Neither will He forsake His inheritance.* Even men will not give up their inheritance. This is especially the case among the Jews! You remember how Naboth would not sell his inheritance—he would sooner die. And the Lord will not forsake His inheritance—there is a sacred condition upon His people that never can be broken—and He will never give them up.

15. *But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.* The wicked may be the upper spokes of the wheel just now, but they will be the lower spokes before long! The truth of God may be in the mire, today, but she shall be upon the throne tomorrow! The revolutions of the wheels of providence produce strange changes. Wait. Work. Watch. For the Lord will set things right in His own good time.

16. *Who will rise up for me against the evildoer or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* The psalmist appeals for helpers, but he gets no response from man. And sometimes the man of God will have to stand alone— and that can be quite an education for him. Blessed is he who has learned to hang on the bare arm of God—he is better off without his earthly friends than he was with them! Here is the answer to the psalmist's question—

17. *Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.* You may be one of the best of God's servants and yet that may be your experience. Here is another piece of testimony in which many of us can join—

18. *When I said, My foot slips, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up.* "My foot had slipped from under me. I was down. But then, even then, You did put underneath me Your everlasting arms. 'Your mercy, O Lord, held me up.'"

19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul.* [See Sermon #883, Volume 15—MULTITUDINOUS THOUGHTS AND SACRED COMFORTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "My

thoughts"—so some read this verse—"seem intertwisted and interlaced like the many branches of a tree. I cannot make them out—they are in such a tangle." But the bird has learned to sit among the branches and sing, "Your comforts delight my soul." There are thoughts of grief, thoughts of fear, thoughts of disappointment, thoughts of desertion, thoughts of a broken heart—all sorts of thoughts, but God's comforts come in and delight the soul! You know what it is—do you not?—to be cast down, but not destroyed? To be troubled, and yet to be happy? "As sorrowful," says Paul, "yet always rejoicing." Whereupon an old divine remarks that it is "*as* sorrowful"—*quasi* sorrowful—but it is not "*as* always rejoicing." There is no "*quasi*" to that, but there is a real joy in the midst of a seeming sorrow! "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul."

20. *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with You, which frames mischief by a law?* Lord, are You on their side? Oh, no, and as You are not on their side, I care not who is! So long as You will not aid iniquity or help wrong-doing, I will, by Your grace, fight the battle through.

21, 22. *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn the innocent blood. But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge.* He gets away unto his God as he had been accustomed to hide in the cave of Adullam out of reach of his foes! And then he sits down in peace to sing—

23. *And He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yes the LORD our God shall cut them off.*

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GOD'S HAND AT EVENING
NO. 3290

A SERMON
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"Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening."
Ezekiel 33:22.

PERHAPS in the special senses in which Ezekiel uses this expression, we shall not expect to feel "the hand of the LORD" upon us. God may not call us to prophesy as Ezekiel did, although in the Scriptural use of the word, "prophesy," the preacher of the word is still called to deliver the message which he has received from his Lord's lips. The days of special visions and voices and prophesying have passed away, but we can still say with Peter, "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arise in your hearts."

I think, however, that we may use our text with some profit in other senses—"The hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening." So we will inquire, first, *what hand was this?* Secondly, *what time was this?* And then, thirdly, *what teaching is there for us in this incident?*

I. So first, let us ask, WHAT HAND WAS THIS? The answer is very clearly stated in the text, "the hand of the LORD." We will examine this expression, first, in its connection with the Lord's people, and then in its relation to sinners in whom a gracious work is beginning.

First, then, *looking at this expression in its connection with the Lord's people,* I remark that sometimes, "the hand of the LORD" is laid very heavily upon them in chastisement. It is no unusual thing for a child of God to say, "The hand of the LORD was upon me"—and often he has not merely to add, "in the evening"—but he can truthfully say, "All day long His hand has been heavily laid upon me." There are some of God's children who are very frequently the subjects of His chastening, and if any of you have come here smarting under the blows of His rod, you must not murmur, for this is the treatment that is meted out to all the rest of the Lord's family. It is through much tribulation that they enter the kingdom, so let not any one of us take up the lamentation of Jeremiah, "I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath"—but let us all expect to follow in the footsteps of the flock, well knowing that—

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

Be not astonished, therefore, if "the hand of the LORD" is laid upon you, thus, for, "if you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" Yet while you feel the weight of God's hand upon you, never forget that it is your *Father's* hand. Whatever form your trial may take—whether it is the loss of a child or of a parent, or the withdrawal of temporal prosperity, or the smiting of the body with aches and pains—the rod is never in any hand but the paternal one and even while the Father smites, He loves. Let this be your comfort, that it is not the hand of an enemy that is upon you—you are not suffering from a crushing blow from the foeman's mailed hand, but the stroke, whether it is heavy or light, is wholly caused by your loving Father's hand!

"The hand of the LORD" is also a humbling hand. When God lays His afflicting hand upon us, He takes away much of our fancied beauty and lets us see the ugliness of our natural deformity. We thought we were very patient until we had need of patience—and then we found what a murmuring, discontented spirit we had within us! Perhaps you, my brother, thought you were a strong believer until your present trial came. But now you have proved how feeble your faith really is. You imagined that you were better than the rest of God's saints because you could sing when they could only groan. But now you have hard work to keep from groaning yourself! It is a blessed thing when the blows of God's rod lay us low at our Father's feet. The safest option for all children of God is to lie flat upon the Rock of Ages. With all the joy and confidence that I trust we feel when we reflect upon our Lord's promises and His solemn oath and covenant, yet when we think of our own imperfections and unfaithfulness, we are compelled to bow very humbly before the throne of grace.

Turning to another side of the subject, let me say that there is no reason why the hand of the Lord should not be upon us without our having any particular trouble. When we have come up to God's house to worship Him, I trust that we have often felt "the hand of the LORD" upon us, pressing us down very low in a sense of our own weakness and unworthiness. There are other things beside affliction that can humble us beneath the mighty hand of God! When Peter's boat began to sink because it was full of fish, Peter, too, went down and he cried to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When we think of all the Lord's goodness to us, we cry out, somewhat as David did, "Who are we, O LORD, and what is our house, that You have done such great things for us?" If we have "the hand of the LORD" upon us in this sense, it will not crush us, nor drive us to despondency or death—it will make us realize our own nothingness while it will also give us a grateful sense of our Lord's loving-kindness and condescension in dealing so graciously with us!

Yet this humbling "hand of the LORD" is also at the same time an uplifting hand. The Christian is often a riddle to himself—he cannot

understand how it is that the lower he sinks, the higher he rises! Then he sings, with Dr. Watts—

"The more Your glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.
Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Immeasurably high!"

The truest joy is the joy of the creature in being made nothing that God may be all in all—the joy of emptiness in receiving of the divine fullness—the joy of utter weakness laying hold upon the divine strength! Have you never, dear friends, in the worship of God, felt His hand gloriously bearing you aloft that not merely were worldly cares forgotten, with all the things that concern time and sense, but you seemed to forget that you were still in the body and that the body was upon the earth? There have been times with some of us when "the hand of the LORD" has been so blessedly upon us that He has seemed to open the pearly gates and bid us enter! We have stood awe-stricken and yet full of joy in the presence of the eternal, and we have worshiped Him with cherubim and seraphim—and have anticipated the day when we shall join the heavenly throng to go no more out forever! "The hand of the LORD" when it is upon us thus is so uplifting that we feel as though the joys of our spirit are more than our bodily frame can bear—and we cry with the spouse—"Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am love-sick." May we often feel this down-casting and yet uplifting power of "the hand of the LORD" upon us!

Further, "the hand of the LORD" is a healing hand as well as a smiting and wounding one. Whenever it is laid upon a poor troubled conscience, it brings peace at once. There is no furrow in the brow which God's finger cannot smooth away. There is no burden upon the shoulders which God's hand cannot remove. Perhaps your heart was so heavy that you thought you would never be able to rejoice again—yet the Lord did but touch you and your depression was gone in a moment! There is an old fiction about the touch of a royal hand curing disease, but the royal hand of the King of kings really does what the other was only fabled to do! Let Him but touch the suffering soul and healing comes at once. It is useless for us to go to war with our besetting sins at our own charge—but when the Lord stretches forth His hand against them, it is another matter! Beloved friends may sometimes seek to set us right, yet through their lack of wisdom they may only aggravate the evil. But when God lays His hand upon the sin, drags it to the light, tries and convicts it—and hangs it up to die—then are we most blessedly delivered from it. If our besetting sin is a fiery temper, or a slothful nature, or a strange temptation to some other evil, may "the hand of the LORD" be so graciously upon us this evening that it shall heal us even before we go to our homes!

The Lord's hand is also a strengthening hand to all His children. Let Him but lay His hand upon you and then, as your days, so shall your strength be. Isaiah trembled when he saw "the King, the Lord of Hosts,"

but one of the seraphim touched his lips with a live coal from the altar, and then, in answer to the Lord's question, "Whom, shall I send, and who will go for Us?" he said, "Here am I; send me." So surely, when God touches the lips with His finger, power goes into the messenger whom He sends forth on His mission of mercy! Moses was very hesitant to go as God's ambassador to Pharaoh—and among his many excuses he urged that he was slow of speech and of a slow tongue—but the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth?"—as much as to say, "He who made your mouth knew what He was doing and He did not make a mistake when He gave you a slow tongue! Go you in *His* strength and you shall be mighty enough to deliver His people out of the land of Egypt." God worked through the weakness of Moses and so glorified Himself over the mighty Pharaoh. And so shall it be with us, my brothers and sisters in Christ, ministers, Sunday school teachers, tract-distributor, or whatever you may be—if "the hand of the LORD" shall be upon us, God shall be glorified in our weakness and we shall be mighty through Him, to the pulling down of strongholds. Tarry in the Jerusalem of your prayer closet until you are endued with power from on high, for, "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength"— and then in *His* name and in *His* might go forth to the service to which He has called you.

I may also add that, to many of you, "the hand of the LORD" is a well-known hand. You have been receiving from it all your days. You have gone to it thousands of times so that it has become very familiar to you. And there is one mark in that hand which has made it especially dear to you, for, "the hand of the LORD" from which you receive everything is a nail-pierced hand, for it is the hand of the man, Christ Jesus, as well as the hand of the Almighty God! And hard by the print of the nail is your own name, for He has said to you, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." When that divine-human hand, once outstretched upon the cross for our redemption, is laid upon us, then do we rejoice with exceedingly great joy!

Now for a little while let us *look at this expression in its relation to sinners in whom a gracious work is beginning.* And here I must remind you that if "the hand of the LORD" is ever laid upon you, then it will come, first, as a creating hand. It is the hand of God and that hand, alone, which can create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you! Nothing but the divine touch can ever make "a new creature in Christ Jesus." If all the angels had united all their powers, they could never have created a world and if all the ministers in the world were to combine their efforts, they could never create a new creature in Christ! Creation is the work of God, alone, so may He graciously lay His hand upon you tonight! Though there is nothing in you for Him to begin with, remember that He made the world out of nothing and He can make a new man of you out of nothing. It is true that your whole being, spiritually, is without form and void—and darkness is upon the face of the deep—but He who brought order out of chaos and said, "Let there be

light," and there was light, can do the same for you! May you become a new proof His creating power, so that the angels may sing over you as they once did over a newly made world!

Yet let me tell you that wherever "the hand of the LORD" comes, it always comes at first as a breaking hand! As soon as God's hand is laid upon us, down go the images of our pride as Dagon fell upon his face before the ark of God! And our self-righteousness, our self-conceit, our carnal confidence and everything else that is displeasing to the Most High are dashed in pieces by the blows from His almighty hand! It is a blessed thing to be put into God's mortar that He may pound us with the pestle that He holds in His hand until He has crushed and bruised us so as to bring us to self-despair—for then it will not be long before that same blessed hand of His shall bind up what He has broken and heal what he has wounded! It is His prerogative to say, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand." If you could go to some eminent surgeon, it would be a strong argument if you could say to him, "O sir, I pray you to heal me, for you did, yourself, cause this gaping wound! It was by your sharp knife that this gash was made, so will you not bind it up?" So go to God, sinner, with that poor broken heart of yours, and say to Him, "Lord, You did break it, will You not bind it up? You are Jehovah-Rophi, will You not heal me?" You know how David prayed, "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice." God is a bone-breaker and He is also a bone-mender! He is also a heartbreaker, yet He delights to bind up the hearts that He has broken! So go to Him, sinner, and ask Him to lay His hand upon you, first breaking, and then binding up—first killing, and then making alive!

Further, to sum up briefly, "the hand the LORD" is a receiving hand. And if you go to Him, sinner, He will receive you graciously and love you freely! It is also an upholding hand, and it will hold you up so that your feet shall not slip. It is an enriching hand, with which the Lord will give generously to you both in providence and in grace. It is a guiding hand with which the Lord shall direct your steps. And at last it shall be an opening hand, with which the Lord shall open the gates of glory, that you may enter them to go no more out forever!

II. Our second question was to be WHAT TIME WAS THIS? "The hand of the LORD was upon me *in the evening*." There is a congruity in meditating upon this text in the evening, so let us think upon it for a while in connection with our own inward experience.

And first, beloved, when you and I have felt "the hand of the LORD" upon us in the evening, I think it has come very seasonably *to remind us of the day's sin*. Evening is a good time for casting up the sum of the day—there ought to be set seasons for balancing our accounts. I am afraid that most us are so busy that we neglect this important duty. But it is well to devote a few minutes at night to review the day that has gone

by. Recall your actions, your words, your thoughts. Look at your sins that you may repent of them. Look at your follies that you may avoid them in the future. Look at your mistakes that you may not fall into them again. As you turn over all these things in your evening mediation, what a blessed thing it is to feel "the hand of the LORD" upon you making your conscience tender, not allowing you to play with sin as though it were a trifle, but assuring you, by a gentle pressure, that all your sin is put away through the great atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus your Lord and Savior!

It seems to me that evening is also *a very blessed time for feelings of gratitude.* How many are God's thoughts concerning us during a single day? When we rose this morning, I suppose that most, if not all of us, found that our food and raiment had been provided for us. We have been busy all day and have had just enough strength to get through our work. We have been preserved, perhaps, in the midst of temptations to which others have yielded. Where they have stumbled and fallen, we have been graciously upheld! And now at evening we are thinking of the many mercies which "the hand of the LORD" has bestowed upon us during the day. If we are delivered from some accident, we say what a merciful providence it was that we escaped—yet we are apt to forget the merciful providence when there is no accident! I have heard of a father who, in the days when there were no railways, needed to see his son who lived a long way off. They agreed to meet at a place half-way between their two houses. Each had to ride about 50 miles. And when they met, the son said to his father, "I have had a very special providence, for my horse stumbled three times yet it did not fall." "Well," said the father, "I also have had a very special providence, for my horse did not stumble once, all the way." This was quite as notable a providence as the son had experienced, but it is one that is often left unnoticed. Our mercies which pass unobserved are probably ten times as numerous as those which we perceive! It is well, therefore, at least at the close of every day, to look back upon all the mercy that has been given to us during the day—and to realize that "the hand of the LORD" is still upon us in the evening, shielding us from all harm, guiding us in His own good way and providing most generously for all our needs!

Evening is also *a special reminder of the evening of life*. We sometimes say that we—

"Long for evening to undress,
That we may rest with God"—

and to a Christian, dying is very much like going to bed. Being buried is just having our clothes put away while we are asleep in Jesus. Therefore, as evening is a reminder and type of dying, it is especially appropriate for us, then, to feel "the hand of the LORD" upon us and to realize that He has brought us there, to the margin of the river, and that He says to us, "You will have to cross that river someday, so dip your foot in it, now, and try to get used to dying." Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I die daily."

He was rehearsing his part every day, so that when the time came for him to actually die, he was fully prepared and was not taken unawares. It would be well if we could hear one say, "As I stood by my bedside, and took off my clothes, I felt that if I were now called to put off my body, which is the clothing of my soul, I could do it with as much complacency as I removed my garments. And when I laid my head upon my pillow and closed my eyes, I felt as easy in the thought of that being my last sleep as I have felt when simply going to my bed." If this is how we are able to talk, we may confidently say, "The hand of the LORD lay upon me in the evening."

I like, too, the thought of this manifestation of God in the evening because *the evening is usually the quiet time that is especially suited to meditation*. The morning is the time for action. The day is the time for work. But the evening is the time for mediation. It is well if we then have the inclination as well as the opportunity for communing with God, though I am afraid that our hearts are not always ready for this high privilege even when the season is peculiarly favorable for it. May you, dear friends, feel "the hand of the LORD" upon you every evening—and may you feel it very specially this evening! We are in the midst of a most gracious work in this congregation. We began with earnest prayer and we are now receiving the blessing that we have asked at the Lord's hands. During the past week we have had a most blessed fulfillment of that promise, "While they are yet speaking, I will hear." While we have been asking the Lord to bless, He has been blessing! And tonight we want again to feel "the hand of the LORD" upon us. When the preacher feels the Lord's hand on him, there is no lack of power or energy in his sermons! When the deacons and elders feel it, there is no lack of attention to the duties of their important offices! When the members feel it, there are no dull, lifeless prayer meetings! And when any individual Christians feels it, his heart is made to burn within him while his Master talks with him by the way. May it be so with every one of us!

III. Our third question was to be, WHAT TEACHING IS THERE FOR US IN THIS INCIDENT?

The text seems to me to teach us, first, *to look above man*. Ezekiel says, "The hand of the LORD was upon me"—not the hand of the king, nor the hand of the priest—but the hand of the Lord! The first question with many persons, when the service is over, very often is, "Well, how did you like the minister." But really, dear friends, that is a very unimportant question—the vital matter is—Did you see Jesus as the preacher sought to lift Him up before you? Was "the hand of the LORD" upon you, pressing you down to the ground under the weight your many sins and then setting you gloriously at liberty by casting all your sins behind His back into the depths of the sea to be remembered against you no more forever? That is the chief business of our coming together in these great assemblies—that we may be brought into real, close, personal contact

with God and see His power and His glory in the sanctuary! As for the preacher, he is of no more account than the lad with the five barley loaves and two small fishes! But if the Master will add His blessing, the multitudes shall be fed spiritually even as the thousands were then fed literally—and He shall have all the glory! I pray you, dear friends, never to be content with a sermon unless it brings you into yet closer fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and lifts your eyes above man unto Him to whom you are bid to look!

Then, as you are to look above other men, much more are you to *look above yourselves*. In one sense, it is hard work to keep a Christian's eyes looking up. But in another sense, it is equally difficult to keep them looking down. You may rake over the dunghills of your own corruption to try to find something good, but you will only find what Paul calls dung! But if you look up to the Most High, you will not search in vain for treasures that will endure forever! If you will persist in looking within, look there till you are tired and then do not look any longer. One look at Jesus Christ will remunerate you far better than 20 looks at yourself! No doubt there are certain marks and evidences of the Christian life for which it is quite right to talk, yet it is better to look at the marks of the Savior's wounds and to see the evidences of God's love manifested in the person and work of His well-beloved Son. It is much more profitable to look at the Creator than at the creature. If you must bring self in at all, let it only be as Ezekiel did when he said, "The hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening."

This text should also encourage us to *remember previous divine visitations*. I suppose Ezekiel had often felt the hand of the Lord upon him, but this time he recorded it. David called to remembrance former manifestations of God's mercy when he wrote, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." Sailors keep a logbook in which they enter the principal incidents of the voyage. And Christian, you ought to keep a log of your voyage to heaven! And you should especially record the visitations of God to your soul. There may come times when you will not have these visits and then, if you turn to your diary, you will be able to call to remembrance the joyous seasons of the past—and it will be a great comfort to you to recollect the experiences you passed through on Mizar's hill and Hermon's mount. There are certain occasions that some of us can never forget—and in our dark hours we think of them and say, "Lord, by all that we have felt in the past, we are assured that You will not let us go, but that You will hold us fast to the end."

And to close, I think that this should encourage us *in our darkening hours to expect the light of God's presence*. It was the evening, the sun was going down, but the Sun of Righteousness was still shining upon Ezekiel! The stars began to sparkle in the heavens, but the promises of God were brighter still! The night was coming on, but the prophet did not

dread it, for although he could not see his Lord's face, he could feel his Lord's hand upon him! It is one of the enjoyments of faith to walk with God in the dark. It is not the enjoyment of sight because it comes in the evening when strength is declining, and life, itself, is dying out. Ah, that evening will soon come to every one of us when we shall have to bid farewell to the fond pursuits of the day—that "night" of which our Savior said that then, "no man can work." And when that night comes on and we begin to feel its chilly dews settling upon our dying brow. When the hoar-frost of death shall be upon every limb, how blessed it shall be to have a bright and glowing lamp within our soul which will owe none of its brilliance to sun or moon, but to the Lord God who gives us the light that shall last forever!

"At evening time it shall be light." In some parts of the world there is no twilight—as soon as the sun sets, night follows immediately. But here in England our long evenings are a great delight, and certainly so is the long evening of a well spent life, when you have, to a great extent, finished with the toil and turmoil of earthly service and your soul has a blessed season of resting, as Bunyan's pilgrims had in the land Beulah until the summons came for them to cross the river and go into the presence of the King. It will be a blessed thing to feel the hand of the Lord upon us in that evening! And whether it is long or short, all will be well with all who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ! Even though we have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for He will be with us. His rod and His staff shall comfort us! And when we get to heaven, we will tell the angels that "the hand of the LORD" was upon us in the morning of our days when we gave our young hearts to the Lord! That His hand was upon us in the noontide of middle life while we were toiling for Him with all our might! That His hand was upon us in the afternoon helping us still to gather the precious grain into His garner, and that His hand was upon us, as it was upon Ezekiel, in the evening! As the Lord God walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, so will He be with us in the evening of our lives! And though we must go to bed and sleep in the tomb, we shall awake in His likeness and then shall we be satisfied—and His hand shall still be upon us in the morning—that morning which will be to us without mourning, that day which shall never have a night—that blessedness which shall last forever! God grant that this may be the portion of each one of us, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 92.

Verse 1. *It is a good thing to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O most High.* It is good in itself. It is good for those who hear it, but it is especially good for our own hearts to give thanks

unto the Lord and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High. Sometimes when we are very heavy in spirit, if we would take care not to defraud the Lord of the revenue of praise that is due Him, we should find that the readiest way to bring comfort to ourselves is to sing praises unto His holy name. Brother and sisters in Christ, it is not very notable work to praise God when all things go well with us—it is far grander work to praise Him when everything seems to be against us! It is because the nightingale sings by night that he has such excellence among the birds. And if you and I can praise God in the dark, then we shall find that it is a good thing for ourselves to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High.

2. *To show forth Your loving-kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night.* [See Sermon #1138, Volume 19—MORNING AND EVENING SONGS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Begin the day by setting forth the Lord's loving-kindness. It was His loving-kindness that watched over you when you lay unconscious and defenseless and could not, therefore, protect yourself. It was His loving-kindness that drew wide the curtain of the night, that touched your eyelids and awakened you out of that sleep which was the image of death and bade you look out upon the rising sun. Therefore take the key of the morning to open the day, and let it be the golden key of praise! Show forth the Lord's loving- kindness in the morning.

And when night comes again, let us then sing of God's faithfulness. We have experienced it through another day, let us praise Him for it. Now we see how He has borne with us, pardoned us, preserved us, supplied our needs and continued to educate us throughout another day. Let us, therefore, praise and bless His holy name and so close the day and commit ourselves to sleep again under His divine protection.

3. *Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.* Under the old dispensation, instrumental music seemed more congruous than it does now with the spiritual worship into which we have been introduced. If we must ever have instrumental music in our worship, let it be the same—the very same as David had. And then I, for one, though I should still think it we going back to the old dispensation long since superseded, would put up with it! I could never get much further than that, I think, for what instrument is there that is equal to the human voice? What music can be compared with it? All other sound is but the poor attempt of man to rival the creation of his God—but the human voice is full of charming melodies and harmonies! And if it is controlled by a true heart, there is nothing like it even to our ears, while it seems to me that it must be far more acceptable to God than the product of mere mechanism.

4. *For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work: I will triumph in the works of Your hands.* There is a blessed verse to come from the heart and mind of a happy man who is praising God and who looks on all

the works of the Lord in creation, providence, and redemption—and makes them all the subject of his joyous song!

5. *O LORD, how great are Your works! And Your thoughts are very deep.* There is little that we know of the thoughts of God except as we gather them from His works or learn them from His word, "for what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God." It is by divine revelation that we must know the thoughts of God—and the more we know of them, the more shall we realize that they are very deep.

6. *A brutish man knows not; neither does a fool understand this.* He looks at nature and as he sees its varied operations. He observes certain eternal laws, as he calls them, but he does not see the power at the back of those laws which makes the laws potent for the government of the world! No, he lives and walks where God has displayed His power to the fullest, yet he fails to see Him! It would be a strange proceeding for anyone to go into an artist's house and look at his pictures and his sculptures and yet never to think of him—but this is what the brutish man does with regard to the works of God, and with regard to God Himself!

7. *When the wicked spring as the grass*—Numerous, fresh, vigorous—

7. *And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever.* That is the end to which they will surely come, no matter how much they boast, nor how they grow and flourish till they seem like the grass in the meadow, to cover everything so that you can go nowhere without seeing them! Yet "they shall be destroyed forever."

8. *But You, LORD, are most high forevermore.* The Psalmist began by calling the Lord, Most High, and now he says that He is "most high forevermore." Yes, this is our joy that God never passes away—He abides forever. Myriads of the ungodly have come and gone. Empires of wickedness have risen to great power and in due time have passed away like dreams—but we can still say, with the Psalmist, "You, Lord, are most high forevermore."

9, 10. *For, lo, Your enemies, O LORD, for, lo, Your enemies shall perish as the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn have You exalted like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.* [See Sermon #1649, Volume 28—FRESHNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The believer, though he is very weak in his own consciousness, and utterly insignificant in his own esteem, shall receive fresh power from God! And when the wicked melt away, he shall grow stronger and stronger.

11. *My eyes shall also see my desire on my enemies, and my ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.* The translators put in the words, *my desire.* In both cases they are printed in italics to show that they are not in the original. No doubt the psalmist means that his eyes should see the end of his enemies and his ears should hear of their total overthrow.

12. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.* The palm tree flourishes amidst the desert sunshine, growing straight upright towards heaven without a branch that deviates to the right or the left and bearing its great masses of fruit as near heaven as ever it can! It is a fine type of Christian life and growth and fruitfulness! A Christian should also be "like a cedar in Lebanon," firmly rooted in his appointed place and defying the winter's snows which threaten to bury him out of sight.

13. *Those that are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our Lord.* Like trees planted in the courtyard, screened and protected, such are true believers! God is their defense and they are screened within the court of the Lord's house.

14. *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.* When Christians decay, they shall still be fruitful. They shall not feel as so many others do, that their age is a cure—it shall be to them a blessing, ripening them for eternity, and it shall be a blessing to all by whom they are surrounded.

15. *To show that the LORD is upright: He is my rock.* Can each one of you say that concerning the Lord, "He is my rock, my foundation, my refuge, my shelter"?

15. *And there is no unrighteousness in Him.* Say that when you have lost the dearest one you ever knew! Say that when your property has melted like the hoar frost in the morning. Say that when every bone in your body is aching and some fell disease is hastening you to an early grave! "There is no unrighteousness in Him." How long have you known Him? If it is 70 years, or more than that, He has never been unfaithful to you, nor allowed a single promise of His to fail! Write this down as the testimony of the experience of all God's people, "There is no unrighteousness in Him."

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THE SEA! THE SEA! THE WIDE AND OPEN SEA!
NO. 3291

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY.

"The sea is His, for He made it: and His hands formed the dry land."
Psalm 95:5.

THIS Psalm exhorts us to sing joyfully unto God. Whether we contemplate the land or the sea, there will be found upon them both abundant reasons for adoring the great Creator. Some, I know, as they walk upon the land, can no more praise Him than if it were one vast desert of Sahara—and yet the earth is full of His goodness—it is as a garden yielding not only food for man and beast, but lovely and fragrant flowers! Forest and field, mountain and plain alike sing out the praises of the Lord! Nor is the sea less rich in excitements to worship the Lord our Maker. Ignorant persons regard the sea as a dreary waste of waters. In the olden times, our home-loving forefathers were desperately afraid of the sea and looked upon it as a devouring monster. It was a "melancholy ocean" to them—a place of constant sorrow and sudden death—they shuddered as they thought of it. But, indeed, to him who is rightly taught, the sea is full of beauty! Its every wave is lit up with splendor—the sea is the Lord's, for He made it! You see then, that both on the land and on the sea adoration is in its place. Praise is never out of season at any time and worship is never foreign in any land. It matters not whether we travel over sand or snow, or how we are tossed about on Arctic or tropical sea—we are still in the pasture of the great shepherd, and within the palace of the great King. Praise the Lord from the earth and let dragons and all deeps join in the Psalm. "Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

At this time I shall ask you only to think of the sea. I could far more easily preach upon this text if I were standing in one of my delightful haunts by the Mediterranean, looking over its blue waters, hidden away in the cleft of a rock, with the spray at my feet. Then, I think, I should not coldly read the words, but clap my hand, as I cried with my heart, "The sea is His, for He made it." Here we are, however—stranded on this white-cliffed island and banished from the fresh sea breezes to this huge Babylon of bricks where men appear to forget God since they see so little of His world and so much of their own! Let us try, if we can, to transport

ourselves to the wide and open sea and as we gaze all around and see nothing but the rolling waves, let us sing—

"He formed the deeps unknown,
He gave the seas their bound.
The watery worlds are all His own,
And all the solid ground."

There is no need for any labored division in our sermon tonight. Our first one will be that *God made the sea*. And the second will be that *therefore it is His.* And the third shall come out of the next verse—*He is therefore to be adored.* "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!"

I. Our first thought is that GOD MADE THE SEA.

Somebody made it and *who else could have made it but God*? It is not often that you find a seafaring man who is an atheist. Addison tells us of a time when he was aboard ship and there was a passenger on deck who was an infidel. He was reported to the captain as an atheist and neither he nor the sailors could make out what sort of a strange fish that might be—and so asked him what he meant. They were told that he did not believe in a God. A storm coming on, the men proposed that they should pitch him overboard seeing he did not believe in God Almighty! But he was soon cured of his unbelief, for, when things looked threatening, the first person who was down on his knees crying for mercy in great terror was the precious atheist, who soon got rid of his atheism when he felt in danger of his life! A little while ago, a Christian minister crossing to America was walking the deck with a gentleman who called himself an atheist. It was a very bad night and the vessel had to steam on in the teeth of a head wind. It would have been fatal to let her drift. The captain said, "We cannot keep any watch, we must drive ahead, and if we run into an iceberg, there's an end of us." Our friend, who believed in God, hearing this, said that he should turn in and go to sleep. His companion declared that he could not think of doing any such thing—he should not like to die in his sleep—and so he would walk the deck, rough as it was. All night long he who had no God was cold and wet with watching, fretting and worrying because he was afraid he should die, while my friend slept sweetly and rose in the morning fresh as a lark! Coming on deck, he accosted the philosopher, "What? Have you not turned in?" "No, no." He was miserable, he was unhappy. "Why," said the believer, "I trust in my heavenly Father and I fell asleep, and I feel quite refreshed. What good have you got by staying here?" "I must confess," said the other, "you believers have the best of it when you get to sea." Yes, and assuredly we have the best of it on land, too! We have the best of it in health, in sickness, in death—and we shall have the best of it forever!

God made the sea, and *the prints of His hands are still to be seen*. Skillful persons can tell that a picture is by a certain artist by its style. It is not everybody that can judge well, but a man skilled in art knows the touch of each painter's brush. "That is Rembrandt," cries the artist, "he

alone could produce such lights and shadows! And the other is by Salvator Rosa—I know the master's hand." He also who has sought out the works of the Lord and has pleasure therein, knows the great Father's style. The same sublime mind which gave us the Holy Scriptures also ordained the channels of the deep. I am absolutely sure that He who reveals the secrets of the soul is He in whose hands are the deep places of the sea. His commandment is exceedingly broad, even as the main ocean—and of His divine grace we are compelled to cry, "O the depth!" even as when we sound the Atlantic!

I will not go into the question tonight, but there are wonderful points of likeness between the word and the work of the Almighty. The sea is a mystery of waters and Scripture is sometimes obscure—but yet the sea shines like a mirror and in Scripture we see the Lord as in a glass! The Bible has its most terrible storms and its calms most restful—it is full of life, even as the sea nourishes innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts. It is full of power, even as the sea moves in the fullness of its strength. There is a certain peculiar light of its own within the word, as if it were all sun and flame, even as at times the waters are a liquid light and the waves shine as with ten thousand stars! The wisdom, goodness, power and infinity of God are all to be seen in the ocean by those who have opened eyes. He who knows God can see His hand in the scales of every little fish. If he takes up a five-finger or a crab, he perceives a master hand in the fashioning of its smallest members! If you take a beautiful needle, however admirably polished, and put it under the microscope, you say to yourself, "A man made this," for it looks like a rough bar of iron—the microscope discovers its lack of finish. But if you take a frill of seaweed, or the eye of a shrimp, and put these under the glass, you exclaim at once, "No man ever made this! No man could have made it. It is perfection!" I shall not go into further details, but I am sure that he who is acquainted with the works of God sees at once that the sea is God's creature—and in its ever-changing sameness, in its awe-inspiring majesty, in its tremendous force, unsearchable mystery, its waves and caverns, its calms and storms—it tells of an invincible hand, an unsearchable mind!

God made the sea—you can mark His wisdom there. Philosophers tell us there is just as much water in the sea as there ought to be, and no more. Perhaps if there were twice as much sea as we now have, we should not be able to live—and if there were any less, the world would become too dry for human habitation. The land and water balance each other to an ounce and a drop—there can be neither more nor less. Permanent and fixed are the relations and proportions of matter. Substances may change their combinations, but of the elements, the same amount must abide till all things pass away. That the sea is salt, and therefore does not corrupt. That it is moved with tides and, therefore, does not stagnate. That it evaporates and, therefore, does not

increase so as to drown the earth, are all instances of divine wisdom. If its waters were more or less salt than they are, many fishes would die and the floating power of the ocean would change. There is a relation between the size of the ocean and the balancing of a dewdrop upon its blade of grass—a proportion between a hurricane and the dancing of a gnat in the summer's sun. The more we study the sea the more shall we say, "Your way, O Lord, is in the sea and Your path in the great waters."

And certainly no man can deny the power which thunders across the billows. What tremendous force is there displayed! "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yes than the mighty waves of the sea." When one has seen the damage the sea has worked upon our coasts, the way in which the hardest rock has been worn away—when one has sadly watched a huge boat tossed to and fro like a plaything and when one has heard how the largest vessels are caught in a cyclone and whirled away like feathers—one bows upon his face before the Almighty Lord who rules the sea! And yet God's goodness is there as well. The sea is a great benefactor! Where were the clouds, and where the rains, and where our harvests, if it were not for the ocean? The sea feeds myriads with its fish and enriches many more by its commerce. It was once thought to divide nations, but now it has been the highway by which they communicate—a silver belt by which all lands are bound to one another! England, above all nations, has reason to see the goodness of God in the sea. Perhaps we had not even remained a nation if the silver streak had not separated us from the continent. Most probably we had not been a free nation, or a Protestant nation, if the Lord had not bid the waters encompass us—

"O Britain, praise your mighty God,
And make His honor known abroad!
He bade the ocean round you flow,
Not bars of brass could guard you so."

May God inspire British hearts with gratitude to Him for setting old England like a queen in the midst of the sea where she laughs at the tyrant's power!

Every attribute of God shines in the sea although the more spiritual and precious are but dimly seen, these being reserved to be manifested in Christ Jesus the Lord, before whose feet the sea crouched in reverence! Perhaps even those attributes will be discovered to be there in some degree when our eyes shall be strengthened to see the glory of the Lord in all His works. Till then we will listen to the sea and think of it as an—

"Impassioned orator with lips sublime,
Whose waves are arguments which prove a God."

God made the sea. I delight to reflect upon this fact, for *it brings us so very near to God*. Yonder at our feet are the blue waves which He has created. You have certain treasures which you value greatly because they were made by a dear friend, and you say, "Whenever I look at them I

seem to feel him near." Thus do God's works make us feel that He is not far from us. Mungo Park, in the deserts of Africa, had his heart cheered by taking up a little bit of moss and reflecting that God made it, and that the Creator had been there and was there, watching over the tiny green thing! Come, then, my friend, and stand by the sea and say to yourself, "The sea is His, for He made it. Here is something that my heavenly Father made. He has left His footprints on these waves. He is still here and His power works forever." The palpitating heart of the sea, with it perpetual tide, tells of God's present life. Its alternate advance and retreat at His bidding prove His present majesty, for He says, "To here shall you come, but no further."

I trust many of my seafaring friends have often felt near to God when alone upon the vast deep. God is in Ratcliff Highway, but it is uncommonly hard to find Him. We could find fifty devils there in five minutes, sooner than find a trace of God—for there is the den of the drunkard, there is the foul haunt in which men are robbed and ruined—the house of the strange woman, of which Solomon says, "the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell." Far out at sea the sailor is free from the danger of falling tiles and chimney-pots when the wind is blowing. And he is also free from many a temptation which besets him on shore. Often, I have no doubt, when you have been alone, watching at night, pacing the deck to and fro and looking up to the bright stars, you have thought, "God is very near me now." I remember, when going to Hamburg, I stood at night with the captain upon the quarter-deck and suddenly a light seemed to rush down the mast and light up the rigging and the whole ship in such a manner as I never saw before. For an instant the vessel seemed to be on fire, and then the light was gone! "What is that?" I asked. "What is that?" he said, for neither of us knew—but we felt awe-struck. Seafaring men meet with them often—strange things that we "land lubbers" never dream about! "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." God seems to come very near to those who are on the waters. When the wind howls and the sea booms, the noise would suffice to drown a thousand volleys of artillery. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thunders: the Lord is upon many waters." When men mount up to heaven and go down again to the deep, then is God present to them and they cry unto Him in their trouble. The sea has often forced men to exclaim—

"Great God, how infinite are Thee!
What worthless worms are we!"

The fact that God made the sea *should make us feel more confidence in venturing upon it*. We may trust ourselves upon the King's highway! We may go where Jesus went, and where the Lord reigns—"The Lord sits upon the flood; yes the Lord sits King forever." As "all things work together for good to them that love God," there is nothing left to work for evil. The sea cannot destroy those whom God would preserve. Even if the

sea in its tempestuous mood should take away our lives, what will it do but waft us to the gates of heaven? It is as well to go to glory by water as by land—perhaps drowning is an easier death than expiring with broken bones or torturing pains. You who are about to emigrate to Australia or to America and are feeling dreadfully troubled tonight at the thought of the terrible sea, should be of good courage. Your Master went to sea and His disciples went with Him—they, too, were tossed with tempest, and yet their vessel and the other little ships which sailed on the billows of dark Galilee were safe! Our Master, who is Lord High Admiral on the seas, brought all the fleet into harbor safe and sound! He has not given up His rank, or lost His power, and He will save all who sail under His convoy. No tempest or tornado shall wreck a soul that is in His charge!

This ought to make us feel at rest as to those who lie buried beneath the waves. I have heard it said by one or two whom I have known, "I would not have minded, sir, if they could have found the body." I suppose there is something natural about that regret, but I do not greatly sympathize with it. The sea is God's own—and blessed are they who lie in God's most sacred sleeping place, where no spade of sexton shall ever disturb their bones! Where can any of us lie better than where "pearls lie deep"? What myriads are there already! When the trumpet of the resurrection sounds, the sea must give up her dead and myriads will stand upon the waves, as on a sea of glass, to be judged! And full many of them will rise to their eternal thrones from the caverns of the mighty main! God has but to speak it, and though the bodies may have been devoured by fish, or dissolved into their separate atoms by the perpetual beating of the surf, yet when He speaks it, frames shall be refashioned, life shall come back at His call and our dead men shall live, and in their flesh shall they see God, who, before they died, had learned to say, "I know that my Redeemer lives."

Do not be distressed by the fear of dying at sea. You must die somewhere. Do you know the old story of the man who asked a captain if he was afraid to go to sea? "I am not," said the mariner, "why should I be?" "Look at the danger," said the landsman. "How did your father die?" "He died at sea" "How did your grandfather die?" "He was lost at sea." "And your great-grandfather?" "Yes," he replied, "I have heard that he, too, was drowned at sea" "Surly then, you are afraid to go to sea?" "No," said the captain, "I am not. Where did your father die?" "He died in his bed" "And where did your grandfather die?" "He died in his bed." "And where did your great-grandfather die?" "As far as I know, he also died in his bed." "And yet you are not afraid to go to bed!" There is good, sound reason in such a view of the matter. We shall not die before our time. Our lives are in the divine hands. You may well smile at my tale and I hope you will keep a gleam of that pleasant look for the next time death stares you in the face—and then say to yourself, "Be still, my heart. If my time has come, I will commit my spirit into the hands of a faithful Creator and feel that if I sink, I shall drop into my Father's hands, for He

holds the waters in the hallow of His hands." Thus much upon that first point—God made the sea

II. Our second point is, GOD OWNS THE SEA—"The sea is His, for He made it." *He owns it by right of creation.* It is not everything that a man makes that is his own. Many tradesmen are occupied in making divers articles which when they have made them, belong to their masters. But that is because the materials are found for them. God made the sea out of nothing—there were no materials ready to His hand to make this world of—His own *omnipotence* spoke it into existence! He filled the sea from His own treasury, the liquid stores were His own. There is not in the sea at this moment a single wave that anybody made but God, and all the constituent elements of it were created by Him, and by Him only. Therefore He claims the sea from shore to shore, and who shall question His title? Not only did He own it once, but He owns it now—He has never handed over the ocean to any people or nation! David said, "The sea is His," and it is still God's. It always will be His sea!

But the sea is man's. God evidently meant us to go to sea because when He made man, almost the first thing He said was that He made him to have dominion over the fish of the sea. And I do not see how we can have dominion over the fish of the sea if we never go to sea at all. There are the fish, thousands of miles from the shore, and if no mariner shall ever cross the deep, what dominion can we be said to have over "the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the seas"? He made man to be a fisherman as well as to be a farmer. He meant him to plow the waves as well as to plow the shore! In fact, our present race all sprang from one whose huge vessel was the cradle of the new race. Man owns the sea but still, the sea is God's. Man is God's viceroy, but God is the true King. Man is tenant under God and should pay the quit-rent of reverential gratitude and adoration, for the freehold of the sea remains with the Lord. There may be a victory in India or in Ireland, but India and Ireland are still the Queen's—and so man may have dominion over the fish of the sea but it is a delegated sovereignty—the sea is still the Lord's.

Old ocean does not belong to Neptune, as the heathen used to say. Father Neptune is an idle dream! The idolaters parceled out the various kingdoms among their deities—one should rule the heavens, another the clouds, another the earth and another the sea—but we know that there is only one God. The sea is Jehovah's—not Neptune's.

Though we sometimes sing, "Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves," the words are not true! Jehovah rules the waves—not Britannia! There is a sense in which the patriotic song expresses a great truth—and I have not a word to say against it—but we all know that we may be on board Britannia's biggest ship of war, but the Union Jack cannot save us in the time of tempest! Jehovah must then interpose and bid the billows sleep. "The sea is His, for He made it."

I sometimes feel very glad when I look at the sea and think that it belongs to the great and generous God and not to greedy man. Here upon land, every foot of earth is enclosed by somebody and jealously guarded from trespassers. The village had a breezy common upon which a poor man might at least keep a goose—but the great folks could never rest till every inch was put within hedges and made their own. You can scarcely walk anywhere without being met by, "*trespassers, beware.*" Mountains and hills which everybody ought to be allowed to climb without leave, are fenced in and kept from all intruders. Men fight for years over a yard of ground that is my lord's, and this is my lady's, and this is copyhold of the manor. "The heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's, but the earth has He given to the children of men"—and they scramble for it and divide it among themselves! No such greed can appropriate the sea. The free sea cannot be parceled out, nor hedged, nor ditched, nor walled! It has no lords of the manor, but remains free and unappropriated forever! "The sea is His, for He made it." According to law, a few miles from the shore the sea belongs to the country which borders on it, but once reach the main ocean and nationalities are forgotten. The sea is neither English, nor French, Dutch nor American. No ship is a trespasser there! No one ever thought of impounding stray whales for going out of their owner's fields. The pastures of the deep are for all fish—they may feed where they will, from shore to shore.

"The sea is His," and *this begets in you a joyous sense of liberty*, as though for once you were beyond bounds and, like a sea bird, feared no cage or fowler's snare. Oh, for a bound from billow to billow of the unpolluted main, where sail of man has never been seen, or voice of blasphemy ever heard! Who can hinder our liberated spirit as it dances on the wave, or dives beneath it? May we always wear that free spirit about us, even in these huddled homes and narrow streets! Let us not be grasping, mean, narrow—let us not hedge in all things unto ourselves, but desire that others may share in our blessings! May we have largeness of heart as the sand which is on the seashore and greatness of love comparable to the immeasurable sea!

"The sea is His." Then *this sentence puts all other claimants out of court*. The sea is the Lord's and, therefore, He ought to be reverenced on it. Hush! Hush! What are you doing, man? Swearing at God on His own sea! Stop till you get on land—and when you reach the shore, stop till you can find a place where God is not near you, for to swear at Him to His face is madness! Will you insult God on His own sea? No, surely. If the sea is His, you will mind what you are doing. When a man is out in the street, when he wanders about as he pleases, he may often take many liberties. But if he is invited to a friend's house, he does not like to be to boisterous and noisy, but minds his manners. If any of us were invited to dinner with the Queen, I am sure we should feel quite nervous, and ask of our friends, "Jack, how do you behave when you go into a palace? What is the way of doing it?" You would all be anxious to be

proper and well-behaved. On the sea it seems to me that you should be particularly careful of what you say and do for you are on God's premises! In as much as He can hear you think—mind what you think about! On the sea you are inside God's house—be holy, then—"for holiness becomes His house forever." There is the throne of the great King and around it is a pavement of crystal! I mean the glassy sea and you sailors should think of yourselves as God's courtiers—permitted to come very near Him, and to behold more of His glory than any other men! Oh that you may be led to think of your position in this light!

I wish you would think highly of your honorable calling. When a man thinks that his calling necessitates his being wicked, he is sure to be wicked. But when he judges that he is under obligation to be holy, perhaps he will desire to be so and God's grace will help him to be so! Ho, you who do business on God's own sea—fly away from His royal domain if you resolve to rebel against Him! Do not dare to sin to His face! But where shall you go? If you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost of the sea you are still within His courts!

There is yet another view of the matter. The sea is the Lord's and, therefore, *I may confess my sin to Him when I am out on the ocean* and He will hear me, for He is there! I may weep the tear of penitence and He will see me, for God is there! Out at sea I may cry, "My Father," and He will hear His child! Brother, you may find Jesus at sea for He was at home on the waves and a companion of seafaring men! The lake of Galilee was familiar with His voice and saw His answer to the prayer, "Lord, save, or I perish!" The sea around you waits to hear you pray and to see God's wonders on the deep!

Something calls for a repetition of that, "hush," which I gave just now, in the thought that "the sea is His," for *God reveals Himself through the sea*—therefore gaze with awe! I have not the slightest doubt that many a man has learned much of God on the ocean, although as yet he knows not the Redeemer and His salvation. I wish every sailor would daily read the Bible, which is our chart to heaven, but many who have neglected that blessed book, have found lessons of warning, yes, and lessons of hope in the rolling waves. O hear the voice of God in the storm! Be warned as you escape from the jaws of death! Have hope as you cling to the rock! The sea is God's—take care that when you fly over its hallowed surface, you read Jehovah's book, bow before His throne, trust in His Son and offer continual thanksgiving to Him!

It seems to me that as the sea is God's, *then sailors should be His, too*, or they are trespassers. A man feeds his own sheep in his own pastures, and would not God have His own mariners on His own sea? Moreover, if God owns the sea because He made it, He owns *you*, because He made you, too! You are His creature and by all the rights of creatorship you belong to Him. He claims you—will you dispute the claim? I would not like to think of you as a blot upon the fair face of the ocean. God is

looking over all the waters and seeing the white sails and the smoking funnels that even now are passing from shore to shore. And He is saying, "The sea is all Mine, but those men who breast the storm are not Mine. I preserve them, but they never think of Me. I have sent salvation to them, but they will not hear it. The fish and the bird know their seasons, but man rebels against Me." I cannot bear to think that it should be so. I long for the day when every ship upon the sea shall be an ark and every sailor a Noah!

What are some of you sailors doing? Why, there are many of you whom I would trust with anything—I would not count my gold, but trust you with my purse—I am so sure that you would bring it back safely. You hate dishonesty and would not tell a lie. You speak out bravely and fear no man, and yet some of you rob God! You pay your debt to everybody most freely, but not to your Maker! You owe Him most, and yet think of Him least! Is not this wrong? See that child? They say he is very good to the servants and to strangers, but he always puts on a scowl when he sees his father, for he cannot stand him. Would you like to be the father of such a child? Yet you are like he. You are capital fellows on board a ship, capital men on shore, too, when you get among your families—and yet toward God you act shamefully! May the Spirit of God lead you to feel that you are wrong—and when you feel it, may you have Grace to tack about and steer for another point!

A little while ago, a vessel picked up a man far out at sea in an open boat. He was unconscious. The oars were lying by his side and he had evidently drifted from off the beach, carried by a current right away from help. I wonder whether any man here is drifting right away—out of sight of land, drifting on and on! Ah, Jack, when you were a boy, you went with your mother to the little chapel in the village. Do you recollect that you were in the Sunday school? You loved to worship with your mother, who is now in heaven, but you went away from home and you went away from God, too! You have been pretty nearly round the world—do you remember the places where you have landed only to plunge into sin? Oh, you forget, do you? I must tell you, then, that God did not forget and your own conscience does not forget, for the stain is on your soul today. You have drifted, drifted, drifted. How long is it since you read a chapter of the Bible? How long since you bowed your knees in prayer? You have drifted very far out. I wish this full-rigged ship of mine, which has just come within sight of you, might pick you up. At any rate, I hail you from this quarterdeck, and if you are not quite unconscious, I hope you will hear the call. Poor shipmate, we would like to get you up the ship's side! Some of my crew will be after you in the boats, directly, for there are true hearts here that love to rescue the perishing. If one of them comes alongside, just know that he is a friend and that he comes in the name of Jesus, "mighty to save." May the Lord Jesus come, Himself and put out His hand to some sinking Peter, and save him from a watery grave! Amen.

I wonder where the training ship, "Atalanta," now is? Where are the other vessels which have been missed so long? We have reason to fear that they are lost! Fine vessels and yet lost! Hundreds on board and all lost! We cannot bear to think of it. If they are lost, it will be of no use to go after them—the swiftest vessel cannot overtake them and the sharpest lookout will never see them. They are beyond hope. But what a mercy it is that you are not! If it had not been for the mighty hand of God last voyage, you would not only have been lost at sea, my Friend, but lost forever! To be lost at sea, if the soul is safe, is but a small calamity—but to lose the soul is to lose all—it were good for that man that he had never been born! Blessed be God, you are not in hell yet! You are not shut out from mercy yet! Jesus Christ still flies the mercy-signal and His servant still cries to you, "Come, come, come to Jesus! Come and welcome, come and put your trust in the Savior." May His gracious Spirit lead you to do so! Remember, wherever you are, on whatever sea you may sail, the sea is His. His grace reaches to the uttermost. The shipwrecked soul is still within the reach of mercy! If God does but lead it to cry to Him out of the lowest depths, He will hear the voice of supplication!

III. I now invite you to the third and concluding point, "O COME, LET US WORSHIP AND BOW DOWN." You of the land, and you of the sea, let us together worship the Lord our God! It is no new work for one of us, for our life is spent in worship, but oh, if it is a new thing with any man here, I would gently take him by the hand and say, "Come, friend, let us worship and bow down, let us do it together. You are a sinner—so am I. You have no merits and I have none. If ever you are saved, it will be by grace, alone, and so it will be in my case. Jesus must be your only hope, and He is mine. 'O come, let us worship.'"

Have you never worshiped God? Then sit still in the pew and do it. Say, "My God, You have made me, teach me how to worship You." Shall I stop a minute while you ask pardon for Jesus' sake?

(Pause.)

This is the last thing I have to say. I recollect a man, an old sailor, who had been a great blasphemer. He was a regular old salt, but there was no salt of divine grace in him, for he hated religion. He heard the gospel. The Lord brought him to his knees, broke his heart, gave him deep conviction of sin and afterwards led him to look to Christ and trust Him and find salvation. When this weather-beaten mariner came forward to join the church, he said, "I am come to get on the register, for I have got a new owner. I used to carry the black flag at the masthead and there was not a timber in me but what belonged to the devil. I carried many a cargo and sailed over many a sea for him, but now I belong to Jesus from stem to stern, and I want to run up the blood-red flag of Christ, who has bought me for His own. I want you to register me under my new owner and let me sail with those who belong to Him." We were glad enough to register

him in the church-book. The first point is to get the owner, the Lord Jesus, and then to acknowledge Him before all the world.
You Christian sailors, wherever you go, show your flag! A dear man of God, a captain, was baptized here last Thursday night and he told me that 20 or more of his crew were converted on the last voyage out. He said, "We cannot make Christians of them, but we give them an opportunity every day of hearing the gospel and, blessed be God, many have found the Savior." Captains, mind you look to your crews—and don't have their blood on your skirts through your neglect! If you are not captains, if you have any influence at all, carry the Gospel wherever you go. I believe if you are nothing but a cabin boy you can speak a word for Jesus Christ if you have Jesus Christ in your hearts! And then others will say, "Why, that boy shames us, for he loves the Savior!" Though they may scoff at you and pretend to despise you, it will make a hole in their consciences, depend upon it! If you drop a lighted match down anybody's neck, he may say it is a small bit of timber and laugh at it, but he will know it is there before long! If you get on fire with the love of God. If you are placed in the company of others, you may be very small and despised, but they will soon discover the heavenly flame! Only you must mind that you are really alight and that the true fire is in your spirit—for an empty profession will only make religion a mockery! God bless you and bless the Society! (A voice—"Amen!") You said, "Amen." Well, there is to be a collection and so I hope you will carry out your amen in a Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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THE ALMIGHTY WARRIOR
NO. 3292

A SERMON
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"Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness: and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You."
Psalm 45:3-5.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verse five, is #3039, Volume 53—THE KING'S SHARP ARROWS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

THIS Psalm has been thought by some to be a marriage song for Solomon on the occasion of his wedding with the daughter of Pharaoh. It may be so, though I should be very loath to believe it. But even if that should be true, we will find in the Psalm a distinct reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to His marriage union with His church. Under the Mosaic dispensation, when a man had married a wife, he was not to go out to war for a year, but when the Lord Jesus Christ entered into a marriage union with His people, that very union made it necessary that He should wage war on their behalf. He had to meet all their spiritual foes in terrible conflict—the prince of darkness and all the powers of evil set themselves in array against Him—and we know how He fought with them, overcame them and trampled them beneath His feet as the treader of grapes crushes the purple clusters in the winepress. And now, even though in heaven, He is in a state of rest. Yet here, as the head of the church militant, His mystical body, He is still warring against sin, struggling most strenuously to drive sin out of the world and to make the earth His own dominion wherein He shall reign in righteousness and peace.

The prayer of the Psalmist, as we have it in our text, is also a most suitable petition for us to present. We desire to stir up our almighty champion to go forth to the war against evil. How gloriously He went forth with His first disciples in the brave days of old! They rode forth to battle and to death under His leadership, but it was to victory, too, in those glorious times of conflict and conquest. But we seem to have fallen upon days of peace—that false peace which arises from stagnation, lethargy and death. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have need to cry mightily to the great captain of our salvation to gird His sword upon His thigh, to order His great war chariot to be brought to the front, again—

that He may again ride forth to battle with all His attendant hosts—that His enemies may know that His power is as great as ever it was in the ages that are gone! While I am speaking upon the text, I trust that all believers here will turn it into a prayer and that while you are praying, God will give you the answer and bless the message to the salvation of sinners—which will be a true victory for Christ!

I am going to invite your attention, first, to *the armed warrior;* secondly, to *His filled chariot,* and thirdly, to *His victory won.*

I. So, first, I ask you to think of THE ARMED WARRIOR—"Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty."

Then *Christ has a sword.* What is it? Certainly not the sword of which soldiers and princes are proud, for it was concerning that kind of sword that Jesus said to Peter, "Put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It was concerning that sort of weapon that Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight." Christ could truly say that the weapons of His warfare were not carnal, but that they were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. His was not the kind of fighting that needs sword and spear and shield and buckler such as the world's warriors use. His wrestling was "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wilderness in high places." The main weapon which Christ wielded was "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

The Psalmist prayed, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh." But in the book of the Revelation we read concerning Christ, "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." You know how constantly Jesus quoted the Scriptures in resisting Satan's temptations or the assaults of His human adversaries. "It is written," was His unanswerable argument at all times. This sword, which Christ wields, is not made of steel to cut heads, or arms, or legs—it is the sword of the truth of God to pierce the hearts and consciousness of sinners. It is said to be sharp—"sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." No other sword wounds as the sword of the Spirit does! It wounds so that none but God can heal. You may bring it down upon a heart that is harder than a millstone, but its edge will never be turned and it will cut the stone in two. It is a sharp, wounding sword—and it is a killing sword. Wherever it goes, it kills sin, cuts iniquity in pieces, slays self-righteousness and destroys the infirmities of the flesh! This sword is also "two-edged." A sword with only one edge to it has a blunt back, but there is no blunt back to the sword of the Spirit—it has a front stroke and a back stroke—in fact, it cuts all ways and every part of it is keen as a razor's edge! Promises, precepts, doctrines, threats are all sharp and

penetrating—there is no part of the Word of God that is ineffective to produce the result for which it was given.

Notice that the Psalmist prays, "Gird *Your sword* upon Your thigh." The Bible is not your Bible or mine, alone. It is God's Bible, it is Christ's Bible, it is the Holy Spirit's Bible. Truth is no monopoly—it is not the priest's truth—it is the people's truth! It is everybody's truth, but it is most of all Christ's truth. Why is it that the Word of God is Christ's sword? Surely it is because that word tells us about Him—He is the text of which the Bible is the sermon! The Bible is like a script pointing to Him and saying, "This is the way to Jesus Christ." Holy Scripture gives you a wardrobe full of choice garments and they all smell of myrrh and aloe and cassia because Christ has worn them! The Word of God is especially Christ's because He has used it and still uses it. My use of the word or any other preacher's use of it will have very little effect unless Christ uses us as the instruments by which He shows what He can do with it. Someone looked at the sword of a famous conqueror and, after examining it closely, said, I do not see anything particular about it." "No," was the answer, "perhaps not, but if you could see the brawny arm that wielded it, you would understand why it is so notable." So is it with the sword of the Spirit—this divinely-inspired book—it may not seem to you as though it could work such wonders as it is continually doing, but if you could see the hand of Christ that wields that sword, then you would understand where the glory and the majesty of the truth of God are found—and where it derives its power to convince and convert the sons of men!

The Psalmist's petition is, "*Gird Your sword upon Your thigh*, O most mighty." When a soldier intends to use his sword, he puts it where he can easily get at it. He hangs it by his side so that he can readily draw it from its scabbard when he needs it either for attack or defense. So the prayer of our text means, "Lord, use Your word! Put power and energy into the truth as it is proclaimed." The preaching of a sermon may be like the drawing of a sword from its scabbard, yet it will not be really effective until Christ puts His hand to the work! The soldier's sword kills nobody until he grasps its hilt with a firm grip and deals the deadly blow with it. Here is the sword of the Spirit, like some ancient weapon hanging on the wall of an old castle, but O You blessed King of kings, will You not take it in Your almighty hand and prove again what You can do with it? Right and left will You not cut and thrust with it and so get to Yourself a glorious victory over all the powers of evil? Ah, sinner, if Christ shall send His word home to Your heart, you will soon perceive that is a very different thing from what it is when we poor mortals only preach it in your ears! When we blow the gospel trumpet at ear-gate, you take no notice. But if the Prince Emmanuel shall bring the great battering ram of His cross up to heart-castle and smite it, blow after blow, the posts will rock, the bars will snap, the gate will fall and the Prince will ride in and

reign forever over the soul that He has won by His grace—as long ago He bought it with His blood! Oh, that He would do it this very night!

Notice the title that the Psalmist gives to the almighty warrior—"Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O *most mighty*." Christ is not only mighty, but He is *most* mighty. There have been mighty men in prayer, but He is the most mighty advocate with His Father on His people's behalf. There have been mighty preachers of the word, but "never man spoke like this man." There have been many friends of sinners, but there has never been such a friend of sinners as Jesus is! Your sins are mighty to destroy, but He is mightier to save. I will grant you that your passions are mighty—that is positive! I will grant you that they are mightier than you are—that is comparative! But Jesus is most mighty to overcome them and that is superlative! The superlative might of the love of Christ as exhibited in His death upon the cross is infinitely greater than the positive and comparative might of our actual sin—and the depravity of our nature. May He prove Himself most mighty in winning many of you unto Himself!

The Psalmist not only prays to the Lord to gird His sword upon His thigh, but he also adds, "*with Your glory and Your majesty*." Did you ever see Christ in His glory *and* His majesty? I know that you have never seen Him thus unless you have first seen yourself in your degradation and shame. There, where the poor broken-hearted sinner lies prostrate in the dust, feeling himself to be less than nothing, the great conqueror comes in His glory and majesty, and says to him, "I am Your salvation. I have loved you with an everlasting love and laid down My life that I might save you." You remember how John Bunyan pictures Prince Emmanuel's entry into Mansoul after He had captured it from Diabolus?—"This was the manner of going up there. He was clad in His golden armor. He rode in His royal chariot, the trumpets sounded about Him, the colors were displayed, His ten thousands went up at His feet and the elders of Mansoul danced before Him." They might well rejoice at His coming in glory and majesty to take up His abode in their midst, and to prove to them how fully He had forgiven their rebellion now that they had repented of their sin and accepted Him as their rightful Lord and Savior! So will it be with all here who welcome Christ into their hearts and no longer yield allegiance to the prince of darkness!

II. Having thus shown you the armed warrior, I am now going to bid you look upon THE FILLED CHARIOT—"And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness."

The Eastern monarch stood erect in his war chariot and rode forth in great splendor in the midst of his troops. To my mind, the preaching of the gospel is the chariot of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel itself is His sword and the preaching of the gospel, the distribution of the word, by which Christ is made known to the sons of men, may be likened to His chariot of salvation! This chariot appears to have four wheels or, if you like, you can call them the four milk-white steeds that draw the gospel chariot. Their names, according to our text, are majesty, truth, meekness

and righteousness. These are the four supports of the gospel, or the four motive powers by which the gospel of Christ is brought into the hearts of sinners!

The power of the gospel lies first, then, in the majesty of Christ. Sinner, Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, is also the Son of God, who could truly say, "I and My Father are one." He who died on Calvary's cross is the King of kings and Lord of lords! That very man who cried in agony, "I thirst," is the almighty God who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand! Does not this move you to trust Him? The majesty of Christ ought to win not only your admiration, but also your affection. He whose face was more marred than that of any other man, was the one of whom Isaiah said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Oh, does not this fact melt your heart and woo and win you to Him, that He, against whom you have sinned, should have suffered for your sins and borne the curse and penalty that were due to you? Surely the majesty of Christ should lead you to trust Him!

Then, the next wheel of the chariot, or the second of the noble steeds drawing it, is *truth*. Sinner, the gospel which is preached to you is true! Whatever there is in the world that is false, this certainly is a positive fact—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is also true that He will receive you if you come to Him—come and trust Him and see if He will not welcome you! It is true that He can forgive the blackest offenses and that He does forgive all who sincerely repent of their sin and trust in His atoning sacrifice. It is true that He can uproot sin from the heart, make the unholy holy, and cause the disobedient to become obedient to God's commands! This is not a matter of conjecture on our part—it is no guesswork, no dream of an excited imagination—many of us have proved the sanctifying power of the doctrines of the cross and we, therefore, urge you to prove this for yourselves so that the truth of the gospel may commend itself to you.

The next wheel or steed of the chariot is *meekness*. Jesus said, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." It is no proud Savior who invites you to come to Him! Let me remind you working men that Jesus Christ belonged to your rank in life and probably toiled at the carpenter's bench with Joseph, the husband of His mother, Mary. He was no domineering aristocrat, looking down with contempt upon men and women in a lower stratum of society. The Lord says concerning Him, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He is the people's Christ. [See Sermon #11, Volume 1—THE PEOPLE'S CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is a condescending Savior who took little children up in His arms and blessed them, and said, "Allow the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Notwithstanding all His glory and majesty, He disdains not the poor and needy, and His ears are always open to the

cry of the humble and contrite! He takes pity upon the prisoner, He hearkens to the wail of the sorrowful, He has respect unto the broken in heart and is always tender and compassionate to any who seek His aid. Surely this meekness of the Savior must commend the gospel to you!

Then the fourth wheel—or the fourth steed if you prefer that metaphor—is *righteousness*. O brothers and sisters, what a righteous Savior Jesus is and what a righteous gospel His gospel is! A man might well fall in love with the gospel for this reason, if for no other—that it sets forth so clearly the majesty of divine justice. God determined to save sinners, yet He would not save them at the expense of justice. He delights in mercy, but He would not indulge even His darling attribute to the detriment of His righteous law! Christ gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. He yielded up His hands and His feet to the cruel nails, His body to indescribable pangs and His soul to agonies so terrible that He cried, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." He bore—

"All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough but none to spare"—

in order that He might fully vindicate the justice of God. Righteousness well completed the number of the wheels of the chariot of salvation, or the steeds that draw that chariot wherever God wills it to go! May they, by His grace, draw it just where you are, poor sinner, and may that same grace compel you to enter that chariot, that you may ride in it to everlasting glory!

But dear friends, a gospel without Christ is like a chariot without a rider in it—and of what use is an empty chariot? In the front of the chariot of the gospel stands Jesus Christ in all His glory and His majesty! I wish that all preachers would always remember this. Some of them seem to me to preach the doctrines of the gospel, and others of them proclaim its precepts—and in that way they bring out the chariot, but there is no rider in it! They have left out the Christ who is its chief—indeed, its only glory! But whatever else the preacher may forget, he should never forget his Master, but always give Him His rightful place. He should say to his Lord as the Psalmist said to Jerusalem, "If I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof my mouth." What is there for any man to preach about if he leaves Jesus Christ out of his sermon? A discourse without Christ in it is delusion and a sham—a mere playing with immortal souls, a mockery both of God and man! Jesus Christ and Him crucified should be the Alpha and the Omega of every sermon! Even if the preacher is not preaching Christ directly, he ought to be preaching Him indirectly, proclaiming the truths of God in such a way that it shall either *draw* the sinner or else *drive* him to the heart of Christ! In the chariot of our ministry I hope that we all, without hesitation, say that Jesus Christ rides in His glory and in His majesty.

But, although Christ may thus ride in the chariot of our teaching, He must always be there in His omnipotent might and in the power of the ever-blessed Spirit. So I want you who love Him to pray the Psalmist's prayer, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty, and in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness." There is a fine old Welsh hymn which I wish I could turn into English without spoiling it—it runs somewhat to this effect—"O Jesus, come forth! Leave the ivory palaces! Your chariot waits for You, Come forth, come forth! Hell trembles before You, all heaven adores You, earth owns Your sway, men's hearts cannot resist You. Come forth, come forth! Bars of brass You break, gates of iron give way before You; come forth, come forth, O Jesus for Your chariot awaits You now!"

III. Now we are to close with our third head, THE VICTORY WON. "Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You."

Many representations of Eastern monarchs picture them not only as wearing a sword upon the thigh when riding in the great war chariot, but also as bearing a battle bow. And the artists, wishing to flatter their royal masters, represented the king's arrows as going right through the hearts of the king's enemies! Our almighty warrior has a sure aim—He never misses the heart at which He shoots His arrows! That same gospel which is like a two-edged sword is, in another aspect, like sharp arrows shot from the bow of a mighty archer. Arrows, you know, can do nothing until they are shot. The arrow is useless without the bow—and the bow, itself, is useless without the hand and arm of the man who bends it and speeds the arrow to the mark he wants to hit! It used to be said of William the Conqueror that no man in England except himself could bend his bow—and so is it with the bow that belongs to our great conqueror—no one but He can bend it. When He fits the arrows to the string and draws the bow with His almighty hand, the missile flies with irresistible force and buries itself in the heart at which the King took such unerring aim!

I take it that these arrows are not so much intended to represent the whole Bible as certain texts out of the Bible—*sharp arrow from the quiver of revelation*. Sometimes one arrow will be shot and sometimes another, but they are all sharp. Have you, my hearers, ever felt the pang that goes through the heart when one of these sharp arrows strikes it? So long as it lasts, there is no pain as keen as that produced by conviction of sin! And there is no cure for that pain except from that very hand which shot the arrow that caused it!

These arrows are spoken of in the plural because while there are arrows of conviction, arrows of justice, arrows of terror, there are also arrows of mercy, arrows of consolation. While there are arrows that kill sin, there are also arrows that kill despair, which also is a sin—and as there are arrows that smite and slay our carnal hopes, so there are other

arrows that effectually destroy our sinful fears. And all these arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies—there is not a blunt one in the whole quiver.

Notice that *all these arrows belong to the King*. It is to the "mightiest" that the Psalmist says, "*Your* arrows." The truth of God never comes home to our heart and conscience until the Holy Spirit convinces us that it is God's truth. There are some doctrines in the Scriptures which many are unwilling to accept as divine although they are very clearly revealed in the word and they are truths which God has over and over again blessed to the salvation of souls. People have often said that the doctrine of election ought not to be preached lest it should prove to be a stumbling block in the way of sinners coming to Christ, yet I can testify that we have had scores of souls brought to the Savior and added to this church through sermons upon election, predestination and those other great truths of God in which many of us believe and rejoice! They are certainly among the sharp arrows of our King!

Observe, too, *where the King's arrows go*. They all pierce the heart. "Your arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies." Some of you have been struck by an arrow in your head. Well, that would kill you if it were literally an arrow—but the King's arrows, when they metaphorically strike the head, that is, when there is a merely intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel, are not effective as they are when they enter the heart. Some of you have been struck by these arrows in your legs—that is to say you have gone limping upstairs to pray for a little while, yet there has been no such killing work as there is when the King's arrows pierce the heart. When they strike the sinner there, they inflict a mortal wound, for out of the heart are the issues of life. O Lord, smite the sinners heart! Kill his old life and give him a new life! Slay him as Your enemy, but cause him to live as Your friend! Shoot Your arrows right through the heart that loves sin and hates You, the heart that loves drunkenness, that loves lust, that loves Sabbath-breaking, that loves evil in any form! Kill that heart, O Lord, and then give a new heart and a right spirit!

Let me remind you that there is a time coming when Christ will go forth to war with all His armor on—that is the time of which we read in the Revelation, "out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it, He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron…in righteousness He does judge and make war." It will be a terrible thing for all who are the enemies of the King in that day! His arrows will indeed be swift and sharp to slay them. Do not long for that day to come, you unconverted ones, for to you it will be a day of darkness and not of light! It will be a dreadful day for those of you who have despised and rejected the Christ of God when He shall fit His sharp arrows to the string, draw the bow and pierce you to the heart. Where will you flee from the glance of His all-seeing eyes? Up to the loftiest mountains His shafts shall fly after you! In the trackless deserts, in the densest forests, far out upon

the mighty ocean His arrows shall find you out! Try not to flee *from* Him, but flee *to* Him! If a man wanted to shoot me with a bow and arrow, I would try to clasp him in my arms and hold him to my heart, for how could he shoot me then? Close in with Christ in this fashion! Run not from Him, but run to Him and clasp Him to your heart and never let Him go!

If you yield to Christ, you will find that He will no longer be angry with you. He is loving and gracious and He delights to welcome penitents to His heart. Oh that He might receive you this very hour! He will if you only trust Him and then you will see Him riding in His chariot in quite another fashion. Perhaps at first you will be afraid of Him and ask, "Lord, what have You come here to do?" And He will reply, "I have come to kill your sins with My sharp arrows." One after another He will fit them to His bow and shoot at all He means to slay. He will kill your profanity. He will kill your self-righteousness. He will kill your self-trust. All of those will be pierced through and through by His unerring darts! Then He will shoot at your pride and kill it, outright, and make you humble as a little child. He will shoot at your love of the world. He will shoot at all your pleasures which are not holy pleasures. He will shoot at every lust and every evil propensity within you—and down they will fall— everyone slain by His sharp arrows and blessed will it be for you when they are all slain! Who would wish to spare any one of these King's enemies? Rather rise up and help the King to slay them! Surely you will give no quarter to those that are your foes as well as His!

Finally, sinner, trust the Savior. He died for sinners, bearing their sins in His own body on the tree. He died for all who trust Him—and they who trust Him shall find Him faithful and true! And He shall bring them home to His Father's house to dwell with Him forever! Oh, that all of us might be in that blessed company! God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul*—Come, my soul, wake up, bestir yourself, for you have a great work to do! Such work as angels do forever before the throne of God on high!

1. *And all that is within in me, bless His holy name.* [See Sermons #1078, Volume 18—THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD and #2121, Volume 36—THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this blessed service! Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart—all that is in me is to be stirred up by His holy name to magnify and bless. "Bless the LORD, O my soul," for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being—it must be myself, my inmost self that praises God!

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* This shall be the first note of our grateful song, "We love Him because He first loved

us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise—they are all around us at home. "Forget not all His benefits" to you, my soul! His overwhelming, His innumerable benefits, which have to be summed up in the gross as "all His benefits," forget them not!

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Come, my soul, can you not praise God for forgiven sin? This is the sweetest note in our song of praise—"Who forgives *all* your iniquities," not merely some of them! The blessed scapegoat has carried the whole mass into that "no man's land" where they shall never be found!

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* He is the physician who can heal you, my soul. Your diseases are the worst diseases of all, for they would drag you down to hell if they remained unhealed! But He "heals all your diseases."

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* O my soul, praise God for redemption! If you cannot sing about anything else, sing of "free grace and dying love." Keep on ringing "those charming bells."

4. *Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* What? Can you wear such a crown as this, which is made up of loving-kindness and tender mercies, and yet not bless Him who put it upon your head? Oh, let it not be so, but let us, each one, break forth in spirit in Mary's song, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* This is heavenly feasting on heavenly fare! There is divine satisfaction to be derived from the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! O my soul, pray to God to give you this satisfying food so that your youth may be renewed, so that your wing feathers may grow again, that you may mount as eagles do! Surely, dear friends, this little list of mercies, though such a short one, comprises an immensity of mercy far beyond utmost comprehension! Let us bless the Lord for it all.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor and the down-trodden praise the Lord who so graciously takes care of them! He is the executor of the needy, and He is the executioner of those that oppress them!

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Therefore let us bless the God of revelation who does not hide Himself from His creatures, but who makes known both His ways and His acts unto His chosen people. An unknown God is not a praised God, but when He reveals Himself to His people, they cannot refrain from blessing His holy name!

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Praise Him for all this! At every mention of any one of His divine attributes let your hearts beat to the music of praise.

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Therefore let the afflicted praise Him, let the downcast and the despondent sing praises unto His holy name! If they cannot sing because

of anything else, let them bless the name of the Lord that He will not keep His anger forever!

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Let us all thank God that we are not in hell and that we are yet on praying ground and on pleading terms with Him—and some of us can praise Him that we shall never come into hell, for He has saved us with an everlasting salvation! Truly, if we did not bless Him, every timber in this building and every iron column that supports this roof would burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude!

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Look up to the blue sky. Try to imagine what is beyond the stars and then say to yourself, "So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him"—and try to praise Him as He deserves to be praised.

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Let us therefore praise Him for such boundless loving-kindness and tender mercy!

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* [See Sermons #941, Volume 16—THE TENDER PITY OF THE LORD; #1650, Volume 28—GOD'S FATHERLY PITY and #2639, Volume 45—OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S PITY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He has an infinitely tender heart. He never strikes without regret, but His love always flows most freely. No earthly father or mother is half as full of pity as God is to His children.

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Our bodies are just animated dust and our souls are so weak and feeble that even they might be compared to dust in His sight—not iron or granite, but simply dust. What men call "the laws of nature" are so stern that it is a wonder that men live as long as they do, for earthquakes and tornadoes and volcanoes are found that no man can bind! And when so many men are constantly crossing the sea it is a wonder that so many of them ever come to land again.

15. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.* You are like the primrose by the river's brink, or the buttercup and the daisy in the meadow that is mown with the scythe. That is all we mortals are—not mighty cedars, not solid rocks, but just flowers of the field or as so much grass!

16. *For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* The hot winds of the East blow over a meadow and it is immediately burned up. Even in the south of France, when the sirocco has blown across from Africa I have seen the fairest flowers look in a short time as if they had been burned with hot iron—and such are we when pestilence, as we call it, comes. It is but a breath of poisonous wind and we are soon gone.

17. *But*—This is a blessed, "but"—

17. *The mercy of the LORD*—That is not a fading flower, that is not a withering wind! "But the mercy of the LORD"—

17. *Is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children*—Here are innumerable mercies all enclosed in the one mercy of the Lord! Everlasting mercy, covenant mercy; if we do not praise God whenever we think of the covenant of grace, what are we doing? We must be possessed by a dumb devil if we do not praise Him whose mercy "is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him."

18, 19. *To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandment, to do them. The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.* Now, children of the King, will you go mourning all your days? You who dwell in the light of His throne, will you not be glad? Rejoice, O believer, for your King lives and reigns forever!

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* "Bless the LORD, you His angels." We cannot do it well enough, yet, so help us, you angels, "that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." Your actions are our praises, O you mighty angels of God! Oh, that we had learned to do His commandments as you do them! We are praying for this, "Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

21. *Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* All living things and all the forces and powers of nature are calling upon men to praise the Lord! And we cry to all the hosts of God, the ministers of His, that do His pleasure, "Bless you the LORD."

22. *Bless the LORD, all His works in all place of dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* While all these glorious anthems are ascending to heaven, I must not be silent! But I, too, must praise the Lord with my whole heart—"Bless the LORD, O my soul."

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"THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT"
NO. 3293

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all his people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you."
Hebrews 9:19, 20.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verse 20 is #1567, Volume 26—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

BLOOD is always a terrible thing. It makes a sensitive mind shudder even to pronounce the word. But to look upon the thing, itself, causes a thrill of horror. Although by familiarity men shake this off, for the seeing of the eyes and the hearing of the ears can harden the heart, the instinct of a little child may teach you what is natural to us in reference to blood. How it will worry if its finger bleeds ever so little—shocked at the sight, even if there is actually no pain! I envy not the man whose pity would not stir to see a sparrow bleed or a lamb wantonly put to pain. And as for the cruel man, I shudder at the thought of his depravity. What exquisite pain it must have caused our first parent—how keenly it must have touched the fine sensibilities of their nature—to have had to offer sacrifice! Probably they had never seen death until they brought their first victim to the altar of God. Blood! Ah, how they must have shuddered as they saw the warm life-fluid flowing forth from the innocent victim. It must have seemed to them to be a very horrible thing and, very properly so, for God intended them to feel their feelings outraged. He meant them to take to heart the anguish of the victim and learn, with many a shudder, what a destructive and killing thing sin was! He meant them to see before their eyes a commentary upon His threat—"In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." He meant Adam and Eve to witness the harrowing appearance as the sentence upon sin was executed, stabbing at the very heart of life, convulsing the entire frame, sealing up the senses and leaving behind but a wreck of the beautiful creature and not a relic of happiness for it in the world. How dreadful must have been the spectacle when the first pair gathered around the corpse of their second son, slain by his brother! There were the clots of blood on the murderous club, or the sharp stone, or whatever other instrument Cain may have used in smiting his brother to the grave. How they must have mourned and sighed as they saw the precious crimson of human life wantonly poured out upon the ground and crying to God against the murderer!

Yes, blood is always a ghastly and a terrible thing. It is so, I suppose, because we recognize in it the destruction of life. Is it not so, also—though we may not be able to define the emotion—because we are compelled in our consciences to admit the effect of sin and we are staggered as we see what our sin has done? All through the great school of the Jewish law, blood was constantly used to instruct the Israelite in the guilt of sin, and in the greatness of the atonement necessary for putting it away. I suppose that the outer court of the Jewish temple was something worse than ordinary shambles. If you will read the lists of the multitudes of beasts that were sometimes slain there in a single day, you will see that the priests must have stood in gore and have presented a crimson appearance—their snow-white garments all splashed over with blood as they stood there offering sacrifice from morning till night! Every man who went up to the tabernacle or to the temple must have stood aside for a moment, and have said, "What a place this is for the worship of God! Everywhere I see signs of slaughter." God intended this to be so. It was the great lesson which He meant to be taught to the Jewish people, that sin was a loathsome and a detestable thing—and that it could only be put away by the sacrifice of a great life, such a life as had not then been lived—the life of the coming one, the life of the eternal Son of God who must, Himself, become man that He might offer His own immaculate life upon the altar of God to expiate the guilt and put away the filth and the loathsomeness of human transgression!

Some of you will feel sickened at these reflections and object to what I have already said as unworthy of my lips and offensive to your ears. I know who these will be—the creatures of taste who have never felt the loathsomeness of sin! Oh, I would that your sins would sicken you! I would to God that you had some sense of what a horrible thing it is to rebel against the Most High, to pervert the laws of right, to overthrow the rules of virtue, and to run into the ways of transgression and iniquity, for if blood is sickening to you, sin is infinitely more detestable to God! And if you find that being washed in blood seems awful to you, the great bath which was filled from Christ's veins in which men are washed and made clean is a thing of greater and deeper solemnity to God than any tongue shall be ever able to express!

I do not think anyone ever knows the preciousness of the blood of Christ till he has had a full sight and sense of his sin, his uncleanness and his ill desert. Is there any such thing as truly coming to the cross of Christ until you first of all have seen what your sin really deserves? A little light into that dark cellar, sir—a little light into that hole within the soul, a little light cast into that infernal den of your humanity and you will soon discern what sin is! And, seeing it, you would discover that there was no hope of being washed from it except by a sacrifice far greater than you could ever render. Then the atonement of Christ would become fair and lustrous in your eyes and you would rejoice with unspeakable joy in that boundless love which led the Savior to give Himself a ransom for us, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us

to God." May the Lord teach us—thundering at us, if necessary—what sin means! May He teach it to us so that the lesson shall be burned into our souls and we shall never forget it! I could gladly wish that you were all burden-carriers till you grew weary. I could gladly wish that you all labored after eternal life until your strength failed, and that you might then rejoice in Him who has finished the work and who promises to be your all in all when you believe in Him and trust in Him with your whole heart!

Looking carefully at the text, I would have you notice *the name given to the blood of Christ, the ministry in which it was used and the effect that it produced.*

I. First, observe THE NAME GIVEN IN THE TEXT TO THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. It is said to be, "THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT."

You are aware, perhaps, you who read your Bibles thoroughly, that the word here rendered, "testament," is more commonly rendered, "covenant," and although it would be wrong to say that it does not mean, "testament," yet it would be right to say that it signifies both, "covenant" and, "testament," and that its first and general meaning is "covenant."

Let us take it so. The blood of Jesus is the blood of the covenant. Long before this round world was made, or stars began to shine, God foresaw that He would make man. He also foresaw that man would fall into sin. Out of that fall of man, His distinguishing grace and infinite sovereignty selected a multitude that no man can number to be His. But, seeing that they had offended against Him, it was necessary, in order that they might be saved, that a great scheme or plan should be devised by which the justice of God would be fully satisfied, and yet the mercy of God should have full play. A covenant was therefore arranged between the persons of the blessed Trinity. It was agreed and solemnly pledged by the oath of the eternal Father that He would give unto the Son a multitude whom no man could number who should be His—His spouse, the members of His mystical body, His sheep, His precious jewels. These the Savior accepted as His own, and then on His part, He undertook for them that He would keep the divine law, that He would suffer all the penalties due on their behalf for offenses against the law and that He would keep and preserve every one of them until the day of His appearing. Thus stood the covenant and on that covenant the salvation of every saved man and woman hangs. Do not think it rests with you, soul, for what says the Scripture? "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy." He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." To show you that salvation is not by human merit, God was pleased to cast it entirely upon covenant arrangements. In that covenant made between Himself and His Son, there was not a word said about our actions having any merit in them! We were regarded as though we were not, except that we stood in Christ and we were only so far parties to the covenant as we were in the loins of Christ on that august

day. We were considered to be the seed of the Lord Jesus Christ, the children of His care, the members of His own body. "According as He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world"; oh, what grace it was that put your name and mine in the eternal roll, and provided for our salvation, provided for it by a covenant—by a sacred pact between the Father and His eternal Son, that we should belong to Him in the day when He should make up His jewels!

Now, beloved, in a covenant there are pledges given—and on those pledges we delight to meditate. You know what they were. The Father pledged His honor and His word. He did more—He pledged His oath and, "because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." He pledged His own word and sacred honor of Godhead that He would be true to His Son, that He should see His seed and that by the knowledge of Him, Christ should "justify many." But there was needed a seal to the covenant—and what was that? Jesus Christ in the fullness of time set the seal to the covenant, to make it valid and secure, by pouring out His life's blood to make the covenant effectual once and for all. Beloved, if there is an agreement made between two men, the one to sell such-and-such an estate, and the other to pay for it, the covenant does not hold good until the payment is made. Now, Jesus Christ's blood was the payment of His part of the covenant! And when He shed it, the covenant stood as firm as the everlasting hills—and the throne of God, Himself, is not more sure than is the covenant of grace! And, mark you, that covenant is not sure merely in its great outlines, but also sure in all its details! Every soul whose name was in that covenant must be saved! Unless God can undeify Himself, every soul that Christ died for, He will have! Every soul for which He stood substitute and surety, He demands to have—and each of the souls He must have, for the covenant stands fast. Moreover, every blessing in that covenant which was guaranteed to the chosen seed was, by the precious blood, made eternally secure to that seed! Oh, how I delight to speak about the sureness of that covenant! How the dying David rolled that under his tongue as a sweet morsel! "Although my house," he said, "be not so with God"—there was the bitter in his mouth—"yet," he said—and there came in the honey, "yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." And this sureness, mark you, lies in the blood! It is the blood of Christ that makes all things secure, for all the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us!

You will ask, it may be, "What is the purpose of this doctrine?" Its purpose is this—To you who have believed in Jesus, covenant mercies are sure, not because of your frames and feelings, but because of the precious blood of Jesus! Yesterday you were happy, perhaps, and today you are downcast. Well, but the covenant has not changed! Tomorrow you may be in the very depths of despair, while today you are singing upon the top of the mountain—but the covenant will not change. That august transaction was not made by you and cannot be unmade by you! It tarries not for man, and waits not for the sons of men. There it stands

fast and settled, signed by the eternal signet, and your security is not in yourselves, but in Christ. If Christ bought you—if the Father gave you to Him, if Christ became a surety for you, then—

"Nor death, nor hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast;
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest!"

The name of the blood, as we find it in our own translation, is "*the blood of the testament.*" This teaches a similar truth of God, though it puts it under another figure. Salvation comes to us as a matter of will. Jesus Christ has left eternal life to His people as a legacy. Here are the words—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." Now, a will, as the apostle rightly tells us, has no power whatever unless the man who made it is dead. Hence the blood of Jesus Christ, the token of His death, gives validity to all the promises which He has made. That spear-thrust by the Roman soldier was a precious proof to us that our Lord was really dead. And now, beloved, whenever you read a precious promise in the Bible, you may say, "This is a clause in the Redeemer's will." When you come to a choice word, you may say, "This is another codicil to the will." Recollect that these things are yours—not because you are this or that—but because His blood makes them yours! The next time Satan says to you, "You do not believe as you ought and, therefore, the promise is not sure," tell him that the sureness of the promise lies in the blood, and not in what you are or in what you are not! There is a will proved in heaven's court of probate, whose validity depends upon its signatures, upon its witnesses and upon its being drawn up in proper style. The person to whom the property is left may be very poor, but that does not overthrow the will. He may be very ragged, but that does not upset the will. He may have disgraced himself in some way or other, but that does not make the will void. He who made the will and put His name to the will, makes the will valid, and not the legatee to whom the legacy was left. And so with you this covenant stands secure, this will of Christ stands firm! In all your ups and downs, in all your successes and your failures, you, poor needy sinner, have nothing to do but to come and take Christ to be your all in all and put your trust in Him—and the blood of the covenant shall make the promises sure to you!

This is a sweet topic. I have not time, however, to enlarge upon it, but I heartily commend it to your private meditations and trust you may find consolation in it.

II. The blood which Moses called "the blood of the covenant" or, "of the testament," was of the utmost importance in the ministry of the tabernacle, for IT WAS SPRINKLED BY HIM EVERYWHERE.

First, we are told that *he sprinkled it upon the book*. Oh, how delightful this Bible looks to me when I see the blood of Christ sprinkled upon it! Every leaf would have flashed with Sinai's lightning and every verse would have rolled with the thunders of Horeb if it had not been for

Calvary's cross! But now, as you look, you see on every page your Savior's precious blood! He loved you and gave Himself for you, and now you who are sprinkled with that blood and have by faith rested in Him, can take that precious book and find it to be green pastures and still waters to your souls!

The blood was then sprinkled upon the mercy seat itself. Whenever you cannot pray as you would, remember that Jesus Christ's blood has gone before you, and is pleading for you before the eternal throne of God. Like the good Methodist who, when a brother could not pray, cried out, "Plead the blood, brother!" Yes, and when you feel so unworthy that you dare not look up. When the big tear stands in your eye because you have been such a backslider and have been so cold in heart, plead the blood, my sister—you may always come where the blood is! There you see that this sin of yours has been already atoned for. Before you committed it, Jesus carried it! Long before it fell from your heart, the weight of it had pressed upon the Redeemer's heart—and He put it away in that tremendous day when He took all the load of His people's guilt and hurled it into the sepulcher—to be buried there forever!

Then *the blood was sprinkled upon every vessel of the sanctuary*. I like that thought. I like to come up to God's house and say, "Well, I shall worship God today in the power and through the merit of the precious blood! My praises will be poor, feeble things, but then the sweet perfume will go up out of the golden censer and my praises will be accepted through Jesus Christ! My preaching, oh, how full of faults—how covered over with sins! But then the blood is on it and because of that, God will not see sin in my ministry, but will accept it because of the sweetness of His Son's blood."

You will come to the communion table tonight, most of you. But oh, do not come without the precious blood, for the best place of all upon which it was sprinkled was *upon all the people*. The drops fell upon them all! As Moses took the basin and scattered the blood over the whole crowd, it fell upon all who were assembled at the door of the tabernacle. Have you had sprinkling with the precious blood, my hearer? If you have, you shall live forever! But if you have not, the wrath of God abides on you! Do you ask how you can have the blood of Christ sprinkled upon you? It cannot be done literally, but *faith* does it. Faith is the bunch of hyssop which we dip into the basin and it sprinkles man's conscience from bad works. You say you have been christened, confirmed, baptized—but all these things together would not save one soul, much less all the multitudes who trust in them! They are not sufficient for the taking away of a single sin! But you always say your prayers, you have family prayers and you are very honest and so on! I know all this—but all these things you ought to have done and they will not make amends for what you have *not* done! All the debt that you have paid will not discharge those that are still due! Know you not that saying of the Scriptures, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"? You may work your fingers to the bone, but you can never weave a

righteousness that shall cover your nakedness before God! The only hope for the sinner is to come and cast himself upon what Jesus Christ has done for him—depending upon the groans, and agonies, and death of the martyred Savior who stood for us and suffered in our place, that we might escape the wrath of God!

I hope that there is never a Sunday but what I teach this one doctrine and, until this tongue is silent in the grave, I shall know no other gospel than just this—Trust Christ and you shall live! The bloody sacrifice of Calvary is the only hope of sinners! Look there and you shall find the Star of Peace guiding you to everlasting day! But turn your backs upon Christ and you have turned your back upon heaven—you have courted destruction, you have sealed your doom! It is by the sprinkling of the blood, then, that we are saved. We must have the blood of Christ upon us in one way or the other. If we do not have it upon us to save us, we shall have it upon us to destroy us. "His blood be on us and on our children," said the Jews to Pilate in their madness—and the siege of Jerusalem was the answer to the cry! Worse than was the siege of Jerusalem to the Jews, shall be the death of those who do despite to the spirit of grace and despise the blood of Jesus! But happy shall they be who, giving up every other confidence, come to the blood of the covenant and put their trust there, for it shall not deceive them!

III. THE EFFECT OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST claims our earnest attention—yet the minutes are few in which I can enlarge upon it.

Whenever Jesus Christ's blood comes upon a man, the instantaneous effect is something more than miraculous. Before the application of Christ's blood, the man was distracted. His guilt and its consequent punishment weighed heavily upon him. "Alas!" he said, "I shall soon die, and then hell will be my lot!" Oh, some of us will never forget when we were in that miserable, burdened state! I declare before you all that when I felt the weight of my sin, I wished that I had never been born! And I envied frogs, and toads, and the most loathsome creatures, and thought that they were so much better off than I, because they had never broken the law of God, which I had so wickedly and so willfully done! If I went to my bed, I started with the fear that I should wake up in hell. And by day the same dread thought distracted me—that I was cast off by God and must perish! But the moment that I looked to Christ—do not mistake me—the *very same moment* that I put my trust in Christ, I rose from the depths of despair to the utmost heights of joy! It was not a process of reasoning. It was not a matter which took hours and days—it was all done in an instant! I understood that God had punished Christ instead of me, and I saw that, therefore, I could not be punished anymore—that I never could be if Christ died for me—and I was assured that He did if I did but trust Him! So I did trust Him—with my whole weight I threw myself into His arms and thought, at the time, that He had never had such a load to carry before! But I found that He was able to save, even to the uttermost, them that came unto Him—and what joy and peace I had

in that moment it is impossible for me to describe! And I thank God that I have never lost it. There have been times of depression. There have been seasons when the light of God's countenance has been withdrawn. But one thing I know—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—I am a sinner, and my soul rests alone on Him! And how can He cast me away, since His own promise is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"? I have believed, by His grace! I have been baptized as an avowal of my faith! And He is not true if He does not save me! But He must be true, He cannot break His word! O dear friends, there are hundreds here who have passed through the same blessed experience and they can tell you that the blood of Jesus in an instant speaks peace to the soul!

And this precious blood has this property about it that if the peace which it first causes should become a little dim, you have only to go to the precious blood to have that peace once more restored to you!

I would recommend any of my doubting brothers and sisters to come to Christ over again as they came to Him at first. Never mind about your experience! Never care about your marks and evidences. Never get piling up your experiences. If you go to the top of some mountains such as Snowdon or the Rigi, you will find it all solid and firm enough, but there are some people who want to get a little higher than the mountain, so the people there built a rickety old stage and charge you four pence—or sixpence to go to the top of it! And when you get up there, you find it is all shaky and ready to tumble down and you are frightened! Well, but what need is there to go up there at all? If you would stand on the mountain, that would not shake! So, sometimes, we are not content with resting upon Christ as poor sinners, and depending on Him. We get to building a rickety stage of our own experience, or sanctification, or emotions, and I know not what besides—and then it begins to shake under our feet. Far better if we were like the Negro who said he "fell flat down on de promise, and when he had done that, he couldn't fall no lower." Oh, to keep close to a promise! Job says that the naked embrace the rock for need of a shelter, and there is no shelter like the Rock of Ages—

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

But I have not told you all the power of this blood, nor could I tell you tonight. That blood gives the pardoned sinner access with boldness to God, Himself. That blood, having taken away the guilt of sin, operates in a sanctifying manner and takes away the *power* of sin—and the pardoned man does not live as he lived before he was pardoned. He loves God, who has forgiven him so much—and that love makes him enquire, "What shall I do for God, who has done so much for me?" Then he begins to purge himself of his old habits. He finds that the pleasures that once were sweet to him are sweet no more. "Away you go," he says to his old companions, "I cannot go with you to hell." Having a new heart, a new love, a new desire, he begins to mix with God's people. He searches God's

word. He makes haste to keep God's commandments. His desires are holy and heavenly and he pants for the time when he shall get rid of all sin, shall be quite like Christ and shall be taken away to dwell forever where Jesus is! Oh, the blood of Christ is a blessed sin-killer! They say that St. Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland. Ah, but Christ drives all the serpents out of the human heart when He once gets in. If He does but sprinkle His blood upon our hearts, we become new men—such new men as all the rules of morality could not have made us! Such new men as they are who, robed in white, day without night sing Jehovah's praise before His throne!

Sinner, would you be saved tonight? Trust Jesus and you shall be! Sinner, would you be saved upon a dying bed? Trust Jesus now and you shall be! Sinner, would you be saved when the heavens are in a blaze and the stars fall like withered fig leaves from the firmament? Look to Jesus, now, and you shall be saved then! Oh, I would to God that some of you would look to Him! Not for the eyes of your body to do it, but for the eyes of your mind to do it! Think of what Christ is—God, and yet man. Think of such a being suffering instead of you! What must be the merit of such suffering, and what an honor to God's justice that such an One should suffer instead of you! Then depend upon Christ and if you do so, your sins are forgiven you! Believe that they are. Then will you feel springing up within your heart great love to Him who has forgiven you—and that will become the mainspring of your new life! You will start afresh like one that is born tonight. You will, indeed, be born-again, for this is regeneration! Not sprinkling your face with drops of water, but making a new man of you—generating you over again, not by natural generation, but by the eternal Father begetting you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—the true and only spiritual generation! And then, as new creatures in Christ Jesus, you shall go your way through this life up to the eternal life, God's blessing shielding you and crowning you forever.

The Lord grant you His blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 9; EXODUS 24:1-10.

Hebrews 9:1. *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.* That is, a sanctuary belonging to this world, a *visible* sanctuary. That first covenant was to a large degree a thing of outward rites and ceremonies, which the new covenant is not—it is a covenant of spiritual and unseen realities.

2-5. *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. And behind the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid roundabout with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had*

manna and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the Cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Because it was not his main purpose at that time—he was writing an important Epistle upon the most vital truths and it would not do to encumber it with too many explanations.

6-9. *Now when these things were thus ordained, the priest went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest, alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the error of the people: the Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.* All these sacrifices and ceremonies, although full of instruction, were not, in themselves, able to give peace to the conscience of men. The new and better covenant does give rest to the heart by the real and actual taking away of guilt, but this, the first covenant, could not do. It is astonishing that there should be any who want to go back to the "beggarly elements" of the old Jewish law, and again to have priests and an elaborate ritual, and I know not what besides! These things were faulty and fell short of what was needed even when God instituted them, for they were never intended to produce perfection, or to give rest to the troubled conscience! So of what use can those ceremonies be which are of man's own invention, and which are not according to the new covenant at all?

10-12. *Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* [See Sermon #2075, Volume 35—OUR LORD'S ENTRANCE WITHIN THE VEIL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ has entered into the true holy place—not into that which was curtained with a veil, which was but a type, and which was put away when the veil was torn from the top to the bottom as Jesus died. He has entered into the immediate presence of God and He has entered there once and for all, "having obtained eternal redemption for us."

13, 14. *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* [See Sermons #1481, Volume 25—THE RED HEIFER and #1846, Volume 31—THE PURGING OF THE CONSCIENCE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Do you all feel the power of that blood now? Oh, what blessing it is to know that the conscience is quite at rest because of the purging worked by Jesus' blood! It is heaven begun below! We cannot

serve God aright until we have been thus cleansed. No, we dare not stand in that awful presence while the consciousness of sin is upon us! But when Jesus Christ says to us, "You are clean," then, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then have we "access with confidence" unto the Father through Him.

15-17. *And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgression that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives.* Whether it is a covenant or a testament, death is necessary to make it valid. God's covenants have always been sanctioned and ratified with blood and the covenant or the testament of eternal grace is ratified with the blood of the surety and testator!

18-26. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* [See Sermons #759, Volume 13—JESUS PUTTING AWAY SIN; #911, Volume 16—THE PUTTING AWAY OF SIN and #2283, Volume 38—CHRIST'S ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What Aaron could not do by entering into the holy place year after year, Christ has done by entering into heaven once! And there is no more need of a sacrifice for sin, and they are grossly guilty who pretend to offer Christ over again. The great work of redemption is finished! Sin is put away and there is no more remembrance of it. In the sight of God, Christ's one sacrifice has completed the expiation of sin, Glory be to His holy name!

27, 28. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* He shall come to complete the salvation of those for whom His precious sacrifice was offered all those hundreds of years ago.

Now let us read the passage to which Paul refers in verses 19 to 21.

Exodus 24:1, 2. *And He said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, you, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship you afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him.* Nearer to God than the people were allowed to come, but still at a distance from Him. It was a covenant of distance—bounds were set about the mountain lest the people should come too near. Yet they were near unto God as compared with the heathen, but far off as compared with those who now, by the teaching of the Spirit of God, have been brought near to God through the precious blood of Jesus! Moses alone could come near to Jehovah on Mount Sinai—the people could not go up with him—nor even with the man who was their mediator with God, for such Moses was. But you and I, beloved, can go up with Him who is far greater than Moses—with Him who is the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, for God "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

3-8. *And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD has said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.* There is a double power about the blood**—**towards God an atonement—that is the blood sprinkled on the altar. And towards ourselves a sense of reconciliation—thus must the blood be sprinkled upon us that we may prove its cleansing power.

9-10. *Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in His clearness.*

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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 LORD'S ETERNAL REST
NO. 3294

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."
Psalm 132:14.

THESE are the words of Jehovah Himself concerning the hill of Zion, but it is clear that He did not intend us to understand them merely in their literal reference to Zion, because Zion could not be a fitting place for His eternal rest. Nor has He made it literally His rest forever, for Zion has been trodden down of the Gentiles for all these centuries. I have no doubt that the Lord had in His mind the greater Zion, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem…the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." The eternal God, looking down from His throne of glory upon all the creatures He has made, selects His Church—elect, blood-bought, called, preserved and sanctified, and He says concerning this Church—"This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

We would never have ventured to conceive of God as finding rest in such puny creatures as we are. However beloved, and however filled with His Spirit, it would seem too great a thing for the Creator ever to rest in His creature! Yet it is true that this is where He finds His rest. It is concerning the redeemed souls who make up the Church of Christ that He says, "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

I must, at the outset, confess my inability to dive into the depths of this subject. I can only, as it were, flit across its surface as the swallow with swift wings skims over the brook. I am going to ask, first, about *God finding rest in His Church;* then about *the duration of that rest;* and in closing, I want to say a few practical words concerning *our finding rest where God finds rest.*

I. First, then, let us think of GOD FINDING REST IN HIS CHURCH.

He does this, in the first place, *because in His Church all the three divine persons of the Trinity are honored.* A man does not find rest in anything which gratifies only one part of his nature. Therefore it can truly be said to Christians concerning this world, "This is not your rest," for whatever gratification it may yield to the body, it can never satisfy our soul. If there were in the Church of God honor only for God the Father, but none for God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, it could never be the Lord's eternal rest. But, beloved, when the Father looks upon the Church, He views with delight His own chosen children and sees His

eternal purposes accomplished in them! He thinks of the covenant into which He entered with His dear Son on their behalf, and of the atonement which He gave for them when He gave His only-begotten Son to die as their substitute and surety. As for God the Son—when He looks upon the Church, He beholds those for whom He paid the ransom price on Calvary—every member of that Church He has purchased with His own blood and, therefore, He looks upon them with peculiar complacency. As for God the Holy Spirit, He—

"Takes delight to view
The holy souls He formed anew."

As He gazes upon them, He sees the gracious results of His regenerating energy and He rests in holy contemplation. I hope, beloved, you will never exalt one member of the ever-blessed Trinity above either of the rest—it is quite a mistake to ascribe the work of salvation entirely to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit. In the first creation, it is most emphatically true that God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." The first creation was the work of deity as a whole, and so is the new creation! And for both we may most justly sing—

"Praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

All are equally concerned in perfecting the Church, the true Zion, and therefore God, in the Trinity in unity—Father, Son, and Spirit—says concerning the Church, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."—

"Arise, O King of grace, arise,
And enter to Your rest!
Lo, Your Church waits with longing eyes,
Thus to be owned and blest.
Enter with all Your glorious train,
Your Spirit and Your Word—
All that the ark did once contain
Could no such grace afford."

Just think for a minute or two what this rest of God is. Is it the entire cessation from toil? When we do nothing, but sit still in listless inactivity, that cessation from toil may yield us a measure of rest, but it is not rest of a kind that we could long love—certainly it is not such rest as we should wish to enjoy forever! We would be in a most restless state if we had nothing to do! We would soon be worn out with the weariness of living an aimless, purposeless life. I believe the truest state of rest is when a man has just as much to do as he can perform with ease. If your mind does not think at all, it is in a coma or in a sort of fainting fit. But when it is occupied with pleasing themes, not working out difficult problems, but meditating upon simple themes which you can easily understand, then it is at rest! Perhaps you sit down quietly by the fire and indulge in what we call day-dreams—your mind is active all the while, yet its activity does not prevent it from resting. Heaven is a place and state of perfect rest, yet it is not the rest of silence and stagnation! In

one sense, they rest not day nor night, yet they serve God continually—and that is perfect rest!

It is in His Church that God finds His rest, *for it is there that He finds work exactly adapted to His infinite capacities*. The blessedness of God must consist partly in His activity—what an active being God is! There is not a cloud that flies across the sky of which He is not the pilot. How busily He worked in creating the heavens and the earth and all that they contain, yet He never rested in them for the visible creation is too narrow a couch to provide a resting place for the eternal! But when He comes to the mightier work of redemption and reveals the combined majesty of His justice and sublimity of His love in those whom He forms anew, then He is engaged in a task that occupies those attributes which He most delights to exercise! And therefore He says to His Church, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell." When He made the earth, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But you never read that God *sang* at the creation. It is when He is working in the higher sphere that He says to Zion, the Church of His choice, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." In the new creation He finds such rest as the old creation never could afford Him. We know so little of the infinite God that we must speak with due humility and reticence concerning these great mysteries, yet it seems to me that in the making of those who shall show forth His praise forever, He is doing a work in which He especially delights and in which He, therefore, rests and rejoices as He does in nothing else!

Further, He rests in His Church *because He sees, there, His eternal purposes fulfilled*. Whenever a soul is saved, God sees, there, another of His divine decrees accomplished. And that affords His heart rest—to speak after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other way. As, one by one, those who were chosen by Him unto eternal life, those whom He gave in covenant to His Son, those who were redeemed by that Son's precious blood are delivered from the Egyptian bondage of sin, conducted safely through the howling wilderness waste of this world and carried across the Jordan of death into the Canaan of heavenly rest, God sees His eternal purposes fulfilled and therein He finds most blessed rest! When the entire Church of God shall have been brought, safe and perfected, to His right hand in glory, then will He say, in the words of our text, "This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." I must confess that I do not understand the condition of mind of those brethren who are not able to perceive in the Scriptures a clear revelation concerning the purposes of God in the salvation of His elect. It would be strange if the work of grace were left to chance. An architect would not permit an important building like St. Paul's, for instance, to be erected according to the whims and fancies of the individual workers employed! He would not leave to the freewill of every laborer the decision as to

where each pillar should be placed, or what stone and other materials should be used in the building—he has everything done according to the plan that he designed before the work was commenced! And shall not the Most High, who is building a habitation for Himself, have it erected in harmony with the plan that He had prepared from all eternity? I think, brothers and sisters, it is because God has planned what His Church is to be and because that plan will be exactly followed until the whole building is complete, that the Lord says concerning it, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

Then, in the next place, have we not in the Church of God *almighty energies rewarded?* God rested on the seventh day because creation's work was done. And God rests in His Church in so far as it also is a finished work. Every soul saved by grace, every soul brought home to glory is the result and the reward of almighty labor. He who spoke and it was done in the making of the material world made not His Church so easily. It was with His word that He made this world, but it was the incarnate word that was necessary to the new creation! No blood needed to be spilt for the making of this earth in all its pristine beauty and glory, but the new heavens and the new earth could be cemented by nothing less than the product of almighty suffering! The Church of God is a most wonderful fabric upon which not only have the purposes of God been exercised from all eternity, but "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" has been at work to accomplish this marvel of marvels which shall set all heaven ablaze with astonishment when it is at last complete and perfect! For many centuries stroke upon stroke from God's hand and instruments has been telling upon the rough block of marble, and when the last touch shall have been given to it, and the work appears in all its glory and beauty before the eyes of God, He will rest, just as a skilled workman does in the successful accomplishment of some great task which he has undertaken and which he regards as his masterpiece.

Best of all, however, is the next reason why God rests in His Church! That is because *it is the reward of stupendous suffering.* We are told that "the Lord smelled a sweet savor" when Noah offered burnt offerings after he came out of the ark. The marginal reading is "a savor of rest." And when God is dealing with sinners, now, He finds no savor of rest except in the sacrifice of His dear Son! All the world over the spirit of justice flew in search of a righteous man, but the only result of that long search was the verdict, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Justice next looked to see if there was any helper who could deliver the guilty, but none could be found until she turned her eyes to the cross where hung the Son of God in extreme agonies. And as she marked the falling blood, the bowed head and the crown of thorns—and heard the voice that said, "It is finished," she rested! Her long quest was over, for she had found the one who was Himself perfectly righteous and who was, therefore, able to deliver the guilty by the full and complete atonement that He offered for their redemption. The Son of God takes delight in His Church because

He sees that in her, all His pains and agonies have yielded to Him a glorious harvest! And God the Father, who smote His Son so heavily when He took the place of His sinful people, delights in His Church because He sees in her a full reward for all that His well-beloved Son endured.

Then do you not think that God finds rest in His Church *because of the relationships there developed?* Where do you find rest, dear friends? You not only rest in the garden which you have planted, and in the house which you have with a great effort, bought—but your choicest rest is found with the children whom you so fondly love. There is no stranger in the family circle! The door is closed, the fire is burning brightly and now is mother's time for rest, and father's time for joy, for there are only loved ones around the hearth. The merchant comes home from the counting-house where he has been on the watch all day lest he should be deceived and over-reached. But he can come down from his watchtower, now, for he has no fear of being deceived in the family circle. The judge has been sternly administering the law while he has been upon the bench, but He lays aside all his sternness when he takes off his robes of office and gathers his children around him. The toiling laborer wipes the sweat from his brow and gladly rests at home among those whom he loves. "Perfect love casts out fear," and fear is like a thorn in our nest—it prevents us from resting. But when "perfect love" comes, then we are perfectly at our ease. When you are at home, you may say what you will, and do what you please—there are none to slander and align you there. You do not say all you feel in the presence of your servants—they are faithful and true, but you do not tell them all that is in your heart. It is when you are among your children that you feel free and unrestrained. So it is with God! Not even among the angels does God find His rest—bright and perfect beings though they are, they are but ministering spirits waiting in the great temple of God to render service to the saints! But here, where He sees His own likeness in every blood-bought soul. Here where He sees those whom He has begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—here it is that He feels at home and finds His rest! Do not think that I am speaking too boldly when I use the family metaphor to illustrate this great truth of God, for I am but following the example of our Lord Jesus, Himself, when He said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" He rejoices over the son who was dead, and is alive again—who was lost, and is found—and because He is our Father, and we are His children, He says of us and of the whole company of His redeemed, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

II. Now I am to speak briefly concerning THE DURATION OF GOD'S REST IN HIS CHURCH. "This is My rest forever."

Then *this proves that there will always be a Church of God.* There are certain persons who are constantly subject to great fear and their fears make them quiver and shake—and then they imagine that God's Church is quivering and shaking, which is a very different matter! They hold up their hands, and cry, "Alas! Alas! The Church is in danger!" Well, some particular church, designed by men, may be in danger, but I do not believe that the Church of God is, or ever was, or ever will be in danger! It is thought by some that Popery will swallow the Church of Christ just as the whale swallowed Jonah. But if it should do so, the Church would come back again as surely as Jonah was cast up upon the dry land! There is no sword fashioned that can smite the Church of God, nor will there ever be one! There will be a Church as long as there is a world—and when this world is burned up, the Church shall shine more brightly than ever—and it shall keep on shining to all eternity, and be a rest for God forever—

"Glorious things of you are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed you for His own abode:
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake your sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
You may smile at all your foes."

Further, *there will always be a Church with God in it, and such a Church as God can rest in.* Some people think that there is no church of which they can comfortably be members. But, dear friends, there is a Church of which Jesus Christ is a member, for He is the head of it! And if you cannot be members of any visible church, be not content unless you are members of that Church in which God rests forever, for that is always a pure Church! You sometimes hear a great deal about apostolic succession—it is a gross lie as it is generally understood, but in itself it is a great truth of God. The apostolic succession may be very clearly traced through the Novatians, Donatists, Lollards, Albigenses, Waldenses, Anabaptists and Huguenots, right down to the Christians of various denominations that exist today. There is a true line that never entered the Stygian bog of Rome! A pure silver stream which has flowed down to us right from the times of the apostles! There always has been a Church in which God could dwell and there always will be a Church that shall be His dwelling place! You know that Christ prayed, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are." And I do not believe that Christ prayed any prayer that will not be answered in due time! More than that, I believe that the Church of Christ is one now. "Oh, but!" says someone, "look at the many divisions and denominations that there are!" Yes, I know about them, but the only true unity is that of the spiritually quickened souls that form the mystical body of Christ. Whatever division there may be among them at present is only external—if we could see beneath the surface and judge

as God judges—we should perceive that in the truly vital matters, they are one. Being one with Christ, they are also one with each other. We must look less and less to mere externals, and think more and more of that which is spiritual, for it is only in the invisible and spiritual Church of Christ that God finds rest. I do not believe that He finds rest in the Baptist denomination, or in the Independent, or in the Church of England, as such—He finds His rest in all the saved to whatever denomination they may belong! His rest is not in great human organizations, but in those whom His grace has called—who are already one in Christ Jesus!

Another inference that I draw from the text is that *the Church of God will always be secure*. "Here will I dwell," says the Lord. And there would be no rest for Him if the enemy could be continually scaling the ramparts, damaging the walls and carrying away His people as captives. A king within his capital could not rest if one suburb after another fell into the hands of his foes. The rest of a shepherd would be effectually broken if he heard a lion scrunching the bones of any of his sheep, or if a wolf seized even one of the lambs of his flock. When the Lord says, "This is My rest forever," He seems to me to guarantee the eternal security of every soul that is in the true Church of Christ. All who are in the Church which Jesus bought with His precious blood must be perfectly safe forever—

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not desert to His foes!
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

There may be many in any part of the visible church who will perish, but there shall never be one who is truly a member of the Church of the living God who shall be lost! I started a little, the other night, when a brother said that once we are brought into the church, we are safe forever. But when he went on to show that by the expression, "the Church," he meant what God means by those words, I fully agreed with him! This is the Zion of which Jehovah says, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." And it is His rest because He knows that all who are within it are safe forever! At the last, Jesus will be able to say to His Father, "Of all whom You gave Me have I lost none."

I also infer from the text that *the whole Church will be eternally glorified*, otherwise God could not say of it, "This is My rest forever." The living stones that are to form the "habitation of God through the Spirit," are being quarried, fashioned and polished here below—and one by one they are being transported to the holy hill above. And so, "all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." And when it is complete, He will say, "Here will I dwell forever." The eternal duration of the Church's blessedness ought to be a theme of greater consideration and rejoicing than it is. Think of it, beloved, that the great God will forever find His rest in you and in others like you who have been

redeemed by the precious blood of His dear Son! Does not this make time seem a mere trifle, and earth but a tiny speck scarcely worthy of our notice? Then, as you are forever and ever to be the object of divine delight, cannot you see that you must *always* have been so? Oh, revel in this thought, that every blood-bought soul shall eternally be the temple and abode of God, Himself, and that all of them united in one shall be His rest forever!

III. Now we are to close with a few practical words concerning OUR FINDING REST WHERE GOD FINDS REST.

God finds His rest in His Church. *Is that where we find our rest? I wonder how many here could truly repeat the language of Dr. Watts—*

"Let others choose the sons of mirth
To give a relish to their wine.
I love the men of heavenly birth,
Whose thoughts and language are divine.

Do you, dear friends find rest in the company of God's chosen people? The ungodly do not. If some gracious person should go to their house and begin talking about the mysteries of the cross, their impatient glances at the clock would soon show that such a theme was weariness to them. When they go up to the place where God's people meet, to worship Him, the shorter the service is the better they like it! And the reason is that they do not savingly know the Lord. A man without sight would not be likely to be very much charmed in a picture gallery. And a man who was stone-deaf would not be very delighted with the grandest oratorio that was ever performed! In like manner, we cannot expect that those who have no spiritual sense can find delight in the company of God's people. But how different it is with the man who is really saved! He can say, with David, of the saints that are in the earth, that they are "the excellent, in whom is all my delight." A good old saint, whom I went to see on her dying bed, said to me, "It always gives me comfort, sir, to think that God is not likely to send me to dwell with the wicked, for I never liked their society here. I believe He will let me go with my own company and I have always kept company with His people since I have learned to know Him." I assured her that I believed it would be so. It is a sign of grace when we find rest with those who are really spiritual because they are spiritual. You may love some saints of God, yet it may be no sign of grace on your part—there may be something specially lovable about them so that you cannot help loving them or you may have received some temporal kindness from them and, therefore, love them for purely natural reasons. But it is a very different matter when we can say, with John—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Some of us can truthfully declare that our happiest hours are those that we expound with the saints of God! And we can fully sympathize with Dr. Watts when he says—

"My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,

There God my Savior reigns.

God says of His Church, "This is My rest forever," and we can say the same. I cannot say that concerning any visible church—I should not like to have to rest forever in any portion of the church on earth! But in union with the redeemed in glory, I can rest! When I think of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When I read the lives of prophets and apostles. When I turn to more modern times and think of Calvin, and Luther, and Zwingli, and Berridge, and Wesley, and Whitefield, and a host of others, I can say, "Ah, let me once get into their company and then I shall feel, 'This is my rest forever.' I do not need anything more than this except to be in the Master's own company!" Oh, what rest it will be to be with Him! This is our rest even now—to be with Him! And to be *forever with Him* will be the perfection of rest—

"Let me be with You, where You are,
My Savior, my eternal rest!
Then only will this longing heart
Be fully and forever blest."

Do you not think that Abel must have felt very strange when he went to heaven? How startled the angels must have been when they saw the first soul redeemed by blood in glory all by himself! I think they must have hushed their songs awhile to ask all about him. Here was a man come to sing in heaven, to chant before the eternal throne the praises of a sacrifice greater than any that he had offered! Yes, but Abel could not have felt perfectly at rest, for Paul tells us that the Church in heaven will not be made perfect without us. When another and yet another joined Abel in heaven, I think it must have increased his happiness. And now, as others keep on going home, the glorified saints welcome them with exceeding joy, for they all feel that their bliss will not be perfect until every redeemed soul is gathered there with them and the whole of the shining ranks are filled! Then, when all shall be there, each one of them will say, as God Himself now says, "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

I wonder if there are any here who will never find rest in the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven? If you want to get into the Church of God, do you know the way to get in? You say, "I must come before the elders." No, no—that is the way to get into our church, here, but not into the invisible Church above! "Well, then, I must be baptized." No, that is the ordinance for you *after* you have entered the Church of God. "Well, then, how am I to get in?" He whose hand was pierced says, I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." The only door to the Church of God is Jesus Christ! Trust to His precious blood sprinkled upon the altar to give you access to and acceptance with God—and having that blood sprinkled upon yourself, you may venture to draw near even to the eternal, for you shall be "accepted in the Beloved." God grant that it may be so, for Jesus sake! Amen.

[See Sermon #3287, Volume 58—THE ONLY DOOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 132.

A Song of Degrees.

1. *LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions.* God had entered into an everlasting covenant with David, "ordered in all things and sure," and in this Psalm either David, himself, or some of his people or descendants pleaded that covenant in time of affliction and trial. "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions." The Lord would not forget either David or his people, yet it pleased Him for them to come before Him in prayer and to remind Him of the covenant that He had made with His servant. Using this prayer in a gospel sense, we bow before the Lord and cry, "Lord, remember Jesus, the Son of David, and all His afflictions! Remember all that He endured as His people's substitute, and have pity upon us for His sake, as we plead that eternal covenant which You have made with Him on our behalf." That ancient covenant was made with David and the far more ancient covenant of grace was made with great David's greater Son," our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

2-5. *How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* David remembered that he had built himself a palace, but he wished even more ardently to build a palace for his God—a house for the celebration of His worship—"an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." But where can a worthy house be built for God? Where can there be made a fit dwelling place for the Most High? He fills all things, yet all things cannot contain Him! There is but one dwelling place of God—it is in Christ Jesus, for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Oh, how we ought to thank God that He has provided Himself a fitting dwelling place in the person of His dear Son, in whom all believers are also built together for a habitation of God through the Holy Spirit! As for the ark of the covenant, it had long ago in David's day dwelt in obscurity.

6. *Lo, we heard of it at Ephrathah: we found it in the fields of the woods.* [See Sermon #2590, Volume 44—HEARING, SEEKING, FINDING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God is willing to dwell in the woods. Many a time He does so. In many a cottage far removed from the haunts of men, God is found—and to many a backwoodsman God is as near as He is to those who worship Him in temples or cathedrals. "We found it in the fields of the woods."

7. *We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.* This Psalm is called "A Song of degrees." Notice the steps here described. We heard of it, we found it, we will go into it, we will worship in it! It is a good thing when in our prayers and praises, we ascend step by step—not on the steppingstones of our dead selves which are pieces of rubbish—but by the living steppingstones upon which the ever-living Spirit helps us to rise tier above tier, His own almighty hand helping us continually to rise higher and higher!

8. *Arise, O LORD into Your rest; You and the ark of Your strength.* Let us pray that the Lord may constantly find rest in the midst of His people. He finds rest in them because they are one with His well-beloved Son. Come, Lord, at this moment, and take Your rest in the midst of this assembly and make us all rest in You!

9. *And let Your priests be clothed with righteousness.* This is the best robe for all God's holy ones who are priests and kings unto Him. This is better than snow white linen or robes decked with crimson and gold!

9. *And let Your saints shout for joy.* The worship of God should be very gladsome and even demonstrative. We may shout. Sometimes the overflowing of joy demands more than ordinary expression, therefore we pray, "Let Your holy ones shout for joy."

10. *For Your servant David's sake turn not away the face of Your anointed.* Much more may we ask this for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. O God, remember Your Son, our Lord and our King, and for His sake look in love and pity upon us today,

11, 12. *The LORD has sworn in truth unto David, He will not turn from it. I will set upon the throne the fruit of your body. If your children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne forevermore.* Long did the house of David reign over Israel. But they proved unfaithful, and therefore the scepter passed out of their hands. But it is still in the hand of another Son of David. In a spiritual sense Jesus Christ has a throne and a dominion that shall know no end—

"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does its successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretches from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

13. *For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.* The literal Zion was the Lord's habitation for a time, but the spiritual Zion will be His dwelling place throughout eternity!

14. *This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* God rest in His people. The whole company of the redeemed shall be His abiding place forever!

15. *I will abundantly bless her provision: will satisfy her poor with bread.* God sends the necessary provision for His people, and sends His blessing with it. We are so poor that we have not even spiritual bread for our souls to eat unless He gives it to us. But here is His gracious

promise, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." This He will do both literally and spiritually.

16. *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* In the 9th verse we had a silver prayer, but here, in this 16th verse, we have a golden answer. The prayer of the Psalmist was, "Let your saints shout for joy." The Lord's answer is, "Her saints shall shout aloud for joy." God always gives good measure, pressed down, and running over. Often we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. His command to each one of us is, "Open your mouth wide." And His promise is, "I will fill it." If you ask great things of Him, He will give you yet greater things for He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

17. *There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for My anointed.* Oh, that today the horn of David might again bud! May every believer in Jesus feel the life of God reviving within Him, and in many a case where there is no spiritual life at all, may life divine begin today! Pray for it, beloved—and then look for it, and you shall surely see it!

18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.* We have no King but Jesus and His crown is always flourishing. It sits well upon a blessed head. Let us crown Him once again this day with our gladsome praise and thanksgiving!

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

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

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COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE
NO. 3295

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"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verse 16 is #2572, Volume 44—FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

I WILL read you the text as it is given in the Revised Version—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?" That is to say, is it not one form of expressing the communion of the blood of Christ? "The bread," or as it is in the margin, "the loaf which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body: for we all partake of the one loaf." The word, "loaf," helps to bring out more clearly the idea of unity intended to be set forth by the apostle.

It is a lamentable fact that some have fancied that this simple ordinance of the Lord's Supper has a certain magical, or at least physical power about it, so that by the mere act of eating and drinking this bread and wine, men can be made partakers of the body and blood of Christ! It is marvelous that so plain a symbol should have been so complicated by genuflection, adornments and technical phrases! Can anyone see the slightest resemblance between the Master's sitting down with the 12 and the "mass" of the Roman community? The original rite is lost in the superimposed ritual! Superstition has produced a sacrament where Jesus intended a fellowship. Too many who would not go the length of Rome, yet speak of this simple feast as if it were a dark and obscure mystery. They employ all manner of hard words to turn the children's bread into a stone! It is not the Lord's Supper, but the "Eucharist." We see before us no plate, but a "paten." The cup is a "chalice," and the table is an "altar." These are incrustations of superstition, whereby the blessed ordinance of Christ is likely to be again overgrown and perverted!

What does this *Supper* mean? It means communion—communion with Christ, communion with one another!

What is communion? The word breaks up easily into union, and its prefix *com,* which means *with,* "union with." We must, therefore, first enjoy union with Christ and with His Church or else we cannot enjoy

communion. Union lies at the basis of communion. We must be one with Christ in heart, soul and life—baptized into His death, quickened by His life—and so brought to be members of His body, one with the whole Church of which He is the head. We cannot have communion with Christ until we are in union *with Him*. And we cannot have communion with the Church till we are in vital union with it.

I. The teaching of the Lord's Supper is just this—that while we have many ways of COMMUNION WITH CHRIST, yet the receiving of Christ into our souls as our Savior is the best way of communion with Him.

I said, dear friends, that we have many ways of communion with Christ. Let me show you that it is so.

Communion is ours by *personal union* with the Lord Jesus. We speak with Him in prayer, and He speaks with us through the word. Some of us speak more often with Christ than we do with wife or child—and our communion with Jesus is deeper and more thorough than our fellowship with our nearest friend. In meditation and its attendant thanksgiving we speak with our risen Lord. And by His Holy Spirit He answers us by creating fresh thought and emotion in our minds. I like sometimes, in prayer, when I do not feel that I can say anything, just to sit still and look up—then faith spiritually catches sight of the well-Beloved and hears His voice in the solemn silence of the mind. Thus we have union with Jesus of a closer sort than any words could possibly express. Our soul melts beneath the warmth of Jesus' love and darts upward her own love in return. Think not that I am dreaming, or am carried off by the memory of some unusual rhapsody—no, I assert that the devout soul can converse with the Lord Jesus all day and can have as true fellowship with Him as if He still dwelt bodily among men! This thing comes to me, not by the hearing of the ears, but by my own personal experience—I know of a surety that Jesus manifests Himself unto His people as He does not unto the world!

Ah, what sweet communion often exists between the saint and the Well-Beloved, when there is no bread and wine upon the table, for the Spirit Himself draws the heart of the renewed one and it runs after Jesus, while the Lord, Himself, appears unto the longing spirit! "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Do *you* enjoy this charming union?

Next, we have communion with Christ *in His thoughts, views and purposes,* for His thoughts are our thoughts according to our capacity and sanctity. Believers take the same view of matters as Jesus does—that which pleases Him pleases them, and that which grieves Him grieves them, also. Consider, for instance, the greatest theme of our thought, and see whether our thoughts are not like those of Christ. He delights in the Father, He loves to glorify the Father—do not we? Is not the Father the center of our soul's delight? Do we not rejoice at the very sound of His name? Does not our spirit cry, "Abba Father"? Thus it is clear that we feel as Jesus feels towards the Father and so we have the truest communion with Him. This is but one instance—your contemplations

will bring before you a wide variety of topics wherein we think with Jesus. Now, identity of judgment, opinion and purpose forms the highway of communion—yes, it is *communion.*

We have also communion with Christ *in our emotions.* Have you never felt a holy horror when you have heard a word of blasphemy in the street? Thus Jesus felt when He saw sin and bore it in His own person—only He felt it infinitely more than you do. Have you never felt, as you looked upon sinners, that you must weep over them? Those are holy tears and contain the same ingredients as those which Jesus shed when He lamented over Jerusalem. Yes, in our zeal for God, our hatred of sin, our detestation of lies, our pity for men, we have true communion with Jesus.

Further, we have had fellowship with Christ *in many of our actions.* Have you ever tried to teach the ignorant? This Jesus did. Have you found it difficult? So Jesus found it. Have you strived to reclaim the backslider? Then you were in communion with the Good Shepherd who hastens into the wilderness to find the one lost sheep—finds it, lays it upon His shoulders and brings it home rejoicing! Have you ever watched over a soul night and day with tears? Then you have had communion with Him who has borne all our names upon His broken heart and carries the memorial of them upon His pierced hands! Yes, in acts of self-denial, liberality, benevolence and piety, we enter into communion with Him who went about doing good. Whenever we try to disentangle the snarls of strife and to make peace between men who are at enmity, then are we doing what the great peacemaker did and we have communion with the Lord and giver of peace! Wherever, indeed, we co-operate with the Lord Jesus in His designs of love to men, we are in true and active communion with Him.

So it is *with our sorrows.* Certain of us have had large fellowship with the Lord Jesus in affliction. "Jesus wept." He lost a friend and so have we. Jesus grieved over the hardness of men's hearts—we know that grief. Jesus was exceedingly sorry that the hopeful young man turned away and went back to the world—we know that sorrow. Those who have sympathetic hearts and live for others readily enter into the experience of "the man of sorrows." The wounds of calumny, the reproaches of the proud, the venom of the bigoted, the treachery of the false and the weakness of the true—we have known in our measure and therein have had communion with Jesus.

Nor this only—we have been with our divine Master *in His joys.* I suppose there never lived a happier man than the Lord Jesus. He was rightly called, "the man of sorrows," but He might with unimpeachable truth have been called "the man of joys." He must have rejoiced as He called His disciples and they came to Him—as He bestowed healing and relief and gave pardon to penitents, and breathed peace on believers. His was the joy of finding the sheep and taking the piece of money out of the dust. His work was His joy—such joy that for its sake He endured the cross, despising the shame! The exercise of benevolence is joy to loving

hearts—the more pain it costs, the more joy it is. Kind actions make us happy and in such joy we find communion with the great heart of Jesus.

Thus have I given you a list of windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which you may come at the Lord, but *the ordinance of the Lord's Supper sets forth a way which surpasses them all.* It is the most accessible and the most effectual method of fellowship. Here it is that we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus by receiving Him as our Savior. We, being guilty, accept of His atonement as our sacrificial cleansing and in token thereof, we eat this bread and drink this cup. "Oh," says one, "I do not feel that I can get near to Christ. He is so high and holy—and I am only a poor sinner." Just so. For that very reason you can have fellowship with Christ in that which lies nearest to His heart! He is a Savior and to be a Savior there must be a sinner to be saved! Be you that one, and Christ and you shall at once be in union and communion—He shall save and you shall be saved! He shall sanctify and you shall be sanctified—and two shall thus be one! This table sets before you His great sacrifice. Jesus has offered it—will you accept it? He does not ask you to bring anything—no drop of blood, no pang of flesh—all is here and your part is to come and partake of it, even as of old the offerer partook of the peace offering which he had brought and so feasted with God and with the priest. If you work for Christ, that will certainly be some kind of fellowship with Him, but I tell you that the communion of receiving Him into your inmost soul is the nearest and closest fellowship possible to mortal man! The fellowship of service is exceedingly honorable when we and Christ work together for the same objectives! The fellowship of suffering is exceedingly instructive, when our heart has engraved upon it the same characters as were engraved upon the heart of Christ. But still, the fellowship of the soul which receives Christ and is received by Christ is closer, more vital, and more essential than any other! Such fellowship is eternal! No power upon earth can henceforth take from me the piece of bread which I have just now eaten! It has gone where it will be made up into blood, nerve, muscle and bone. It is *within* me, and *of* me. That drop of wine has coursed through my veins and is part and parcel of my being! So he that takes Jesus by faith to be his Savior has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from him. He has received Christ into his inward parts and all the men on earth, and all the devils in hell cannot extract Christ from him! Jesus said, "He that eats Me, even he shall live by Me." By our sincere reception of Jesus into our hearts, an indissoluble union is established between us and the Lord—and this manifests itself in mutual communion. To as many as received Him, to them has He given this communion, even to them that believe on His name!

II. I have now to look at another side of communion, namely, THE FELLOWSHIP OF TRUE BELIEVERS WITH EACH OTHER. We have many ways of communing, the one with the other, but there is no way of mutual communing like the common reception of the same Christ in the same way! I have said that there are many ways in which Christians

commune with one another—and these doors of fellowship I would mention at some length.

Let me go over much the same ground as before. We commune *by holy converse.* I wish we had more of this. Time was when they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another. I am afraid that now they more often speak one *against* another. It is a grievous thing that love often lies bleeding by a brother's hand. Where we are not quite as bad as that, yet we are often backward and silent—and so miss profitable converse. Our clannish reserve has often made one Christian sit by another in utter isolation, when each would have been charmed with the other's company. Children of one family need not wait to be introduced to each other—having eaten of this one bread, we have given and received the token of brotherhood. Let us therefore act consistently with our relationship and fall into holy conversation next time we meet! I am afraid that Christian brotherhood in many cases begins and ends inside the place of worship. Let it not be so among us! Let it be our delight to find our society in the circle of which Jesus is the center and let us make them our friends who are the friends of Jesus. By frequent united prayer and praise, and by ministering, the one to the other, the things which we have learned by the Spirit, we shall have fellowship with each other in our Lord Jesus Christ!

I am sure that all Christians have fellowship together in their *thought*s. In the essentials of the gospel we think alike—in our thoughts of God, of Christ, of sin, of holiness, we keep in step. In our intense desire to promote the kingdom of our Lord we are as one. All spiritual life is one. The thoughts raised by the Spirit of God in the soul of men are never contrary to each other. I say not that the thoughts of all professors *agree*, but I do assert that the minds of the truly regenerate in all sects and in all ages are in harmony with each other—a harmony which often excites delighted surprise in those who perceive it! The marks that divide one set of nominal Christians from another set are very deep and wide to those who have nothing of religion but the name. Yet living believers scarcely notice them. Boundaries which separate the cattle of the field are no division to the birds of the air! Our minds, thoughts, desires and hopes are one in Christ Jesus—and herein we have communion.

Beloved friends, our *emotions* are another royal road of fellowship. You sit down and tell your experience and I smile to think that you are telling mine! Sometimes a young believer enlarges upon the sad story of his trials and temptations, imagining that nobody ever had to endure so great a fight, when all the while he is only describing the common adventures of those who go on pilgrimage and we are all communing with him! When we talk together about our Lord, are we not agreed? When we speak of our Father and all His dealings with us, are we not one? And when we weep, when we sigh, when we sing and when we rejoice—are we not all akin? Heavenly fingers touching like strings within our hearts bring forth the same notes, for we are the products of the same Maker

and tuned to the same praise! Real harmony exists among all the true people of God—Christians are one in Christ!

We have communion with one another, too, in our *actions.* We unite in trying to save men—I hope we do. We join in instructing, warning, inviting and persuading sinners to come to Jesus. Our life-ministry is the same—we are workers together with God. We live out the one desire, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Certainly we have much communion, one with the other, in our *sufferings.* There is not a poor sick or despondent saint upon the earth with whom we do not sympathize at this moment, for we are fellow members and partakers of the sufferings of Christ. I hope we can each one say—

"Is there a lamb in all Your flock,
I would disdain to feed?
Is there a foe, before whose face,
I fear Your cause to plead?"

No, we suffer with each other, bear each other's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. If we do not, we have reason for questioning our own faith! But if we do so, we have communion with each other.

I hope we have fellowship in our *joys.* Is one happy? We would not envy him, but rejoice with him! Perhaps this spirit is not so universal as it should be among professors. Are we at once glad because another prospers? If another star outshines ours, do we delight in its radiance? When we meet a brother with ten talents, do we congratulate ourselves on having such a man given to help us, or do we depreciate him as much as we can? Such is the depravity of our nature that we do not readily rejoice in the progress of others if they leave us behind—but we must school ourselves to this. A man will readily sit down and sympathize with a friend's griefs, but if he sees him honored and esteemed, he is apt to regard him as a rival and does not readily rejoice with him. This ought not to be! Without effort we ought to be happy in our brother's happiness. If we are ill, be this our comfort that many are in robust health! If we are faint, let us be glad that others are strong in the Lord! Thus shall we enjoy a happy fellowship like that of the perfected above.

When I have put all these modes of Christian communion together, not one of them is so sure, so strong, so deep as communion in receiving the same Christ as our Savior and trusting in the same blood for cleansing unto eternal life! Here on the table you have the tokens of the broadest and fullest communion. This is a kind of communion which you and I cannot choose or reject—if we are in Christ, it is and must be ours! Certain brethren restrict their communion in the outward ordinance, and they think they have good reasons for doing so. But I am unable to see the force of their reasoning, because I joyfully observe that these brethren commune with other believers in prayer, praise, hearing of the word and other ways! The fact is that the matter of real communion is very largely beyond human control and is to the spiritual body what the circulation of the blood is to the natural body—a necessary process not dependent upon volition. In perusing a deeply-spiritual book of devotion,

you have been charmed and benefited, and yet upon looking at the title page, it may be you have found that the author belonged to the Church of Rome. What then? Why, then it has happened that the inner life has broken all barriers and your spirits have communed! For my own part, in reading certain precious works, I have loathed their Romanism and yet I have had close fellowship with their writers in weeping over sin, in adoring at the foot of the cross and in rejoicing in the glorious enthronement of our Lord. Blood is thicker than water, and no fellowship is more inevitable and sincere than fellowship in the precious blood and in the risen life of our Lord Jesus Christ! Here, in the common reception of the one loaf, we bear witness that we are one; and in the actual participation of all the chosen in the one redemption that unity is in very deed displayed and matured in the most substantial manner. Washed in the one blood, fed on the same loaf, cheered by the same cup, all differences pass away, and "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another."

III. Now then, dear friends, if this kind of fellowship is the best, LET US TAKE CARE TO ENJOY IT. Let us at this hour avail ourselves of it!

Let us take care *to see Christ* in the mirror of this ordinance. Have any of you eaten the bread and yet have you not seen Christ? Then you have gained no benefit. Have you drunk the wine, but have you not remembered the Lord? Alas, I fear you have eaten and drunk condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body! But if you did see through the emblems, as aged persons see through their spectacles, then you have been thankful for such aids to vision! But what is the use of glasses if there is nothing to look at? And what is the use of the communion if Christ is not in our thoughts and hearts?

If you did discern the Lord, then be sure, again, to *accept Him.* Say to yourself, "All that Christ is to any, He shall be to me. Does He save sinners? He shall save me. Does He change men's hearts? He shall change mine. Is He all in all to those who trust Him? He shall be all in all to me." I have heard persons say that they do not know how to take Christ. What said the apostle? "The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart." If you have something in your mouth that you desire to eat, what is the best thing to do? Will you not swallow it? That is exactly what faith does. Christ's word of grace is very near you—it is on your tongue—let it go down into your inmost soul! Say to your Savior, "I know I am not fit to receive You, O Jesus, but since You do graciously come to me as bread comes to the hungry, I joyfully receive You, rejoicing to feed upon You. Since You come to me as the fruit of the vine to a thirsty man, Lord, I take You willingly, and I thank You that this reception is all that You require of me. Has not Your Spirit so put it, 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name'"?

Beloved friends, when you have thus received Jesus, fail not to *rejoice in Him* as having received Him! How many there are who have received Christ, who talk and act as if they never had received Him! It is a poor

dinner of which a man says, after he has eaten it, that he feels as if he had not dined! And is it a poor Christ of whom anyone can say, "I have received Him, but I am none the happier, none the more at peace." If you have received Jesus into your heart, you *are* saved. You *are* justified. Do you whisper, "I hope so"? Is that all? Do you not *know*? The hoping and hopping of so many are a poor way of going—put both feet down and 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." You are either saved or not! There is no state between the two! You are either pardoned or condemned and you have good reason for the highest happiness or else you have grave causes for the direst anxiety. If you have received the atonement, be as glad as you can be! And if you are still an unbeliever, rest not till Christ is yours!

Oh, the joy of entering continually into fellowship with Christ in such a way that you never lose His empathy; be this yours, beloved, every day and all the day! May His shadow fall upon you as you are in the sun, or stray in the gardens! May His voice cheer you as you lie down upon the seashore and listen to the murmuring of the waves. May His presence glorify the main solitude as you climb the hills! May Jesus be to you an all-surrounding presence, lighting up the night, perfuming the day, gladdening all places and sanctifying all pursuits! Our Beloved is not a friend for Lord's days only, but for weekdays too; He the inseparable passion of His loving disciples. The who have had fellowship with His body and His blood at this table may have the Lord as an habitual guest at their own tables! Those who have met their Master in this supper room may expect Him to make their own chamber bright with His royal presence! Let fellowship with Jesus and with the elect brotherhood be henceforth the atmosphere of our life, the joy of our existence! This will give us a heaven below and prepare us for heaven above!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:14-35.

Verses 14-16. *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with Him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.* It was one of the twelve who went to the chief priests, to bargain for the price of his Lord's betrayal! He did not even mention Christ's name in his infamous question, *"What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?"* The amount agreed upon, *thirty pieces of silver,* was the price of a slave and showed how little value the chief priests set upon Jesus—and also revealed the greed of Judas in selling his Master for so small a sum. Yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received—a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord! Let us who have been redeemed with Christ's precious blood, set high store by Him, think much of Him and praise Him much. As we remember with shame

and sorrow these thirty pieces of silver, let us never undervalue Him, or forget the priceless preciousness of Him who was reckoned as worth no more than a slave.

17, 18. *Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.* How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in His humiliation! He had no home of His own wherein He could *"keep the Passover"* with His disciples. He was soon to be put to a public and shameful death, yet He had only to send two of His disciples *"into the city to such a man,"* and the guest chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at His disposal! He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done, but He obtained it by the divine compulsion of almighty love. Even in His lowest estate, our Lord Jesus had the hearts of all men beneath His control. What power He has now that He reigns in glory!

19. *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.* If Christ's disciples always loyally *did as Jesus appointed them,* they would always speed well on His errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. If we would only go to them as Peter and John went to this man in Jerusalem, and say to them what "the Master says," we would find that their hearts would be opened to receive Christ even as this man's house was willingly yielded up at our Lord's request!

20, 21. *Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.* Our Lord remained in seclusion until the evening and then went to the appointed place and sat down, or rather, reclined at the paschal table with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." This was a most unpleasant thought to bring to a feast, yet it was most appropriate to the Passover, for God's commandment to Moses concerning the first paschal lamb was, "With bitter herbs they shall eat it." This was a painful reflection for our Lord, and also for His twelve chosen companion—"One of you," and His eyes would glance round the table as He said it, "One of you shall betray Me."

22. *And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began, each of them, to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?* That short sentence fell like a bombshell among the Savior's bodyguard! It startled them—they had all made great professions of affection for Him and, for the most part, those professions were true. *And they were exceedingly sorrowful*—and well they might be! Such a revelation was enough to produce the deepest emotions of sorrow and sadness. It is a beautiful trait in the character of the disciples that they did not suspect one another, but each of them inquired, almost incredulously, as the form of the question implies—*"Lord, is it I?"* No one said, "Lord, is it Judas?" Perhaps no one of the eleven thought that

Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given him an honorable place among His apostles. We cannot do any good by suspecting our brethren—but we may do great services by suspecting ourselves! Self-suspicion is near akin to humility.

23, 24. *And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.* A man may get very near to Christ, yes, may dip his hand in the same dish with the Savior, and yet betray Him. We may be high in office and may apparently be very useful, as Judas was—yet we may betray Christ. We learn from our Lord's words that Divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt—"*The Son of man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed*." His criminality is just as great as though there had been no "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." *"It had been good for that man if he had not been born*." The doom of Judas is worse than non-existence! To have consorted with Christ as he had done—and then to deliver Him into the hands of His enemies—sealed the traitor's eternal destiny!

25. *Then Judas which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* Judas appears to have been the last of the twelve to ask the question, "is it I?" Those who are the last to suspect themselves are usually those who ought to be the first to exercise self-suspicion. Judas did not address Christ as, "Lord," as the other disciples had done, but called Him, Rabbi—"Master." Otherwise his question was like that of his eleven companions. But He received from Christ an answer that was given to no one else—He said unto him, "You have said." Probably the reply reached his ears alone, and if he had not been a hopeless reprobate, this unmasking of his traitorous design might have driven him to repentance, but there was nothing in his heart to respond to Christ's voice. He had sold himself to Satan before he sold his Lord.

26-28. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat, this is My body. And He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* The Jewish Passover was made to melt into the Lord's Supper, as the stars of the morning dissolve into the light of the sun. *As they were eating*, while the paschal supper was proceeding, Jesus instituted the new memorial which is to be observed until He comes again. How simple was the whole ceremony! *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body*." Christ could not have meant that the bread was His actual body, for His body was reclining by the table! But He intended that broken bread to *represent* His body which was about to be broken on the cross. Then followed the second memorial, the cup, filled with "the fruit of the vine," of which Christ said, "*Drink you all of it*."

There is no trace here of any altar or priest—there is nothing about the elevation or adoration of the "host." There is no resemblance between the Lord's Supper and the Romish "mass." Let us keep strictly to the letter and spirit of God's word in everything, for if one adds a little, another will add more, and if one alters one point, and another alters another point, there is no telling how far we shall get from the truth of God! The disciples had been reminded of their own liability to sin—now their Savior gives them a personal pledge of the pardon of sin, according to Luke's record of His words, "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you."

29. *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.* Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine till He should drink it new with His disciples in His Father's kingdom. He will keep His tryst with all His followers, and they, with Him, shall hold high festival forever!

30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.* Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to His last dread conflict, to Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha—yet He went with a song on His lips! He must have led the singing, for the disciples were too sad to start the Hallel with which the paschal feast closed. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives*. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat and prevailed.

31, 32. *Then said Jesus unto them, All you shall be offended because of Me, this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.* Observe our Lord's habit of quoting Scripture! He was able to speak words of infallible truth, yet He fell back upon the inspired record in the Old Testament! His quotation from Zechariah does not seem to have been really necessary, but it was most appropriate to His prophecy to His disciples—*"All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad*." Jesus was the Shepherd who was about to be smitten, but He foretold the scattering of the sheep! Even those leaders of the flock that had been first chosen by Christ and had been most with Him would stumble and fall away from Him on that dread night, but the Shepherd would not lose them—there would be a reunion between Him and His sheep—*"After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee*." Once again He would resume, for a little while, the character of their Shepherd-King, and with them He would revisit some of their old haunts in Galilee before He ascended to His heavenly home. "I will go before you," suggests the idea of the good Shepherd leading His flock after the Eastern manner. Happy are His sheep in having such a leader! And blessed are they in following Him wherever He goes!

33. *Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.* This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence it betrayed, but also because it was a flat *contradiction* of the Master's declaration! Jesus said, "All you shall be offended because of Me this night," but Peter thought he knew better than Christ, so he answered, *"Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended*." No doubt these words were spoken from his heart, but "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Peter must have been amazed, the next morning, as he discovered the deceitfulness and wickedness of his own heart as manifested in his triple denial of his Lord! He who thinks himself so much stronger than his brethren is the very man who will prove to be weaker than many of them, as did Peter, not many hours after his boast was uttered.

34. *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crows, you shall deny Me thrice.* Jesus now tells His boastful disciple that before the next morning's cockcrowing, he will thrice deny his Lord. Not only would he stumble and fall with his fellow disciples, but he would go beyond them all in his repeated denials of that dear Master whom he professed to love with as intense an affection as even John possessed. Peter declared that he would remain true to Christ if he were the only faithful friend left. Jesus foretold that of all the twelve, only Judas would exceed the boaster in wickedness!

35. *Peter said unto Him, Though I shall die with You, yet will I not deny You. Likewise also said all the disciples.* Here again Peter contradicts his Master straight to His face. It was a pity that he should have boasted once after his Lord's plain prophecy that all the disciples would that night be offended. But it was shameful that Peter should repeat his self-confident declaration in the teeth of Christ's express prediction concerning him! He was not alone in his utterance, for *likewise also said all the disciples*. They all felt that under no circumstances could they deny their Lord. We have no record of the denial of Christ by the other ten apostles, although they all forsook Him and fled, and thus practically disowned Him. Remembering all that they had seen and heard of Him, and especially bearing in mind His most recent discourse, the communion in the upper room, and His wondrous intercessory prayer on their behalf, we are not surprised that they felt themselves bound to Him forever. But, alas, notwithstanding their protests, the King's prophesy was completely fulfilled, for that night they were all "offended."

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PRAISE FOR JESUS
NO. 3296

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"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise."
Genesis 49:8.

THESE words were spoken by the patriarch Jacob when he blessed his sons as he lay a-dying. But before he finished Judah's blessing, the good old man seemed to forget his son and to turn his thoughts to Jesus, our Lord, of whom Judah was a very significant type. Jacob compared Judah to a lion and a lion's whelp—and in the Revelation we read that one of the elders said to John, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loosen the seven seals thereof." In the 10th verse of this chapter we have Jacob's notable prophecy concerning the coming of Christ, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

I intend only to speak about Judah so far as he is a type of Christ, and I trust that I shall, by the Holy Spirit's gracious guidance, move all the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ to praise Him, so that I shall be able to reverently say to Him, "Jesus, You are He whom Your brothers shall praise." So I shall speak, first, concerning *the praise of Judah and the praise of Jesus*. And then, secondly, concerning *the glories of Judah as setting forth the glories of Jesus*.

I. First, then, let us think about THE PRAISE OF JUDAH AND THE PRAISE OF JESUS.

Jacob said to Judah, "You are he whom your brothers shall praise." Judah was preeminent above his brethren in several things for which he deserved to be praised. The first was the *eloquence and prevalence of his intercession*. Judah seems to have been the gifted one out of the 12 sons of Jacob, and his pleading prevailed with his father when all others were powerless. When "the lord of the land" of Egypt, whom his brothers failed to recognize although he knew them, said to them, "You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you," they went back home with heavy hearts and their father stoutly refused to allow Benjamin to go down into Egypt. But when all their corn was eaten up, and they were obliged to go again to buy more, it was Judah who persuaded Jacob to let Benjamin go with them. Reuben and Levi were obliged to be silent in that critical period, for they had lost their rightful position in the family by their transgressions, and Simeon was a hostage in the hands of Joseph—but Judah was able to step into the breach and his intercession prevailed.

We, brothers and sisters, are by nature like those sinful sons of Jacob. We have offended our Father who is in heaven, and it is in vain for us to attempt to approach Him as sinners without an intercessor. But our Judah-Jesus, if I may so call Him, stands before His Father's face—and whatever our desire or our request may be, provided it is a right one—it is sure to be granted when Jesus pleads for us before the throne of God! "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." Turn your eyes upward, beloved, and see our great high priest appearing there in the presence of God for us! And as He points to the print of the nails in His hands and feet, and to the scar of the soldier's spear in His side, and pleads our cause, be certain that His plea must prevail with His Father! Remember the argument of the apostle when writing concerning the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, "this man, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." If Judah was praised because his intercession prevailed with Jacob, much more shall Jesus be praised because His intercession prevails with Jehovah! Clap your hands, O you saints, at the remembrance of His prevalence on your behalf when you sought Him out of the depths of your despair! And praise Him that He still lives to carry on His people's cause above! Have you any burden on your mind at this moment? Is there anything that distresses you? Have you been much in prayer without getting answers to your supplications? Then put your case into the hands of Christ—He has never lost a suit yet—and that is more than the best of earthly advocates can say about the cases entrusted to them! Therefore praise Him, you who have committed yourselves into His hands! And as for you who are going to do so now, begin to praise Him, for your most sanguine anticipations of blessing shall not be disappointed!

That was a wonderful scene when Joseph said that Benjamin should not go back with his brothers, but should remain in Egypt as his servant because the silver cup had been found in his sack, and Judah pleaded with Joseph, not knowing that "the lord of the land" was his own brother! You remember how he pictured their old father at home, who would certainly die of a broken heart if Benjamin did not return to him in safety and how, at last, he offered to be a bondman to Joseph if he would but let Benjamin go free. You see, he pleaded for *substitution*, and he also told Joseph how he became surety for the lad unto his father—and his plea was so effectual that Joseph could refrain himself no longer, but bursting into tears declared that he was their long-lost brother! So, dear friends, if the great Lord of heaven and earth seems angry with you because of your sins—"and He is angry with the wicked every day"—put your case into the hands of the sinners' advocate, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and when He stands up to plead with His Father for you, He will soon bring a smile of forgiveness upon the righteously severe countenance of His Father and you shall gladly say, "Jesus, You are He

whom Your brethren shall praise because of Your almighty power in pleading for them."

We find that at a later period, the tribe of Judah was *foremost in wisdom and skill*. If you turn to Exodus 35:30, you will see that when the tabernacle was to be erected in the wilderness, "Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord has called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work." And, surely, I may metaphorically apply this description to our Judah-Jesus! What wisdom there is in Him and what skill! What is there that He cannot do? Bezaleel could cut, polish, and set precious stones—but Jesus can take the worthless pebbles of the brook and transmute them into diamonds! Jesus takes "base things of the world, and things which are despised," and works such marvelous changes in them that the Lord of hosts says concerning them, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels." He is a wonderful lapidary! Some of us have been upon the wheel under His hand for a long time—and we are apt to think that He has cut us most cruelly—but the cutting is intended to bring out our brilliance and to make us fit to shine in the diadem of the King in due time! Bezaleel was also a worker in wood—and our great Judah-Jesus came to us when we were growing wild in the forest of sin. It was His axe of conviction that cut us down and it has been His hand of skill that has been fashioning and carving us to make us worthy to be pillars in His temple!

What is there that Jesus cannot do? Has He not worked out for us a work which required far more skill than the erecting of the tabernacle in the wilderness and the making of the ark of the covenant, the veil which hung before the most holy place, the high priest's garments of glory and beauty and all the cunning work devised by Bezaleel and his helpers? Did He not spend His whole life in working out for us a matchless robe of righteousness in which we may even dare to stand before the all-seeing eyes of God? Angels will keep on wondering throughout eternity at the wisdom of their Lord and ours! The wisdom of His teaching is divine. "Never man spoke like this man." The wisdom with which He deals with each individual case that is brought to Him is matchless! He is the great physician and there is no earthly doctor who has such skill as He has. Let Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, have all due praise, but let Jesus, the Son of God, have far more! All wisdom is to be found in Him! His very name is "wisdom." Solomon calls Him by that name. The wisest of men was not at all wise in comparison with incarnate wisdom, the wisdom of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Jesus, we bless You, You who have worked out a perfect righteousness for us, You who make us into living stones and then build us, stone by stone, into the marvelous edifice of Your church! Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise for Your wondrous wisdom and skill!

Further, the tribe of Judah had precedence *in presenting offerings unto the Lord*. In Numbers 7:12, we read, "He that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah." The Lord had said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar," and the prince of the tribe of Judah, therefore, led the way by bringing his offering on the first day. We know that our Lord sprang out of Judah, so he was first with his offering. "No," says someone, "Abel was first with his offering." Yes, apparently He was in the order of time, but Christ's offering was much more ancient than his, for He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In the divine purpose, His sacrifice was offered long before the great tragedy on Calvary! And the merit of His atonement was reckoned to His people's account long before man was created—but certainly in order of precedence Christ's offering comes first. Christ brought for His offering His own most precious body and blood and we, by faith, present the same offering when we come to God in the name of Jesus. What sacrifice could we bring if Judah's prince had not first brought His one offering by which He has perfected forever them that are sanctified? Did I say just now that Christ's offering had precedence? I must correct myself, for it is first, it is last, it is midst, it is the *only* sacrifice that can put away sin and make us acceptable unto God! And there is no sacrifice either of prayer or of praise that we can present to God unless we bring it by virtue of Christ's one great sacrifice. Let us, therefore, praise our Judah-Jesus! Let us give Him our loudest hallelujahs, for He comes first to the altar, and we afterwards approach it through Him. Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise for Your wondrous atoning sacrifice!

Yet again, Judah had the singular precedence of *always leading the van when the tribes were on the march*. In Numbers 10:14 we read that, when the fiery-cloudy pillar moved, "in the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies." First in the encampment, first on the march, first everywhere was Judah's lion! The tribe of Dan brought up the rear, but the tribe of Judah always went in front. And here again let Jesus Christ be praised, for He always leads the way! If I descend into the Valley of Humiliation, I shall see His footprints all down the slippery steeps. If I pass through the Enchanted Ground where so many fall asleep, I shall see the track of the wakeful one all along that dangerous way. If up the Hill Difficulty I have to scramble on my hands and knees, I shall see the marks of the blood drops where His hands were torn by the thorns and His feet were cut by the flints as He, too, climbed there! And when I go down to the river, I shall still see His footprints—and up the other side I shall see the track of my risen Lord! All up the eternal hills I shall but follow where He leads the way! Yes, and up to the very throne of God He has gone before us, clearing a way for His people and leading them along it.

Yet once more, *Judah afterwards attained to the sovereignty*, for David, of the tribe of Judah, was in due time proclaimed king over all Israel. We also have a King of the line of Judah, one who is mightier than David, and wiser than Solomon—and happy are we in having such a

King to reign over us! Who among us that loves Christ would not set Him up upon a high throne? Oh, that we could continually exalt Him yet more and more! Let your sweetest songs be all in His praise! Let your most daring deeds be done for Him. Give Him, you gracious women, your alabaster boxes full of precious ointment! Prepare your feasts, you wealthy men, and invite Him to preside at the table! Come, you children, and strew branches in the way while He rides along triumphantly! Let, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" be the joyful strain which comes from every lip and heart because Jesus reigns over us, the King of kings and Lord of lords! Do praise Him, do extol Him this very moment, lift up your hearts and your voices while we sing this familiar strain—

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power divine.
And blessings more than we can give
Be, Lord, forever Thine."

(The congregation joined in singing, and
then the preacher continued his sermon).

II. The second part of our subject was to be THE GLORIES OF JUDAH AS SETTING FORTH THE GLORIES OF JESUS. They are illustrated in the sentence concerning Judah that follows our text.

The first of them mentions *the victories of Judah*—"Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies." You know what it means when a man seizes his enemy by the throat, or when a lion gets its prey by the neck and shakes the very life out of it. Thus has Jesus Christ done with all the enemies of His people. Shall I tell you again the grand old story? 'Twas one dark night when the great shepherd was watching His flock that He heard the roaring which told Him that the old lion of the pit was about to leap into the fold to tear the sheep in pieces. Then the shepherd whispered to Himself, "This is the dreadful hour and the power of darkness." Taking His place in the midst of His blood-bought flock, He waited for the next terrific roar. And as the lion sprang into the fold, He received him upon His bare bosom, and began at once to grapple with Him. He was wounded in His hands, in His feet, and in His side—and in the desperate struggle "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It was a dreadful fight which had been foreseen before the world was made, and which shall be the theme of grateful song when the world has ceased to be! But in the end the shepherd tore the lion as though it had been a kid and, crying, "It is finished," He Himself fell prostrate over His foe, slain, but dying only to rise again and live in everlasting triumph! In that dread combat, His hand was, indeed, on the neck of His enemy—and now He has gone to glory, leading captivity captive! You who have been delivered by Him from the old lion of the pit may well exclaim, "Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise."

The next thing for which Judah was to be praised was Jacob's prophecy, "*Your father's children shall bow down before you.*" Now, who in this house is a child of God? You will not be long in answering that question when I put to you another, "Do you bow down before the Lord Jesus Christ?" Here we are, a vast multitude assembled in this

Tabernacle, but we are not all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We cannot all truly say, "Our Father, who are in heaven." Our text gives us the means of knowing who are the children of God, for the great Father says to His Son, "Your Father's children shall bow down before You." Do you bow down before the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He your only trust? Do you rest your whole weight upon Him? Do you depend for time and eternity upon Judah-Jesus whom God has anointed and appointed to be the only Savior of sinners? If so, you have proved your sonship by bowing down before your great elder brother!

The third glory of Judah was *his lion-like power*. Jacob said, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you are gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" This seems to be a picture, first of Judah, and then of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a young lion, He has gone up and tore His prey in pieces. Sin, death and hell He has torn asunder! And now that He is like a mighty, full-grown lion, woe be unto those who provoke Him to anger—but blessed are they who have Him on their side! Many of you have seen that beautiful engraving of Una, the type of innocence, riding upon a lion's back; that lion, according to Spenser, protecting her from all ill. That is how every penitent soul rides, by the grace of God! The Lion of the tribe of Judah is the guardian of every believing heart. You have but to trust yourself to Jesus and He will see to it that you are never destroyed. He will preserve and deliver you from all evil of every kind and, at last, shall safely bring you where you shall see His face and rejoice in Him forever and ever! But woe to any of you who reject Him! Woe to you who deny His deity! Woe to you who break His Sabbaths, abhor His word and despise His cross! In that last tremendous day, His anger against the wicked shall be so terrible that they shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Oh, bow before Him, accept His grace, trust in His atoning sacrifice and then the very power which should make you now tremble will be exerted on your behalf and cause you to rejoice forever!

Further, Jesus is to be extolled for *His perpetual sovereignty*. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet until Shiloh comes." Judah's sovereignty came to an end, but Jesus always reigns. His kingdom here on earth has often seemed as if it was in jeopardy, but it has never been overthrown and it never will be. In the martyr days, they sewed the Christians up in the skins of wild beasts and cast them to the dogs. They dragged them at the heels of horses. They burned them at the stake. They stripped off their clothes and tortured then with hot irons on every part of their body. I dare not mention all the cruelties that were practiced on the followers of Jesus, but nothing availed to shake their allegiance to their King! In all these trials they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them and who gave them the grace to endure all these things for His sake! Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution nor famine, nor nakedness, nor

peril, nor sword could separate them from the love of Christ! And thus His kingdom was perpetuated during even the darkest ages of its history—which in another sense were also the brightest because of the glory that the faithfulness of His followers brought to their King! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom—"of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."

Now we get clear of Judah and come to Shiloh, of whom Jacob says, "*unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.*" Ah, beloved, there are no gatherings of the people anywhere else like those who come to Christ! It is no small thing that, all these years, the multitudes have gathered in this house, Sabbath by Sabbath, and why do they come? I confidently affirm that the only reason why such crowds gather here is because the preacher's theme is Christ! Feebly as he sometime preaches, his unvarying theme is the cross, the precious blood, the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ offered once for all on Calvary! This is a theme which never palls upon the ear! This is a subject which never grows stale. "We preach Christ crucified," for this is the magnet that draws the people to Him. Jesus Himself said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." The crowds that come here are nothing in comparison with the multitudes that have been and are still being drawn to Christ by the magnet of His death! I see His cross standing on yonder hill and I see the people gathering to it from every quarter. There was a little stream at first, but it grew, and none of us can tell how many have already been drawn to Christ—and still they come! While I have been speaking to you, they have kept on coming to Him, and so they shall until "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth." "Yes all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." They may seem to us to be long in coming, but they must come. The vision may tarry, but it is sure—and at the appointed time there shall be heard a great shout from the dwellers in the land, and from those far off upon the sea and from the glorified 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."

At the last, good old Jacob seems to have had his eyes opened, and to have seen *a very singular vision of Judah's King*—"Binding His foal unto the vine, and His ass's colt unto the choice vine." Yes, 'tis He, the very same of whom the prophet wrote, "Behold, your King comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." This is Judah-Jesus! He is a King, but He goes not down to Egypt for horses. He is meek and lowly, so He is content to ride upon the humble ass in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem! The mention of "the vine" and "the choice vine" naturally turns our thoughts to His most instructive parable of the vine and the branches. And as the ass's colt was bound to the vine, so is the church of God bound to Him who said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman."

Jacob's next words are also very suggestive—"He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes." You know the meaning of the allegory. Jesus went to Gethsemane and there "the blood of grapes" upon the true vine—I mean, the bloody sweat that exuded from every pore of His sacred body—was so copious as to make His garments appear as though they had been washed in wine! They took Him to Gabbatha and there they scourged Him so cruelly that again His clothes looked as if they had been washed in the blood of grapes. And so He passed on through the streets of Jerusalem until He came to Golgotha. Can you bear to see Him taking His last bloodbath on Calvary?—

"His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree."

After that terrible bloodbath, how does He look? What aspect does He bear? Jacob said, "His eyes shall be red with wine, and His teeth white with milk." His eyes were red with wine, but again it was the red wine of His own most precious blood flowing down from His thorn-crowned brow! And the white teeth seem to suggest the spotless purity of the Son of God even when He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, we must praise our blessed Judah-Jesus, for He was still fairest of the fair even when His face was marred more than the face of any man! Let us humbly bow before Him. Let us gratefully adore Him as we remember that, "being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But that was not the end of Him, for He was buried—but the third day He rose again and, after tarrying a while with His disciples, He ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and ours! And He is coming back again, one of these days, "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" in Him!

Long ago, Isaiah asked, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?" And the answer came at once, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Then the prophet asked, "Why are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like he that treads in the wine vat?" And He answered, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in My anger, and trample then in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." To all who trust Him, our great Judah-Jesus is still "mighty to save." All blood-bedewed from Calvary, He cries, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." To every sincere penitent, He still speaks in righteousness and says, "I washed My garments in wine, and My clothes in the blood of grapes when I trod the winepress of Jehovah's wrath for Your sake; when there was none to help, My own arm brought salvation unto Me, but it was for you that I suffered." Oh, believe Him, sinner! Trust Him and so become a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and then go forth to serve Him and to praise Him all your days—and to glorify Him forever. Let us all go our way still singing the praises of our blessed Lord and Master—

"Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death;
And be His honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!
Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is your exalted name!
The glories of Your heavenly state
Let the whole earth proclaim!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 49:1-28.

Verses 1, 2. *And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, you sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.* It must have been a great comfort to the old man to have all his 12 sons with him. What a quiet answer this was to his former unbelief! They were all there, yet he could remember the time when he had said, "Me have you bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away." Ah, we also shall have in our later days to chide ourselves for our foolish unbelief! "Jacob called unto his sons." So he was not bereaved after all! They are all here, Jacob! It falls to the lot of few fathers to have 12 sons—but still fewer to have all 12 of them gathered about his dying bed! "Gather yourselves together." They were to keep together as a family—and shall not the people of God keep together? Come away from the world, beloved, but come close to one another! Be one household. Be it your delight to assemble around your elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ! "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days." We are not told, nowadays, everything about the future, but much of the future is unfolded to us in the great principles of the law and the gospel. And we may learn very much of holy foresight by coming to the oracles of God.

3. *Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellence of dignity, and the excellence of power.* The patriarch fixes his eyes on his first-born. He must say something sharp that would dishonor him, but he does not deny him the rights of birthright. He clothes him with the robes and the jewels of primogeniture, and then he strips him—

4. *Unstable as water, you shall not excel; because you went up to your father's bed; then defiled you it: he went up to my couch.* So a man may have great opportunities and yet lose them. Uncontrolled passions may make him very little who otherwise might have been great. Reuben was "the excellence of dignity, and the excellence of power," yet his father had to say to him, "You shall not excel."

5. *Simeon and Levi*—They stood next according to the order of birth. "Simeon and Levi"—

6. *Are brothers.* They are very much like each other.

6-7. *Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not you into their secret; unto their assembly, my honor, be not you united: for*

in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they dug down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. Hence we do not read of the tribe of Simeon in the blessing of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy. But the Levites had this curse turned into a blessing, for, though they were scattered, yet they were scattered as priests and instructors to the other tribes. Happy is that man who, though he begins with a dark shadow resting upon him, so lives as to turn even that shadow into bright sunlight! Levi gained a blessing at the hands of Moses—one of the richest blessings of any of the tribes. This holy man, Jacob, in dying, did not express himself according to the rules of natural affection but he yielded himself up to the Spirit of God—therefore he had to say very much what must have been very bitter for a father to say, and he said it in all faithfulness being taught of the Spirit concerning things to come.

8. *Judah*—Now the Patriarch changes his tone, for he has come to that tribe which would take the birthright, out of which the Christ would come—"Judah"—

8. *You are he whom your brothers shall praise.* They praised God for him, they praised God by him, they praised God in him! He is the type of Jesus, of whom we can say all this with great emphasis.

8. *Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you.* In the person of David, in the long line of kings of the tribe of Judah, all this came true. And in the person of the great son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, all this has come true to a very high degree!

9. *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?* The coat of arms of Judah was a lion *couchant*, in the fullness of his strength, keeping still, waiting to spring upon his adversary. Our Lord Christ is such a Lion today—"the Lion of the tribe of Judah"—*couchant*, lying down. "Who shall rouse Him up?" Ah, if He is once fully aroused, what power will He put forth when He shall spring upon His adversaries?

10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* Jacob's eyes were dim, but he could see a very long way! He could see to the coming of Christ, the Shiloh, the Pacificator, the Peace-Maker—he could see that day when the Jews would cry, "We have no king but Caesar," for the Shiloh would have come and the scepter would have departed from Judah's tribe. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Oh, that it might be so today! May many be gathered to Christ! He is the true center and we gather unto Him. May the divisions of the church be soon healed by a general gathering unto Christ who alone is the center of the Church. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

11-12. *Binding his foal unto the vine, and his donkey's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood*

of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk. They were to have a land in which would be milk for babes and wine for strong men! Surely this land is "Your land, O Emmanuel!" What nourishing milk there is in the gospel, and what exhilarating wine for those who know the love of Christ!

13. *Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his brother shall be unto Zidon.* When the land was divided by lot, the lot was disposed by God to the complete fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy. Many things may seem to be left to chance, but they are not—the hand of God still guides and controls. This blessing is very suggestive. "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for a haven of ships." If God puts you by the sea, mind that you are a haven for ships. The Lord, in His providence, fixes your position—see that you turn it to account for the good of others.

14-15. *Issachar is a strong donkey couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.* Issachar's was a poor case. He was so idle, so fond of rest, that he was willing to become a servant unto tribute. This seems hardly a blessing yet it was true of Issachar. He was strong, but then he was a donkey as well as strong, so he liked couching down between two burdens much better than bearing either one of them—yet he had to bow his shoulder to bear and became a servant unto tribute.

16-17. *Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.* This tribe would show more cunning than courage. It would excel rather in the strategy of war than in the force of arms. Here the old man paused and refreshed himself by saying—

18. *I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD.* What a happy breathing space is this! When you and I, also, are near our journey's end, may we be able to say, as Jacob did, "I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD." He could not have said that once. This is the very Jacob who had, in his earlier days, been full of crafty policy and tricks and schemes! But he has done with all that now, and he is able to truthfully say, "I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD."

19. *Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.* This has been the blessing of many a child of God—to fight and apparently to lose the battle, yet to win it at the end. O you who are striving against sin, or seeking to win souls for Christ, after many disappointments may you be able to clutch this sweet assurance, "He shall overcome at the last."

20. *Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.* Asher was a tribe that was placed in a very fertile region where everything was crowned with delight. Oh, to have our inheritance where we feed upon the bread of heaven, and where the deep truths of God become to us royal dainties!

21. *Naphtali is a hind let loose: he gives goodly words.* Naphtali was a tribe notable for those that could speak freely, helped of God with a holy freedom in bearing testimony to His truth.

22. *Joseph*—Ah, now the patriarch comes to his beloved Joseph, and here the old man lingers long, longer than upon any other of his sons. "Joseph"—

22. *Is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.* The Hebrew puts it, "Joseph is a son of fruits, even a son of fruits by a well; whose daughters run over the wall."

23, 24. *The archers have surely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hand were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel).* [See Sermon #17, Volume 1—JOSEPH ATTACKED BY THE ARCHERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Joseph is a type of Him who is both the Shepherd and the stone to us—the Shepherd who defends us, provides for us, and dies for us. And the foundation on which we build for time and eternity.

25-28. *Even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin shall prey as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spoke unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.*

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DAVID AND HIS VOLUNTEERS
NO. 3297

A SERMON
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"And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains; Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, Mishmannah the fourth , Jeremiah the fifth, Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh. These were of the sons of God, captains of the host: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. These are they that went over Jordan in the first month when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west."
1 Chronicles 12:8-15.

DAVID, compelled to flee from his own country, and to hide himself from the malice of Saul, was eminently a type of our Lord Jesus Christ who, in the days when He dwelt here among men, was despised and rejected of men. And at this moment it is well known to the true church of God and it becomes palpably evident to every earnest believer in the gospel that Jesus, the Son of David, is not received, acknowledged, or tolerated in this present evil world. He has gone forth outside the camp. All who would repair to Him must go forth likewise, bearing His reproach. These eleven Gadites—all of them remarkable men—espoused the cause of David when he was in his very worst condition—they left the ease and comfort, the honors and elements of their own homes to associate themselves with him when he was regarded as an outlaw under the ban of society. And to this day, every Christian who is faithful to his profession must separate himself from his fellow men to be a follower of the despised Jesus. In that way and with that faith which men still count heresy, must he join himself with that to which is everywhere spoken against, running the gauntlet of the age if he would espouse the cause of the Lord's Anointed!

In tracing out the parallel, let me now draw your attention, first, to *the leader* who commanded the voluntary homage of good and valiant men. And then to *the recruits* who joined themselves to him, of whom we find a graphic description it our text.

I. THE LEADER, whom we regard as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, was David, the son of Jesse. And in tracing out some points of analogy, we begin by noticing that like David, *our Lord was anointed of God to be the leader of His people*. Hence the words of prophecy concerning Him, "I will make an everlasting covenant with You, even the sure mercies of

David. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." The Spirit of God is upon Jesus of Nazareth, for Him has God the Father anointed. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." We may well be ready to follow a leader whom God has appointed and commended to us with such high praise! "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him: with whom My hand shall be established: My arm also shall strengthen him." The Lord, in His own sovereignty, with wisdom and prudence, has been pleased to fix His choice upon the man Christ Jesus to be our federal head, our King and our commander. What other justification do we need for following Christ than that God Himself thus sets Him forth? To this choice of God our soul agrees. Never be afraid, young man, of acknowledging Christ! Never let any of us blush to acknowledge the blessed impeachment that we are followers of the Lamb! It is an honor to follow one who has the highest sanction of heaven in taking the command and exercising the authority that pertains to Him!

Jesus was like David, too, in that *He was personally fit to be a leader*. David, alike by his character and his deeds of prowess, had become the foremost man of his times. So our blessed Lord, as to His person, is just such a King as one might desire to obey. And as for His achievements, O tell what His arm has done—what spoils from death His right hand won! Let His fame be spread over all the earth! He stood in the gap when there was none to help. He vanquished the foe who threatened our destruction. He set His people free. He led their captivity captive. In point of courage and in feats of war He so outstripped David that I may safely say, "David has slain his thousands, but Jesus His tens of thousands! He is a man of war. The Lord is His name." He has defeated all the principalities and powers and put to rout all the hosts of hell that came against His people. Therefore let Him be acknowledged as King. Who else should be exalted among the people but He who has done such wonderful things for the people? It is no marvel that the men of Israel gathered around David with a glowing enthusiasm and proved their patriotism by their allegiance to his sovereignty. Nor need we wonder that the children of God should shout—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all!"

Right well does He deserve all the homage we can ever ascribe to Him!

But our Lord, though anointed of God, and meriting the distinction which He gained, was, nevertheless, like David, rejected of men. Poor David! Saul thirsted for his blood and put him upon dangerous missions, in the hope that he might die. And when he saw that God was with him, he hated him yet more—till he hunted him like a partridge upon the mountains! He could find shelter nowhere. If he went to the priests of Nob, the king sent and slew all the inhabitants of the city. Or if he went

to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and saved the inhabitants of Keilah, yet by-and-by they were willing to give him up to his enemies! He was safe nowhere. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth was in the same manner despised and rejected of men; nor has the offense of His cross ceased to this day. You may be a nominal Christian and have the good esteem of all men, but if you are a true disciple of Jesus, obeying Him from the heart, openly avowing His cause and diligently testifying His truth, you will meet with bitter hostility in all sorts of places and among all sorts of people! Rest assured that until Christ comes again, it will be true that if you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but Christ has chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

There may be Christians placed in such sheltered nooks and living among such godly families that they do not come into collision with the outside world—but if you do come into connection with the world in any way, you will be sure to prove its enmity! As the world is in rebellion against God and hostile to Christ, it will be intolerant of you. So Ishmael persecuted Isaac even in Abraham's own household! So the seed of the serpent hates the seed of the woman. So, too, those that are under the law own no kindred with those that are the children of the promise. Marvel not, then—it scarcely becomes you to murmur, though it sometimes appears to you a hard lot—Jesus Christ is still as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness to the mass of mankind! True religion is not to be found in fashionable circles. It finds little favor among the great and mighty, though today it does not hide its head in the clefts and caves of the rocks. While the violence of persecution is abated in its outward manifestations of terror, the malice out of which it grew still survives and the people of God are harassed by it in a thousand ways. The iron is made to enter into their soul. Thus the cruel jealousy and the galling animosity, with which David was driven forth and hunted from place to place, find a counterpart in the treatment that Christ, Himself, received—and that all His faithful followers have in their measure to endure!

But notwithstanding the pains and penalties they incurred in those dark days, the really good and pious people in Israel rallied to the standard of David. I know it is said that those who were in debt, those who were in distress and those who were discontented came to David. That is quite true and well it typifies the abject condition of those poor sinners who come to Christ for refuge! But many of those Israelites were reduced in circumstances and brought into debt through the bad government of Saul. Probably the very best people in the country were to be found among those who gathered around David. And certainly there was with David, Abiathar the priest. He came to David as the representative of the godly, the Puritan party! With David, likewise, there was Gad the prophet. And you know how, in the early days of David's persecution, he resided with Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, so that the

gracious party was always on David's side. Does not the same thing happen among those who ally themselves with the son of David at this day? Although He whom we worship is despised and rejected of men, yet unto you who believe, He is precious! They that fear the Lord love Christ and embrace His gospel. Those that have a new heart and a right spirit are not at all dubious which side to take. They have lifted up their hands to the crucified one and they are sworn to do battle for His cause as long as they live! We need not be ashamed to side with Jesus, for we shall be in good company—not in the company of the nobles of the earth, those who bear its titles, own its wealth, or enjoy its empty fame—but in the company of the pure in heart, of the heirs of the promises, of those to whom God has been pleased to reveal Himself, yes, of the babes out of whose mouths He has perfected praise! Oh, we may well be content to cast in our lot with God's elect, be they who they may in the world's esteem, or be their lot what it may in their pilgrimage to the better country! With them would we be numbered! With them would we be associated! With them would we go! Let Christ's people be our people. Where they toil, we would toil. With them would we live; with them would we die, and with them would we be buried, in the glad hope that with them we shall rise again to live forever in the fellowship of the saints!

Mark one thing more. Despised as David was among men, yet, being anointed of God, *his cause in the end was successful*. He did come to the throne—and so it is with our Lord Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding all the opposition that still rages against His cause, it must prosper and prevail. "He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Well may the enmity of the wicked provoke the irony of heaven. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." It is Jehovah Himself who says it, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." God's decree has placed Him there! Do you think the conspiracy of kings and rulers can unseat Him? No—there must He sit till all His enemies are beneath His feet! Oh, it is good to be with Christ, today, for then we shall be with Him tomorrow! It is good to be with Him in the stocks, for if we can bear the reproach, we shall one day be with Him on His throne to share the glory! If you will walk with Christ through the mire when He goes barefoot, you shall be with Him in the golden streets when He puts on the golden sandals and the angels fall down and worship Him! If you can foot it with Him in His deeds of service when He grows weary and footsore, you shall ride with Him when He rides on His white horse of victory, when all the armies of heaven shall follow Him in His great achievements! If you are with Him in His humiliation, you shall be with Him in His triumph!

I think I have told you before a little parable which I will venture to repeat in this place. There was a certain king whose son was set upon an errand to a far country. And when he came into that country, although he was the lawful prince of it, he found that the citizens would not acknowledge him. They mocked him, made fun of him and took him and

set him in the stocks! And there they scoffed at him and pelted him with filth. Now, there was one in that country who knew the prince; and he alone stood up for him when all the mob was in tumult raging against him. And when they set him on high as an object of scorn, this man stood side by side with him to wipe the filth from that dear royal face. And when, from cruel hands, missiles were thrown in scorn, this man took his full share of them and, whenever he could, he thrust himself before the prince to ward off the blows from him if possible—and to bear the scorn instead of him. Now it came to pass that after a while the prince went on his way and, in due season, the man who had been the prince's friend was called to the king's palace. And on a day when all the princes of the court were roundabout and the peers and nobles of the land were sitting in their places, the king came to his throne and he called for that man, and said, "Make way, princes and nobles! Make way! Here is a man nobler than you all, for he stood boldly forth with my son when he was scorned and scoffed at! Make way, I say, each one of you, for he shall sit at my right hand with my own son. As he took a share of his scorn, he shall now take a share of his honor." And there sat princes and nobles who wished that they had been there, yes, envied the man who had been privileged to endure scorn and scoffing for the prince's sake!

You need not that I interpret the parable. May you make angels envious of you if envy can ever pierce their holy minds! You can submit for Christ's sake to sufferings which it is not possible for seraphim or cherubim to endure!

II. Having thus drawn your attention to the leader, whom David, the son of Jesse, prefigured, let me turn now to speak a little OF THOSE WHO GATHERED ROUND HIM AND ENLISTED IN HIS SERVICE. The recruits who came to David were eleven in number.

The first characteristic we read about them is that *they were separated*. "Of the Gadites, there separated themselves unto David" eleven persons. Observe that they separated themselves. They seem to have been captains of the militia of their tribe. The very least among them was over a hundred, and the greatest over a thousand, but they separated themselves from their commands over their tribes—separated themselves from their brethren and their kinsfolk. I daresay many of their friends said to them, "Why, what fools you are! You must be mad to espouse the cause of a fellow like David!" And then they would call David all manner of foul, opprobrious names. "Are you going to be among those who associate with him—a troop of bandits with that ragged regiment?" I'll be bound to say they had terms for David and his men which in polite ears, it would not be meet to quote! It is a mercy that the language of those men of Belial has not been recorded. But these men all said, "Yes, we will separate ourselves." And, for that matter, they did not merely tear themselves away from their friends, but from their kinsfolk, too! David needed their right arms and he would have them! He needed valiant

men—and they would go and fight for David—whatever fond connection should be sundered thereby!

Dear friends, in these times it is most important that everyone who is a Christian should understand that he must separate himself from the world. You cannot serve Christ and the world, too. You cannot be of the world and of Christ's church. You may be nominally of the church and really of the world—but really of the world and really of the church you cannot possibly be! The Christian must differ from the world in many things. His language must not be the speech of Babylon, but the chaste, pure language which Christians use. His actions, his customs, his manners, his habits, must not be like those of other men. He is not to be full of affectation and eccentricity. He need not adopt a peculiar garb, or discourse in quaint phrases or speak with an unnatural twang. All that may be mere formalism! Still, there is ample room for separateness in that which meets the eye and addresses the ear of the observer. We need not display vanity in our attire. In dress, Christians will be simple and chaste, not ornate and gaudy. In their speech, too, the children of God will certainly never use an oath, or lend their tongue to the semblance of a lie! And from foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, they will rigidly abstain! The tongue of a believer, my brothers and sisters, ought to be as a fountain which sends forth sweet water—in our conversation there should be the meekness of wisdom! And when we cannot speak to profit, our silence must bear witness to our sincerity. But it is in his dealings with the world that the Christian shows the moral force of his character. There it comes out because it cannot be hid. If his trade has become used to tricks and stratagems which will not bear the light of God, he cannot conform to them! He will shrink from them with abhorrence! He must keep a clean conscience. Other men may do the thing without compunction. It may have become "the custom." But no antiquity or universality of custom will authorize that which is obviously wrong—so he cannot do it and will not do it, for he is a Christian! He counts that a higher morality is required of him than of an ordinary man and after this higher morality he diligently seeks!

From the world's religion the man of God will likewise stand aloof. He never asks himself, "What kind of religion does the present age consider most expedient?" Nor does he wish to find out the fashionable taste in doctrine, or the order of devotion which is most agreeable to the undevout! He seeks after God. He diligently inquires for God's truth. He joins himself to God's church and earnestly promotes its welfare. Moreover, he loves God's ways and desires to be under the power of God's Spirit. After this manner he separates himself. Does not the church in these days need to hear sounded every day, as a thunder clap, that divine commandment, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"? Oh, the shameful conformity of some professors with the world! It degrades the church and it debases

themselves! God grant that we may be staunch in our nonconformity to the world! To whatever church we may belong, may we be "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

But, observe that *these people separated themselves unto David*. You may separate yourself and yet not separate yourself unto Christ! And if not, you only change from one form of worldly-mindedness to another. We are not to separate ourselves unto self-righteousness, or unto affectation, or unto a sect, but unto Christ! The people got away from their friends that they might get to David—we are to get away from the world that we may get closer to Christ! We often sing—

"Oh, for a closer walk with God!"

But if our walk is to be close with God, it must be a long way from the world! We must separate ourselves, by divine grace, unto Christ! And then, as you read that they separated themselves unto David in the wilderness, let me entreat you to ask yourselves if you are ready to take part with a rejected, crucified Christ! Tens of thousands would separate themselves to David if he were in Hebron on the throne of Israel. They would go there to crown David in the day of his prosperity—but the thing was to separate themselves unto David in the wilderness! That is the work of real divine grace in the heart which leads us to take sides with a despised Christ. It is a blessed thing when God teaches you to say, "I will follow the truth wherever it leads me. I will follow it though some shall say to me, 'You are inconsistent.' I do not care about that. Though they shall say, 'Why, you have landed, now, in fanaticism.' I do not care about that. I will be a fanatic. If the truth of God leads me there, I will separate myself unto Christ in the wilderness." Though they should tauntingly say, "You only go to some 'Little Bethel' which is frequented by a few ignorant and vulgar people," be it so! If Christ goes there, what matters that to us? If the truth of God should lead us down into a hovel where we could only associate with the very lowest of the low—if they were the Lord's people, they should be our delight! I wish this spirit were in all Christians—that they would be loyal to the truth of God and not pander to the world! Do not be continually asking yourselves, "What will so and so think? And what will so and so say?" Do the right and fear not! Believe the truth of God; let what will come of it! Follow the straight line and do not trim your way. Go not round about for the sake of policy, but take sides with Jesus Christ in the day of scoffing, on the ground of principle!

Do I speak to some men here who work in factories? Oh, acknowledge Christ when other men laugh at Him! Stand up for Jesus when the whole shop is full of jesting and jeering against religion! If your religion is worth having, it is worthwhile enduring a little banter for it. He that is a friend must be a friend in need. If you would be a friend of Jesus, you will defend His name when it needs a defender and everybody is raging at Him. To come to the Tabernacle and join your fellow Christians in praising Jesus is very easy and involves no self-denial. But the thing is, you merchants, to praise Jesus among your fellow merchants who are

ungodly—to bear witness, you working men, among others who fear not the Lord—to separate yourselves unto David in the wilderness, to cleave to Christ where He is scoffed at and despised! That is a true Christian! I beseech you, test yourselves by this, for if you are ashamed of Him in this evil generation, He will be ashamed of you when He comes in His glory. But if you, out of a pure heart, can confess Him before a godless world, He will acknowledge you in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him! Oh, for grace to be separated unto Christ in this way!

Note, next, about these men that *they were men of might*. It is said of them that they were "men of might…whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains." All who came to David were not like that. David had some women and children to protect, but he was glad to receive others who were men of might. Now there came to Jesus, the greater David, in His day, the weak ones of the flock—and He never rejected them. He was glad to receive even the feeblest! But there also came to our Lord and Master eleven men who, by His grace, were like these Gadites. Truly, I may say of His apostles, after our divine Lord had filled them with His Spirit, that they had faces like lions and feet like hinds' feet, so swift were they for service and so strong for combat! How wondrously they ran to and fro to the very ends of the earth, like the roes of the mountains! And how bravely they faced persecution and opposition, like lions that could not flinch from their prey! And what grand works they did for Jesus! Would to God that we were like they, beloved! The grace God can make us like they were. The grace of God can make us brave as lions, so that wherever we are, we can hold our own, or rather can hold our Lord's truth and never blush nor be ashamed to speak a good word for Him at all times! He can make us quick and active, too, so that we shall be like the roes upon the mountains! I am afraid that, often, we are like the donkey that couches down. We need the whip and the spur to make us move! We are like bulls unaccustomed to the yoke of service. Yet it ought not to be so. Loved as we have been with such great love and having tasted, as some of us can testify, of such choice favors from our Lord, being indulged with such intimate fellowship with Him and sustained as we are now with such joy and peace in Him, we ought to serve Him with quickness and activity, with courage and confidence! We really should outlive the lion for his bravery and the hinds and the wild goats of the rock for their swiftness. I pray that it may be so. May God send to this church men—and women, too—of this order—"strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!" To whom the joy of the Lord shall be their strength, who shall go about their Father's business with all their might—that might which is given them of God—and do great exploits for our greater David while He is in the wilderness and needs their aid!

But it is worth noticing that *they were men of war, conditioned to discipline*—"men of war fit for the battle that could handle shield and buckler." Now there are some men of might who do not seem to be good

men of war because they cannot keep rank. What exploits they may do, they must do alone, for they cannot march with the army. There are some brothers and sisters I know who are most excellent people as individuals, but they seem never to be meant to march in the ranks—they must, every one of them, *lead*—they feel they must, they cannot be second to anybody! Neither can they be under any discipline or rule. Instead of taking their place in Christ's church, they seem to consider themselves independent of the church and its organization. However, the men Christ needs in the church—and I pray Him to multiply their number in our midst, and enlist all of us among them—are such as can keep step, observe the rule and preserve order in the march, or in the fight or the service of the Lord! Men who can smite the foe, who can handle the sword and buckler, and ward off the arrows of the enemy—who can use the shield of faith and withstand the assaults of the adversary—we need these! May God teach us how to keep our places and to do our work!

Some men have swords, but their swords seem to be more dangerous to their friends than to their foes. They are the people one wishes to keep clear of. They are, no doubt, very zealous, but if they had a little love as well as a lot of zeal—and were endowed with a capacity for fellowship—it would greatly improve their character! This, however, seems to be their defeat—they have such an excess of individuality and they are, therefore, so exclusive that we can hardly imagine how they could pray, "Our Father, which are in heaven," or recognize anybody else as belonging to the family of the Most High! May God make us men of might, but may He also make us men of discipline! While we keep our place and do our own work, may we delight to see others do their share of the work, too! When we smite the foe, may we delight to see others use the weapons of Christian warfare with skill and success! Do not shrink from the drill or revolt against discipline, for it is a great trait of a good soldier that he should know how to keep rank.

These Gadites, likewise, furnish us with *a noble example of strong revolution*. When the eleven men determined to join David, they were living on the other side of a deep river which at that season of the year had overflowed its banks—so that it was extremely deep and broad. But they were not to be kept from joining David when he needed them by the river. They swam across the river that they might come to David. Oh, I would like to hold up my Master's banner and be His recruiting sergeant tonight, if I could entertain the hope that out of this company there would come men of such mettle whose hearts the Lord has touched to join themselves to the Lord and fight for His cross, whatever might impede and block their way! Do you stand back and shrink from avowing your attachment to the standard of God's Anointed because it would involve loss of reputation, displeasure of friends, the frowns of your associates in the world, or the heartbreaks of anguish of those you tenderly love? Know, then, that our Lord is worthy of all the troubles you

incur and all the risks you run! And be assured that the peace which a soul enjoys that once joins Christ in the hold and abides with Him in the wilderness, well repays a man for all that he has to part with in getting to his Lord and Master! We have known some of the rich who have joined Christ's church who have had to swim through overflowing rivers of contumely—the unkindness they have braved has indeed been cold and chilling. We have known many a poor woman who has had to suffer from her husband's brutality—and many a poor man who has had to run the gauntlet of a thousand cruel tongues! But who is afraid of such treatment as that? Once see the King in His beauty and your fears will vanish like smoke! Did you ever see His face stained with spit and black and blue with the blows of mailed hands? Did you ever see that head surrounded with the crown of thorns and mark the painful agony that was upon His visage, more marred than any man's? And have you not said, "Savior, since You endured all this for me, there is nothing that I will count too difficult to endure for You. I will count shame for You to be my glory, and Your reproach shall be greater riches to me than all the treasures of Egypt"? Have you not said that? If you have said so from your very soul, God the Holy Spirit writing it upon your heart, I know you have resolved to endure any pain or shame if you could but get to your Lord and stand side by side with Him! They swam the river to get to David, so, believer, swim the river to be with Christ!

Now, it would appear that after they had got across the river, they were attacked, but we are told that "they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the East, and toward the West." They were men of such resolution that if they had to fight to be on David's side, they would fight! And, notwithstanding the position of those on the right hand and the opposition of those on the left, they still pushed their way, lion-like men as they were, through all the forces that would impede them! O you that love our Lord and Master, I beseech you, in this evil day, this day of blasphemy and rebuke—stand not back—be not cowards! Cast in your lot with Him and with His people! Come to the front, hide not away like cowards, for this is the day when he shall be accursed that comes not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty! See you not everywhere how the truth of God is fallen in the streets—how the old idols of Rome are once more set up in the high places of this land? The whole nation seems to have gone after the idols which our fathers removed! O you that love Christ, come out and separate yourselves from all acquaintance, all association with this evil thing! Come and join yourself unto the Son of God by a holy covenant! If He is your Beloved, and if His grace is in your heart, fear not! What have you to fear? Greater is He who is with you than all they that are against you! Fear not. The battle is not yours, it is the mighty God's! If truth is with you, you must conquer! If Christ the incarnate truth is with you, you are already more than a conqueror through Him that has loved you! Never be ashamed! Never turn aside from Him who gave Himself to you! Be steadfast,

immovable. For this steadfastness you need to pray much and often to God, for many are the seductions of the world—

"Can you cleave to your Lord, can you cleave to your Lord,
When the many turn aside?
Can you witness that He has the living Word,
And none upon earth beside?
Do you answer, 'We can'? Do you answer, 'We can,
Through His love's constraining power'?
But do you remember the flesh is weak,
And will shrink in the trial hour?
Yet yield to His love, who around you now
The bands of a man would cast
The cords of His love, who was given for you,
To His altar binding you fast."

Examine yourselves. Prove your own hearts. Consider what manner of men you ought to be. Let the precepts of the word admonish you. Let the *esprit de corps* stimulate you. Never let disciples of Christ fall behind followers of David in warmth of attachment, or in order of service. The nearer you get to the person of your Lord, the more you will catch of His Spirit! I think, beloved, you need direction more than exhortation. The more you live under His eyes and the more often you listen to His voice, the better, truer, nobler men and women you will prove to be and the happier recognition you will find in the day of His appearing!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 56.

To the chief Musician upon Jonathelemrechokim, Michtam (a golden Psalm) of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

Verse 1, 2. *Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresses me. My enemies would daily swallow me up: for they are many that fight against me, O You most High.* David was in such peril from man that he cried to God to come to his rescue. Man was merciless to him, so he prayed, "Be merciful unto me, O God." His enemies were many and mighty, so he appealed to the one who was Almighty—who could destroy them or put them all to flight.

3. *What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.* He is a happy man who can trust in God when he is afraid. But he is still happier who can say, "I will trust, and not be afraid."

4. *In God I will praise His word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.* The trusting soul is a singing soul and it soon becomes a courageous soul! Faith in God drives out the fear of man—"In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

5, 6. *Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps when they wait for my soul.* David had many enemies—Saul,

Doeg the Edomite, the Philistines and some even in his own household—but all their malice and craft were in vain since the Lord was on his side! We, too, have enemies who wrest our words, whose thoughts against us are evil, who lay traps for us and lie in ambush to take us unawares. But we need not fear any of them, not even the great adversary, himself, if we are trusting in the Lord!

7. *Shall they escape by iniquity? In Your anger cast down the people, O God.* They sought to cast him down, so he prayed to the Lord to cast them down, and we know how graciously the Lord answered his supplication.

8. *You number my wanderings: put my tears into Your bottle: are they not in Your book?* David was such a wanderer at that time that he might not remember all the places where he had hidden away from Saul. But God had a record of them and even of his tears—"are they not in Your book?" There is nothing that concerns the Lord's chosen people that is not noted and remembered by Him.

9. *When I cry unto You, then shall my enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.* David's confidence in God was not misplaced! He who can truthfully say, "God is for me," need not fear however many may be against him!

10, 11. *In God will I praise His word: in the LORD will I praise His word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.* He repeats the declarations he made in verse four—such holy confidence may rightly be published again and again! It is most pleasing and honoring to the Lord and it is most likely to lead other tried believers to follow such a worthy example! The praising and trusting man fears not what man can do to him.

12. *Your vows are upon me, O God I will render praises unto You.* David had not forgotten the vows that he had made unto the Lord. Vows should not be lightly made, but once made, they should be sacredly remembered, and faithfully performed.

13. *For You have delivered my soul from death: will not You deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?* So the Psalm ends, as it began, with prayer—a prayer that was most graciously answered, as we can see if we turn to Psalm 116:8, 9—"You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living."

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LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S BAPTISM
NO. 3298

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1912,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1866.

"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up immediately out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16, 17.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon verse 17 is #2409, Volume 41—A GREAT SERMON BY THE GREATEST PREACHER—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

I WANT to teach two lessons tonight. The first will be a most necessary one for the unconverted. The second will be more suitable to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Without any preface, let us at once try to learn the first lesson from the text which relates to THE CO-WORKING OF THE TRINITY IN THE MATTER OF OUR SALVATION.

There are some who seem to suppose that Jesus Christ is our Savior to the exclusion of God the Father and of God the Holy Spirit, but this is a most erroneous idea. It is true that we are saved by the precious blood of Christ, but it is equally true that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit have had their share in the great work of our salvation. In order that we might not fall into the error in which some have been entangled, it pleased God to give us, at the very beginning of Christ's public ministry, a very distinct intimation that He did not come alone and that He did not undertake the work of our redemption apart from the other adorable persons of the ever-blessed Trinity.

Try to picture to yourselves the scene that our text describes. There is Jesus Christ who has just been baptized in Jordan by John. And John bears witness that He is the Son of God because the sign from heaven for which he had been told to look for had been given. As Jesus comes up out of the water, the Spirit of God descends upon Him in a visible shape—in appearance like a dove—and rests upon Him. John says that "it abode upon Him," as though the Spirit was thenceforth to be His continual companion and, truly, it was so. At the same time that the dove descended and lighted upon Christ, there was heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." This was the voice of God the Father—He did not reveal Himself in a bodily shape, but uttered wondrous words such as mortal ears had never

before heard! The Father revealed Himself not to the eyes as the Spirit did, but to the ears—and the words He spoke clearly indicated that it was God the Father bearing witness to His beloved Son. So that the entrance of Christ upon His public ministry on earth was the chosen opportunity for the public manifestation of the intimate union between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

Now, sinner, from this day forward, if you have never done so before, think humbly, reverently and lovingly of all the three persons of the most blessed Trinity in unity! Bless the Son of God for becoming man in order that He might redeem us from destruction. He left His glory in heaven and was made in the likeness of men that He might suffer in our place as the Lamb of God's Passover and that we might shelter beneath His sprinkled blood—and so escape the sword of vengeance. Do you know that when Christ was baptized, He gave, as it were, a picture of His great work of redemption? He said to John, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," by which I understand not that He fulfilled all righteousness by being baptized, but that His baptism was a picture or emblem of the fulfillment of all righteousness. What was done with Christ when He was baptized? Why, first, He was regarded as one who was dead and, therefore, He was buried beneath the waters of Jordan. He thus set forth, by a most significant symbol, the fact that He had come to earth to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—and that in due time He would actually die and be really buried—as now He was submerged beneath the yielding wave in a metaphorical burial. But baptism does not consist of merely plunging the person into the water—he must be lifted out again—otherwise he would be drowned, not baptized. So the Savior, when He rose up out of the water, set forth His own resurrection. By His baptism, He figuratively said, "I shall die for sinners, I shall rise again for sinners and I shall go back to heaven to plead for sinners. My death will put away their offenses and my resurrection will complete their justification." Go, you who long for salvation, and by faith look to the Savior dying on the cross at Calvary! See Him buried in Joseph's tomb. See Him rise the third day and after forty days, see Him ascend to heaven leading captivity captive! His dying, His burial, His rising, His ascension—these are the fulfillment of all righteousness—and it is by these that you must be saved—it is not your being baptized that can save you! It is Christ's being baptized for you with that baptism of blood when He poured out His soul unto death that you might live forever! It is not your suffering, but His suffering that avails for your salvation! It is not your being or your doing that is the secret of blessing, but it is His being and His doing on which you must depend for everything! Trust in Jesus Christ and you shall find salvation in Him!

Now I want you to look with humbly grateful eyes to God the Holy Spirit. You remember how Jesus Christ applied to Himself the words He read in the synagogue at Nazareth—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,

because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It was the Spirit of God who gave success to Jesus Christ's ministry—and if you, dear friend, would be saved—it is only the Holy Spirit who can take away from you the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh! I pray you to think with holy reverence of that mighty, mysterious Being who works in human hearts and molds them according to the will of God. By nature you are spiritually dead—and only the Spirit of God can give you spiritual life. By nature you are spiritually blind—and only the Spirit of God can give you spiritual sight. Even the work of Christ on the cross does not avail for you until the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to you. You must look to Christ, or He will not save you! You must trust in Christ, or His precious blood will not be applied to you! But you will never look to Him or trust in Him unless the Father who sent Him, shall draw you to do so by His Spirit effectually working in you. When we are thinking and speaking of the Holy Spirit, let us always feel as if we must take off our shoes for the place whereon we stand is peculiarly holy. You remember how solemnly Christ warns us as to the consequences of even speaking against the Holy Spirit? "Whomever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Whenever we mention the name of the Holy Spirit, let us do it with holy awe and reverence, remembering that it is the Spirit that quickens, it is the Spirit that instructs, it is the Spirit that sanctifies, it is the Spirit that preserves, it is the Spirit that makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! So unto the ever-blessed Spirit of God as well as unto the well-beloved Son of God be glory and honor, praise and power, forever and ever!

With equal reverence and with equal awe let us also think of God the Father. What does the Father here say concerning Christ? First, He calls Him His Son. There has been much disputing about how Christ can be equal with the Father, and equally eternal, and yet be the Son of the Father. This is a great deep into which you and I, dear friends, will do well not to pry. We usually speak of Christ being the Son of the Father by what is called "eternal generation." I confess that there is a mystery here which I can neither understand nor explain, but as the Father calls Him His Son, I unhesitatingly believe that He is what the Scripture constantly calls Him, "the Son of God." In our text we find that the Father not only calls Christ His Son, but He says, "This is My beloved Son." What wondrous love there must be in the heart of each one of the divine persons in the sacred Trinity towards each of the others! How blessedly they must look upon one another with divine benignity and complacency! There never could be any diversity in their interests, for they are one in

heart, one in purpose, one in every respect, even as Jesus said, "I and My Father are one."

Now, sinner, the point to which I want to especially direct your thoughts is this—that God not only calls Christ His Son and His beloved Son, but that He says He is well-pleased with Him. And this concerns you in that if you are so united to Christ as to be one with Him, God will also be well-pleased with you for His dear Son's sake! But can a sinner ever be pleasing to God? Not in himself, apart from Christ, but all who are in Christ are "accepted in the Beloved." His Father is so pleased with Him that all whom He represents are pleasing unto God for His sake! "But," asks one, "how can I be in Christ?" My dear friend, if you are one of the Lord's chosen, you are *already in Christ* in God's eternal purpose. But the way in which you must experimentally get into Christ is by true faith in Him. To trust in Jesus is to be in Jesus. To rely upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ is to be one with Christ. Faith is the uniting bond which binds together the Christ in whom we believe and those who believe in Him. If you are truly trusting in Christ, God looks upon you as a part of Christ's mystical body and He is well-pleased with you for Christ's sake.

Thus you have the Son suffering for you, the Spirit applying to you the merit of His atoning sacrifice and the Father well-pleased with you because you are trusting in His beloved Son! Or, to put the truth in another form, the Father gives the great gospel feast, the Son *is the feast* and the Spirit not only brings the invitations, but He also gathers the guests around the table. Or, to use another metaphor, God the Father is the fountain of grace, God the Son is the channel of grace and God the Holy Spirit is the cup from which we drink of the flowing stream. I wish that I could really make you see Jesus Christ standing by Jordan's brink as He came up out of the water after He had been baptized by John—and the Spirit of God descending and lighting upon Him and that I could make you hear the voice of the Father saying—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." If I could do this, all I would have to add would be John's message, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." There is eternal life for everyone who truly looks to Him by faith—

"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!"

II. In beginning my sermon, I told you that the second lesson I wanted you to learn tonight would be more suitable to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, though at the same time it may also be useful to the unconverted, just as I hope the first lesson has been helpful to the people of God though especially intended for those who are not yet avowedly on the Lord's side. This second lesson, upon which I have now to speak, relates to THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT UPON BELIEVERS, but I would

not have dared to take the text without also calling your attention to the first lesson upon which I have already spoken.

I want you to clearly understand that as the Holy Spirit rested upon Christ, so He rests upon all who are in Christ. Indeed, when the Spirit rested upon Christ, He rested upon the whole church that was represented by Christ. You remember that David says the unity of brethren is "like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." So the anointing that Christ received from the Holy Spirit ran down to the very lowest, least and last of the members of that church of which He is the head!

When the Holy Spirit descended from heaven like a dove and lighted upon Christ, that descent was intended to teach us several lessons which we will now try to learn. Consider, first, the swiftness of that descent. The heavens were opened—there was no delay, but swiftly as a flash of lightning the Spirit descended and lighted upon Christ. Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, do you feel dull and heavy tonight? Are you depressed in spirit? There is no reason why, within the next second, you should not be in quite a heavenly frame of mind, for the Spirit of God can descend upon you like a dove and immediately you shall be lifted up out of your dullness and despondency! The Spirit needs no time in which to work. The motions of matter are necessarily tardy—matter can only move at a certain rate and there are many things that slow it down. But as you know, the motion of mind is far more rapid—your thoughts can fly to America and back again more swiftly than I can describe their flight! In a flash your mind can be soaring away up among the stars millions and millions and millions of miles away! Now, the mind of the Spirit is the highest order of mind, for He is divine and, therefore, His motions are swift as light—no, they are incomparably swifter than that! He descended like a dove in order to set forth the rapidity of His flight. You remember that expression in the Song of Solomon, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." So is it when the Spirit comes to us—our soul is, as it were, borne along in a swiftly-driven chariot! It does not take the Holy Spirit an hour to convert a soul. The vital spark that regenerates a soul is kindled in an instant! Instantaneous conversion is not the exception, it is the rule—there cannot be any conversion but that which is instantaneous! The growth, the development of the work of grace in the heart and life is gradual, but there is a moment in which the soul passes from death unto life, from slavery to liberty, from sin to righteousness! And I have already said to you, Christian friends, that you can, in a moment, be transported out of a dull, languishing state of heart into one of holy peace and joy. Breathe the prayer—

"Come, Holy Spirit heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,

And that shall kindle ours"—

and there is no reason why He should not grant your request even before you have finished your petition!

The figure of a dove also represents softness as well as swiftness. Speed generally causes some measure of sound—we usually associate hurry with noise, but it is not so with the Spirit of God. He descended with silent wings and alighted upon Christ as He came up out of the river where He had been baptized. If it had been recorded that the Spirit descended like an eagle, we would have thought of the whirring of great wings. But the dove's flight is of a far gentler and quieter order. So, beloved, the Spirit of God may come down upon some of us in this house tonight, yet no one may be aware of His coming except those upon whom He rests as He rested that day upon Christ! Your neighbor may not perceive what has happened to you—there need be no outcry, no shouting, no violent contortions as there have been in certain revivals of which we have heard. No, the blessed Spirit frequently works invisibly, as the wind blows where it wishes—and sometimes blows so softly that we are not conscious of the slightest sound from the gentle zephyrs that fan our cheeks. I pray that in the solemn silence of the mind, many of you may thus experience the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, so swift yet so soft, so gentle yet so strong!

Besides this, wherever the Spirit comes, He works according to His own holy nature. He comes like a dove and He operates in a dove-like manner. And if He graciously operates upon you, you also will have dove-like qualities given to you. What are they? Well, I think that the first thought we associate with a dove is that of purity. You remember that the spouse in the Song of Solomon says of her beloved, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves." And the bridegroom says to His spouse, "You are fair, My love; behold, you are fair; you have doves' eyes"—that is, eyes of purity, bright sparkling eyes that care not to look upon that which is unclean! The dove is no carrion-loving bird and you will recollect that it was the only bird that was offered to God in sacrifice under the old dispensation. Perhaps someone says, "Oh, but it was written in the law, "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons!" Yes, it was so written. But then I remind you that a pigeon is only one member of the great dove family and that it was only among the doves, of all feathered creatures, that there was found a bird that was clean enough to be offered unto God as a sacrifice! So the selection of a dove as the emblem of the Holy Spirit is very suggestive, for, wherever He goes, He breeds purity. If a man shall live a life of uncleanness, hatred, malice, and then say that he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, he lies, for the Spirit first makes us pure and then peaceable. Unless you, my dear hearer, have shaken off from you the love of all that is evil and have resolved in God's strength to live as becomes the gospel of Christ, you prove that you have *not* experienced the dove-like influence of the Holy Spirit! In my early days in the country, I was horribly shocked when I heard of a man standing on a public

house table and saying though at the time he was almost drunk, "I can say what none of you fellows can say, that I am one of God's elect." All of us who knew anything of the man used to shudder at the thought of his blasphemy in pretending to be one of the elect. Why, if the grace of God does not make a man holy, what is it worth? My dear friend, if you are determined to be damned, leave religion out of it—and do not pretend to be a child of God and yet live in sin. To profess to be an heir of heaven and then to live as an heir of hell is such detestable hypocrisy that I pray God that all of you may be preserved from ever falling into it! Where the Spirit of God dwells, there is sure to be purity!

And next to purity comes *peace*. The dove with the olive leaf in its mouth was the token of peace to Noah and those who were with him in the ark. And the dove has long been used as a symbol of peace. If the Spirit of God, like a dove, shall dwell with you, my dear friend, you will have peace in your own conscience, peace with your fellow men, peace with God. As Paul puts it in writing to the Philippians, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus." Those worrying, distracting thoughts of yours do not come from the Holy Spirit! Those carking cares, those disquieting anxieties are not the Spirit's work! Where the Spirit, like a dove, dwells in a believer's heart, that ancient assurance is fulfilled, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You." May you enjoy this perfect peace through the coming of the Spirit to you!

The dove is, next, the picture of *gentleness*. You do not expect to see doves fighting like vultures or ravens. I suppose doves do quarrel sometimes but, as a rule, their gentle and amiable nature makes them harmless and lovable. So, Christians should be the most gentle of all men. We are to be willing to be struck on one cheek and then to turn the other to the smiter. I know some professing Christians who, as soon as ever a contrary word is spoken to them, boil over with rage. Well, it is not their Christianity that makes such a display as that—and it is a poor excuse to say that it is their infirmity! "Oh," says one, "but if you tread on a worm, it will turn." Yes, the poor little creature turns in its agony, but is a worm to be a model for your conduct? Surely it would be better to ask the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to take the Lord Jesus Christ as your example! Have you never heard of the Christian who killed his neighbor by kindness? When his oxen got into his neighbor's field, the cross-grained man put them into the pound and said that if they came astray again he would deal with them in the same way. By and by, his own oxen wandered into his neighbor's field—and then the Christian man fed them and sent word that if they came there again, he would treat them in the same way. That is the style in which we should endeavor to act towards any who treat us unkindly—by heaping coals of fire upon their heads, we may in time burn love into their hearts!

I am afraid that all professing Christians are not as gentle as they should be, though gentleness is one of the prominent characteristics of

true Christians. I am not a Quaker, but I must say that in this particular quality of gentleness, the Society of Friends has set a good example to the whole Christian church. I wish that the spirit of non-resistance was more generally prevalent among Christians than it often is. It is certainly in accordance with both the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously." These words of the Apostle Peter follow immediately after his declaration that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." Where the dove-like Spirit dwells, there will be a gentleness of spirit in harmony with His own nature. I am charmed with the change that is often apparent in the converts who come to join this church. When I hear of a man who before his conversion used to rage and rave in such a way as to be a terror to his family, yet who now, though he is at times greatly provoked, just walks away and says nothing, I feel that the grace of God is really working in his heart. If what you call grace does not change your evil tempers, you had better exchange it for the true grace of God which will do so, for surely it is one of the first evidences that the Spirit of God is dwelling within a man when it makes him "gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."

A dove is also one of the most *harmless* of all God's creatures. And a Christian must never intentionally hurt or harm others. Our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to suffer, but He did not make others suffer—and He would not have us seek to propagate His truth in a bitter spirit. If you are dealing with an infidel, let him see that, however strongly you disapprove of his principles, you endeavor to win him away from them not by unkindness, but by love. I doubt if anybody is ever bullied into accepting the gospel. Certainly, more flies are caught with honey than with vinegar—and more sinners are brought to Christ by kindness than by unkindness. Never let anyone be truthfully able to say of you, "There is a professed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who has done me most serious injury." But rather let it be said concerning you, "There goes a man whom I grossly injured, yet he bore it patiently and said nothing against me because he is a Christian."

You know, too, that in Scripture the dove is spoken of as a type of *love*. When the turtledove has lost its mate, everybody knows how it will sit and moan and mourn. "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land" is the Scriptural description of a spiritual springtime, the season of love and joy. If the dove like Spirit has come into your heart, my friend, your soul will be full of love to Jesus. But if you are not conscious of His presence, you will mourn like the bereaved dove and will dolefully sing—

"I cannot bear Your absence, Lord.
I cannot live without Your smile."

If I cannot rejoice in Christ, the next best thing is to weep because I cannot enjoy sweet fellowship with Him. If I cannot rest in Christ, it is a

good thing if I cannot rest anywhere else. Ah, soul, if you have the Spirit of God within you, you will pine and sigh and cry until Christ is very near and very dear to you! And when He is both near and dear to you, then your soul will be like a vessel that is filled to the brim, yet still remaining under the running stream, and you will overflow with love and gratitude to your dear Lord who has done such great things for you!

Time flies, so I must close with just one more thought. You remember that when this world was created, "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Everything was in a state of chaos and confusion—there was neither life nor order! But when the Spirit of God spread His great wings over the face of the deep and brooded, like a bird upon its nest, it was not long before the voice of God was heard and soon disorder gave place to order, darkness to light, and death to life! The Holy Spirit comes into our heart now to work the same kind of change as that. He finds our soul in a state of chaos—formless, empty, dark—but when He mysteriously spreads His dove like wings over our soul—life, light and order soon appear. We then begin to see what we never saw before! We put God into His rightful place and we realize how great He is. And we put ourselves into our rightful place and we realize what nothings we are! We put the law into its rightful place and recognize how terribly stern it is. And we put sin into its rightful place and we tremble before its terrible power! When the Spirit of God broods over us, one of the first signs of the new life appearing in our soul is the penitent cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Those sorrow-filled eyes, those swiftly-falling tears, that brokenhearted sigh—all these are the result of the brooding of the Spirit of God upon our disordered nature! And when at last you can truthfully say—

"I rest My soul on Jesus,
This weary soul of mine.
His right hand me embraces
I on His breast recline"—

that also is the result of the brooding of the Spirit! He has quickened you! He has given you life, for only a living soul can truly say, "I do believe in Jesus." That is a sure sign of the new creation! It is a certain proof that Christ has made all things new in you by the effectual working of His ever-blessed Spirit. To any here who have never realized the dove-like energy of the Holy Spirit, I commend the prayer Charles Wesley wrote—

"Expand your wings, celestial Dove,
Brood over our nature's night!
On our disordered spirits move
And let there now be light."

Dr. Watts gives us another prayer in which Christians can heartily unite—

"Descend from heaven, immortal Dove,
Stoop down and take us on your wings

And mount and bear us far above
The reach of these inferior things!
Beyond, beyond this lower sky
Up where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die
And fruits immortal feast the soul!
Oh for a sight, a pleasing sight
Of our almighty Father's throne!
There sits our Savior crowned with light,
Clothed in a body like our own!
When shall the day, dear Lord, appear,
That I shall mount to dwell above,
And stand and bow among them there,
And view Your face, and sing, and love?"

May the Lord bless every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 6.

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* If the sinfulness of man has really given an opportunity for the display of divine mercy then the devil's logic would be, "Let us commit more sin that there may be more room for grace to work!" But Christians have learned their reasoning in another school—and to such diabolical arguments they answer in the words of the apostle —

2. *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The two terms are exactly opposite to one another. If, through grace, we are dead to sin how can we live in it? If, sinners as we are, we come to Christ to be saved from sin, then it would be a complete misuse of language to talk of being saved from sin, yet still to continue in it! Besides, the apostle goes on to show that the ordinance, by which believers in Jesus are to be admitted into the visible Christian church will not allow them to continue in sin.

3, 4. *Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* [See Sermons #1627, Volume 27—BAPTISM—A BURIAL and #2197, Volume 37—CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND OUR NEWNESS OF LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You remember, My brothers and sisters in Christ, that hallowed hour when you went down into the liquid tomb, when, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, you were immersed upon profession of your faith in Jesus Christ? By that solemn act you set forth your death to sin and when you were raised again out of the opening element, you thereby made a profession of your faith in Christ's resurrection. And moreover, you did then and there, seeing that you had received the grace of God in truth, profess to rise unto newness of life! How could you, then, go back to sin? That would be to make your

baptism a lie! Indeed, you are, all of you, unbaptized unless you have been baptized into Christ's death.

5, 6. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* [See Sermon #882, Volume15—THE OLD MAN CRUCIFIED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God has driven the nails through the active powers of our sin—both hands and feet are fastened to the cross of Christ. And though the heart and the head may sometimes wander, yet our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin may be destroyed—and we are looking forward to that happy day when the old man shall be dead altogether, and we shall be made meet to enter into the inheritance of the saints in light. We believe that our old man will never die until we die, but we thank God that the death of our body will also be the death of the body of sin.

7. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.* He can no longer live in it, for he is dead. And if we are really dead in Christ, we can no longer live in sin as we were known to do.

8-11. *Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* [See Sermons #503, Volume 9—DEATH AND LIFE IN CHRIST and #2933, Volume 51—DEAD, YET ALIVE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If Christ could die again, then believers might lose their spiritual life and there might be such a thing as falling from grace! But while Jesus lives, no member of His mystical body can die. His own promise is, "Because I live, you shall live also." He died unto sin once—we do the same. He lives no more to die—we also do the same. Highly privileged are they who are dead with Christ! And blessed is that ordinance in which we set forth our death and burial with Him.

12, 13. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Your legs used to carry you to the theater—compel them now to carry you to the house of God even though you are weary. Your eyes could look long enough upon wickedness—let not their lids fall when you are sitting to hear a sermon! Let all the members of your body which once served Satan now serve God! Consider that your whole body is a consecrated temple and be not satisfied unless the whole of it is reserved for the great God Himself!

14, 15. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not*

under the law, but under grace? [See Sermons #1410, Volume 24—BELIEVERS FREE FROM THE DOMINION OF SIN and #1735, Volume 29—THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE DO NOT LEAD TO SIN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is another of the antinomian suggestions that were made in the apostle's time—and that are still made now! And how does Paul answer it? Why, with this solemn adjuration—

15-18. *God forbid! Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey: whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.* [See Sermon #1482, Volume 25—OUR CHANGE OF MASTERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Is not that a glorious sentence, "Being then made free from sin"? Yes, the fetters are all gone! We have put up our feet upon the block and the chains have been knocked off! We have put our hands down and the irons have been broken in pieces. Free from sin! 'Tis true that sin still tempts us, but it cannot prevail against us—it tries to put the bit in our mouth and to ride us as once it did, but we no longer submit to its sway! Sin is now an enemy to fret and worry us, but not a king to trample upon us and rule over us.

19, 20. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when you were the servant of sin, you were free from righteousness.* You disdained the silken bonds of piety—you said that you would never wear what you called the iron fetters of grace! You were "Free from righteousness." So, surely, now that you are the servants of righteousness, you should seek to be free from sin!

21-23. *What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* [See Sermon #1868, Volume 31—DEATH AND LIFE—THE WAGE AND THE GIFT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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HO! HO!
NO. 3299

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters."
Isaiah 55:1.

THERE is a thirst which is peculiar to the believer. He can say with David, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God." Delightful thirst! Would God we had more of it! May we be longing and panting after our God in that sense until we shall be filled with His Spirit and shall dwell in His presence to go no more out forever!

But I wish now to speak of another kind of thirst to another class of thirsting ones, who thirst they scarcely know for what. They have a sense of unrest, of longing, of yearning—yet they have a very indistinct idea of what it is their souls are pining for. It may be that they will find out presently what it is their thirst requires. Better still, if perhaps, by God's blessing, that thirst shall be quenched by their drinking that living water of which they are bidden freely to take.

I shall not detain you with a long preface, nor, indeed, with a long discourse. I will try to make each portion of my address brief, practical and pointed. May the Holy Spirit make it effectual!

Learn from my text that *God has made plenteous soul-provision and that to every thirsty soul this provision is perfectly free and gratuitous.*

I. In the first place, GOD HAS MADE AN ABUNDANT SOUL-PROVISION.

We read here of "water." Water has been pronounced the simplest, purest, fittest drink for all persons of all ages and temperaments. Now, there is a thirst in man's body which makes him require drink. He drinks and that thirst is removed. There is a similar thirst in man's *spiritual* nature. He needs something and he feels uneasy until he gets it. The grace of God, which is proclaimed to us in Christ Jesus, is that which meets the longing of man. That is the spiritual water for man's spiritual thirst. In the text, the word is put in the plural, "Come you to the *waters*," I suppose to show the abundance thereof, as though there were many rivers of it, so that none might fear that they should require more than was provided—

"Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join.
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine.
Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines—

Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins."

The mercy of God is not a little brook which can be almost drained up by a passing ox, but it is a vast river—it is many rivers, rivers to swim in! "Ho, everyone that thirsts!" Stand not back because you think there is not enough, but come you to the waters!

Or the word may be in the plural to signify variety. The soul needs many things. Viewing eternity, God and judgment from different points of view, it needs manifold and multitudinous mercies. They are all provided and the word, "waters," indicates that many fresh springs of consolation are ready for those who thirst for all spiritual blessings as soon as the eye sees or the ear hears tell of them! You need not fear if you need the pardon of sin, or the renewal of your nature, or guidance in perplexity, or comfort in distress—you need not fear but what you shall find it. "Come you to the waters." There is an infinite variety in the grace of God! He is called "the God of all grace." All the grace that all the sinners that ever come to Him can need, they shall find stored up in the gospel provisions of the covenant of grace. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters," for God has provided for soul-needs in plentiful abundance and endless variety!

Now, are you thirsting? It surely is not the mere play of imagination, but the sober apprehension of a fact that convinces me there are persons here who are thirsting in a spiritual sense. I think one of them says, "I thirst, *I thirst to have my sins forgiven and to be reconciled to God*. I know that I have done wrong—for me to plead that I have been innocent would be to add a lie to all my other iniquities. I am sensible in my inmost heart that I have both by omission and commission, transgressed the divine law. I deserve punishment, but I would that, by some means, I might be put into the divine favor. I cannot bear to think that God should be angry with me every day! Once I laughed at this, but now I feel its meaning and it is like an arrow sticking in my loins. Oh, that I could have my Maker to be my friend! I cannot fight the battle with Him—He could crush me in a moment! I would, therefore, cast down the weapons of my rebellion and be reconciled to Him." Come, then, you thirsty one, come and have what you need! Come and put your trust in Jesus and your sin is forgiven and you are reconciled—for, far off as you are, you shall be brought near by the blood of Christ! Do you know how? It is thus—God must punish sin. Your sin has incurred penalty, but He exacted your debt from your surety. He punished Jesus for your sins which you have committed, if you believe in Jesus as your substitute! He endured, that you might never endure, the whole of the divine wrath! God can now, therefore, without marring His justice, reconcile to Himself the offending sinner, be agreed with him, receive him into friendship, yes, receive him into *sonship* and adopt him as His child! That troubled conscience of yours will soon have peace if you will but trust in the bleeding sacrifice of the Lamb of God for slain sinners! Put your hands upon His dear head, once

crowned with thorns for you, and you shall prove that God is our friend, and know that your sin is forgiven! Ho, everyone that thirsts for pardon and for reconciliation, come you to the waters, and have there your desire!

I think I hear another say, "I desire that same blessing, but I need something more. *I want to conquer the sin that dwells in me.* I want to be pure and holy! I cannot bear to be in the future what I have been in the past! I feel the chains of habit that bind me—I need to snap them off. I would no longer be an example of vice—I want to be a pattern of everything that is lovely and of good repute. But I have struggled against sin and it gets the mastery over me. I do for a time escape, but still I bear my fetters upon me and am dragged back to my prison. I cannot be what I would, oh, that I could escape from the power of sin!" Ah, you thirsty one, it is a blessed thing to desire as you desire! And let me tell you that God will give you the desire of your heart, for Jesus died that He might deliver His people from the power of Satan! He came on purpose that He might destroy the power of sin in His people and make them so free that they should not serve sin, but become a people zealous for good works. If you will come to Jesus and simply believe in Him—that is, rely upon Him, trust Him—His grace will come and refine you, implanting a new nature, taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh—and you shall yet put your foot upon the neck of all your corruptions! You shall cast them out little by little, and you shall be made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! Ho, everyone that thirsts for purity and virtue and for victory over indwelling sin, let him come to the waters that flowed with the blood from Jesus' side—and let him taste and his thirst shall be appeased forever!

In some persons this soul-thirst takes the shape of *an anxious desire for perseverance and security*. "I would like," says one, "oh, how I would like to know myself saved, and so saved that I never can be lost! Would that I could get on the Rock and feel the steadfastness of my refuge, that I might be able to sing—

"'My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace!'"

I recollect how I longed and panted after this, for no salvation ever seemed to me to be worth the having that would not last me to the end. No sign of grace within seemed worth the having, but a sign that could never be cut off. The dread, "perhaps," haunted me lest the enterprise should be, after all, a failure, and the prospect of final deliverance should be defeated by some superior power of evil. I wanted the indwelling of eternal life, of that incorruptible life which lives and abides forever! Now, such a life as this it is that we read of in the Bible. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a

well of water springing up into everlasting life." You who want security, who wish to know that you are saved and to rejoice in it, may well listen to these words—"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." If you come to Christ for this blessed satisfaction, you shall have it! Give yourselves up to Christ and you shall sing, in the words of our song—

"I know that safe with Him remains
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour."

Yes, be your thirst for pardon, for reconciliation, for sanctification, for deliverance from sin, or for perseverance and safety, you shall have any and all of these in the waters which God has made to flow!

There are persons in the world, however, whose thirst takes another form. They have a *thirst for knowledge*. They want to know, to know infallibly. Through how many theories some people wade! There are minds so naturally inclined for cavil and controversy, for reasoning and reconsidering, that the more they study, the more skeptical they grow. Always learning, they never come to the knowledge of the truth of God. "Oh," such a man seems to say, "If I could but get hold of something that was true, some fact, some certainty." Well, sir, if you thirst for this, let your soul be given up to a belief in Christ and you shall soon find certainty! I believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is so certain a truth to that man who has believed it, that it is so verified to his inner consciousness, and so interweaves itself with his entire being that no proposition of Euclid could ever be more demonstrable, or more absolutely conclusive! We have known and believed the revelation that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. We have tasted, felt and handled the good word of life. I know, and many here know, that since we have believed in Jesus we have come to live in an entirely new world. We have broken through the veil that parted us from a kingdom of which we know nothing, and we have been brought into this new kingdom and live in it, and are as conscious of new sensations, new emotions, new sorrows and new joys as we are conscious of the old sensations which we possessed before! It is true, sirs, certainly true! Have not our martyrs stood at the stake and burnt for this truth of God? That is a stern truth for which a man will dare to burn! Twisted as their nerves and muscles were upon the rack, and their very hearts searched after with hot claws of fire by their tormentors, yet have they learned to sing in the midst of anguish, to tell of present enjoyment and to triumph in the absolute truth of the doctrine whereof they were the witnesses! If you need to get your foot upon a bit of rock, to feel your footing and express your conviction—"Now, this is true whatever else is not"—you must believe in Jesus Christ! Then you will be no more shifted about like an unguided vessel by every wind and every current, but you will be sailing with the heavenly pilot on board, directing you to the haven of everlasting peace!

But there are *those whose thirst is that of the heart*. It is not so much something to believe as something to *love* which they need. Well, my dear

friend, if you would have something worthy of your affection, a person whom you may love to the fullest possible extent and never be deceived, whom you may adore and never become an idolater, let me say to you—Come you to the waters, and drink of the love of Christ, for they that love Him much may love Him more—they cannot love Him too much! He never disappoints any confidence that is reposed in Him. His dear, sweet love which He pours into the souls of those who love Him is recompense for any sorrow they may have endured for His sake—a recompense that makes them forget their wrongs and woes in the exceeding weight of glory which it entails!

Oh, did you but know my Master; you would find out that to know Him is to love Him! All things else in this world are insignificant in comparison with Him. As a candle is not to be compared to the sun at noonday, so the joys of this world are not worthy to be mentioned in the same century as the joys of communion with Christ! Get this, and you shall have overflowing joy! You shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness and drink of the wines on the lees well-refined!

But time would fail me if I were to try to mention all the different forms of soul-thirst. Whatever they may be, God has provided a supply for them all. Sinner, you cannot need anything which God cannot give you! Your soul cannot crave for anything but He can bestow it. You cannot be so soul-sick but He has medicine that will heal you. You cannot be so naked but He can clothe you, nor so black but He can wash you, nor so devilish but He can sanctify you, nor so near being damned but He can save you! Christ is all in all. If you are just now ready to die; if you have brought yourself down to the gates of the grave by your sin; if you are suffering in the body the results of your iniquities; if your own conscience has pronounced on you the dread sentence of doom—know this—my Master's arm is strong, and long as well as strong! He is able to reach the worst, the vilest, and the most abandoned! And when He once reaches them, He will never let go of them till He has taken them out of the miry clay, out of the horrible pit and set their feet upon a rock and established their goings! I wish I had an angel's tongue, or could sound a trumpet that would be heard right round this world! How loudly, then, would I proclaim the glad tidings that God has in store for needy ones—everything they need! No sinner need die of famine, for there is no famine in this land of grace. No traveler through this world needs to die of thirst, for the well is deep, and it eternally springs up. No sinner needs to starve, for the oxen and fatlings are killed and the gospel message is, "Come, for all things are ready." God grant that knowing how bountifully all these things are provided, we may, none of us, keep back, turn a deaf ear to the general call, refuse the special invitation, slight the grace, or scorn the gospel!

II. Observe, secondly, that THE GOSPEL PROVISIONS ARE FREE TO ALL THIRSTY SOULS.

Do you notice the first word of the text? "Ho!" That is like the cry of the salesman at a fair. He calls out to passersby, "Ho! Look! Listen! Turn here! Here is a bargain—something worth your attention!" So God condescends, as it were, to cry out to those who are busy with this world's cares, its business and its barter, its buying and selling, "Ho! Ho! Ho! Here is something worth your minding, you that would be rich at little cost, you that are in need, you that would find something that shall exactly meet your case." Ho!—this is the gospel note; a short, significant appeal, urging you to be wise enough to attend to your own interests. Oh, the condescension of God—that He should, as it were, become a beggar to His own creature and stoop from the magnificence of His glory to cry, "Ho!" to foolish and ungrateful men!

Notice the next words, "Ho! Everyone"—not some of you that thirst, but all—you rich ones, you poor ones, you great men, you little men, you old people, you young folk. "Ho! *Everyone that thirsts*." Now, it does not say, "Everyone except—except—except." No, no! Here is an amnesty published without exception or exemption. Here is an invitation given to every longing, thirsting one—and not a single name struck out—"Ho! Everyone that thirsts."

And then it is added, "come." Not, "make yourselves ready." Not, "bring your money," or, "prove your title," but, "come!" Come just as you are. The coming is believing, trusting. Believe, trust, then, while you are as you are! Rely upon Christ—"*come you to the waters*." Come now. Read the invitation for yourselves. It is written in the present tense. Obey the summons—come, come at once! Though you have no money, you may come and take a drink, for it is freely provided for you. As I walked over a long sandy road one day last week when the weather was sultry and the heat far beyond our common experience in this country—almost tropical—I saw a little stream of cool water and, being parched with thirst, I stooped down and drank. Do you think I asked anybody's permission, or inquired whether I might drink or not? I didn't know to whom it belonged and I didn't care! There it was and I felt, as it was there, it was enough for me. Nobody was there to call out, "Ho!" My inward craving called out, "Ho!" I was thirsty and water was there inviting to my taste! I noticed, after I had drunk, that two poor tramps came along and they stooped down and drank in like manner. I didn't find anybody marching them off to prison. There was the stream—and the stream being there, and the thirsty men being there—the supply was suited to their need and they promptly partook of it. How strange it is that when God had provided this gospel, and men need it, they should require somebody to call out to them, Ho! Ho! Ho! And then they will not come, after all! Oh, if they were a little more thirsty, if they did but know their need more, if they were more convinced of their sin—then they would scarcely need an invitation, but the mere fact of a supply would be sufficient for them and they would come and drink—and satisfy the burning thirst within.

Now, although the gospel provision is free to all thirsty souls, there are many who cannot believe this. Some cannot believe it because they stumble at the doctrines. What doctrine frightens you, dear friend? Is it the doctrine of election? Well now, I believe the doctrine of election, and I thank God that I do. It is a precious doctrine. And let me tell you, dear friend, that the doctrine of election shuts nobody out, though it shuts a great many in. "But I may not come and trust Christ." How do you know that? God says you may—in fact, He says, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed," thus making it a sin not to believe! So you really have such a right to believe that it becomes even your duty! Whatever the doctrine of election may be, or may be meant to be, we will not talk of that just at present, for it is quite certain that it cannot contradict any plain practical direction of Scripture. Here is a plain text, which no one can deny, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." If, then, you believe on Jesus Christ, you are not condemned—election or no election! But let me tell you, if you believe in Christ you are one of His elect! And it is because He elected you that you come to believe in Him—it is because He chose you that you are led to desire Him and made to accept Him! Let not that doctrine ever terrify you, or provoke your distrust, for if you rightly understand the revelation, it is rather a finger beckoning to Christ than a specter that should intimidate you, or drive you away from Him!

Then your spirit of legality will tell you that the gospel is not free to you. Why not? Oh, because you are not fit to receive it. This, I say, is a spirit of legality and is clearly contrary to the gospel! There is no fitness needed to receive Christ! You see men go to wash. What is the fitness for washing? Why, to be dirty—and that is no fitness. All the fitness a sinner can have for Christ is simply to need Christ. If you are empty, you are fit for Christ and He will come and fill you. If you are poor, you are fit for Christ to make you rich. He that is sick is fit for a physician. He that is needy is fit for pity. He that is guilty is fit for mercy. I beseech you, get rid of that pestilent and soul-destroying idea of fitness for Christ! You cannot come to *God* as you are, but you may come to the Savior as you are. All black and unwashed you may come and wash in the fountain which He has opened! Let nothing, then, by way of legality, make you think that the gospel provisions are not free to you.

But what if your unbelief should tell you that the provisions of grace are not for you because you have been such a great sinner? Did not Jesus come into the world to save the very greatest of sinners? He said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." You may have soared as high as the mountains in your sin, but God's flood, like, that of Noah, can go over the tops of all your iniquities! Do not limit the Holy One of Israel by your unbelief! Believe Him and you shall be forgiven, even though you were worse than you are!

Ah, brothers and sisters! Whatever the devil may say, and whatever your irritated conscience may say against the freeness of God's mercy, I

tell you solemnly it is as free to every thirsty one as the drinking fountain at the street corner! It is as free as the air that blows over the mountain and into the valleys—free to every lung that breathes—so free is the mercy of God! God stints not His mercy when men need it. Be they but thirsty, let them but long for it, and they shall have it! If there is any difficulty, it is on your part, not on God's part. You are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in yourselves. O guilty sinners, if you find no mercy, it is not because God is unwilling to give, but because you will not trust Him! Because you will not think that He can save you! The prodigal never could have believed his father's heart to be so kind as it was had he not tried and proved it. Come and try my Master's heart! I tell you that He will blot out your sins like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud! Only rest on Him and you shall find Him better than you ever dreamed Him to be! As for my words, they cannot fully set Him forth. May you be brought to try Him, for then you will be sure to find that He is a mighty Savior!

The provisions of grace must be free to thirsty ones, *why else were they provided?* Why should there be a Savior for sinners if God will not give salvation to sinners? Why those wounds? Why that bloody sweat? Why that crown of thorns, why those expiring throes if God will not receive sinners? The dying Savior is the best answer to the caviling of unbelievers. He must be willing to forgive who spared not His own Son! If the gospel were not free to thirsty ones, why is it published? If it were not meant for you, why are we bid to tell it to you and to continue sounding it in your ears? If it were meant for a few in a corner, why publish it in the streets? Why gather the crowds together, as we are bound to do, and find out those in the highways and hedges with a mandate to compel them to come in? Why do all this if God intends to bar the door in their faces? The very fact that the gospel is preached to the sinner is God's love-token that He will accept you if you will come to Him! Why is there a mercy seat? Why are you allowed to pray? Why are you bid to pray, if God will not hear? This were a mockery of which you cannot accuse God—that He should encourage a sinner to pray with no intention of hearing him! Let me ask you again—How is it that others have found God's mercy so free when they have come and trusted Christ? Why is that multitude in heaven, all once as guilty as you are, but all having washed their robes in the precious blood of Jesus? Why those on earth who have found peace? They had nothing to recommend them any more than you have. They will all tell you that they came just as they were, in all their rags and beggary, and Jesus did not reject them. No, glory be to His name, He received us freely!

Come, then, fellow sinners, come! May the eternal Spirit draw you now! Even now, "come you to the waters." Though you have no money and no price and no goodness, come and rest in Jesus and find everlasting life! Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." That is my message. There is your welcome. Come! Do come! So my errand

will speed. So your souls will be blessed. So God's name will be glorified! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* [See Sermons #1161, Volume 20—WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE and #1726, Volume 29—BUYING WITHOUT MONEY—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The description of gospel blessings grows sweeter as it advances. "Waters" first, "wine and milk" next, and still all "without money and without price." We preach no narrow salvation—we rejoice in the covenant of grace—it is the backbone of our theology, but the Gospel has wide arms, a loud voice and persuasive tones! "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." In Christ there is a full supply for all our necessities—bread and water and yes, there are luxuries sufficient for our largest desires—wine and milk and He wants us to bring nothing in payment for them! "Without money and without price." That is, indeed, free grace! Some people object to that expression and say that it is tautology, for grace must be free—but we mean to keep on using it that all may know that grace is free, gratis, all for nothing!

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* The less value there is in any religion, the more you have to pay for it. The pardon that costs a shilling is not worth a farthing, but that which costs us nothing is worth more than the whole world!

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* [See Sermons #2278, Volume 38—FEEDING ON THE WORD and #2786, Volume 48—THE SOUL'S BEST FOOD—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] All that your largest desires can long for, you will find in Christ. You shall have not only necessities, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the fullest! You shall not be able to conceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the grace of God. The gospel is "that which is good." Yes, it is the best food our souls can ever eat! It gratifies, it satisfies and fills our spirits with holy joy and exhilaration!

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto Me*—[See Sermons #2092, Volume 35—GOD'S OWN GOSPEL CALL and #2316, Volume 39—TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is the gate by which salvation enters into man—Ear-Gate—by hearing and believing. "Incline your ear," bend it forward as if you would catch every word—"and come unto Me"—

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Only think of a covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners! God striking hands

with guilty men in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a sure covenant, too—not made up of "ifs" and "buts" and "perhapses," but a covenant sealed with blood and signed by Him who gives an oath with it that He will never turn from it, that you may have "strong consolation."

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* [See Sermons #2534, Volume 43—THE GREATEST GIFT IN TIME OR ETERNITY and #2787, Volume 48—CHRIST'S TRIPLE CHARACTER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness to the immutable love of God and to be to us our captain and our King! Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their leader. You remember how David, in the cave Adullam, gathered to himself "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, and he became a captain over them." Even so, the great antitype, David's Son and David's Lord, is willing now to gather to Himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented and weary with the world, and God says, "I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that know You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* What joy this gives to you who love Him! Jehovah has glorified His Son, and given to Him the power to call to Himself a people that He knew not in a saving sense, and He shall so call nations that knew Him not that they shall run unto Him! We do not preach the gospel at haphazard—we are sure of results. If we speak in faith, in the name of Christ, men must be saved, they must run to Christ. It is not left to their option—there is a divine hand that secretly touches the springs of the will of men so that, when Christ calls them, they run to Him! Oh, that He would just now call them, even those that are furthest off, that they may run to Him and that He may be glorified! A Savior without souls saved by Him would be only a Savior in name. A head without a body would be a very ghastly thing. A shepherd without sheep would be a man without occupation. A Christ anointed to save the lost, and yet no lost ones coming to Him—where would His glory be? But sinners, drawn by His almighty grace, run to Him, and so God glorifies Him!

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.* In those happy gospel times when Christ is set forth on purpose that "He may be found," seek Him, call upon Him! He is very near when the gospel is preached with holy unction, when Christians are praying, when hearts are breaking for the conversion of sinners, and when His Spirit is working in their hearts that they may repent of sin.

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way*—It is a bad way, it is a downward way, it is a way that will end in destruction! Do not follow it any longer. "Let the wicked forsake his way."—

7. *And the unrighteous man his thoughts.* "Thoughts!" says one, "We shall not be hanged for our thoughts!" Oh, but you may be damned for

your thoughts! No man has really forsaken the way of wickedness until he hates the very thought of wickedness. If your thoughts run after evil, your tongues will soon utter evil and your hands will soon do evil.

7. *And let him return*—he is like one who has wandered from his father's house—"let him return." He is like the dove that flew away from Noah's ark and was ready to faint. "Let him return"—

7. *Unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* [See Sermons #1195, Volume 20—ABUNDANT PARDON and #2797, Volume 48—THE NEED AND NATURE OF CONVERSION—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a blessed word, "abundantly," is here! Abundant pardon to cover abundant sin, abundant provocation, abundant rejection of His word!

8. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My way, says the LORD.* "Says the Lord," as if He would not leave the prophet to speak any longer on His behalf! He Himself appears upon the scene and speaks—"For My thoughts are not your thoughts." No doubt He refers here to the pardon of sin. Our thoughts are narrow! We find it hard to forgive great offenses, to forgive many offenses, to forgive many offenders, to continue completely to forgive—all this is very difficult to man.

9. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Think of the biggest thought you ever had concerning God's forgiveness of sins. Try again. Let your thoughts rise still higher—you cannot have reached the utmost height yet, "for as the heavens are higher than the earth," so are His thoughts and ways higher than yours!

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* If you believe this great promise, you shall have the full benefit of it. Let this gracious rain drop on you, and it must refresh you. Let these blessed snowflakes come down on you, and they shall melt into your bosom, and remain there to bless you forever—they shall not go back to God with their mission unfulfilled! As for us who preach that word, or teach it in the Sunday school—we may have a full assurance that we shall not labor in vain, nor spend our strength for nothing! No, no—the raindrops go not on an errand that can fail and the snowflakes that fall to the earth accomplish the end for which they are sent! Much more shall the purpose of God's word be accomplished! Behold, it drops like the gentle rain—like snowflakes fly the messages of mercy from the lips of the Lord, Himself, and they shall not fall in vain, blessed be His holy name!

12. *For 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. There shall seem to be joy everywhere when there is joy in your heart. When you receive Christ, you have put everything round about you into its true position. The whole creation is a vast organ, and man puts his tiny fingers on the keys and evokes thunders of harmony to the praise of God! When the heart is filled with joy and peace, mountains and hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.* The thorn is everywhere, today, pricking our feet and maiming our hands. But "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." Where is the thorn, then? I see it upon the bleeding brow of Christ—He has taken it away and worn it as a crown!

13. *And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* [See Sermons #833, Volume 14—THE LORD'S NAME AND MEMORIAL; #2410, Volume 41—SPRINGTIME IN NATURE AND GRACE and #3044, Volume 53—SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It shall make men know what He is like, what gracious power He has, what goodness dwells in Him! "It shall be to Jehovah for a name"—"An everlasting sign." That sign is exhibited today in the eyes of men. An evil and adulterous generation called for a sign, and this is the sign that God has given—His converting grace in His church. Instead of miracles, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners—and if any will not believe when this sign is sent to them, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead! It stands as "an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

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"Brethren beloved of the Lord."
2 Thessalonians. 2:13.

THE verse from which my text is taken begins thus, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord," so I will commence my discourse by saying that we might often find comfort and relief from gloomy apprehensions by associating with those who are "beloved of the Lord." If you read the chapter through, you will perceive that Paul's mind was greatly exercised concerning the perilous times which were to come to the church of Christ. He wrote to warn the Thessalonians concerning the coming of antichrist, and then said that there were some to whom God would send "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteous." The apostle's heart was so heavily burdened with that sorrowful theme that he was glad to turn his pen to quite a different subject and, therefore, he wrote, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord." Just now, there is a general opinion that the growth of Popery in this land is most alarming and that the declension of vital godliness is very serious. And while we do not fully agree with the alarmists, we are obliged to admit that these are times of peculiar peril. The tendency of those who look only at the black side of the question is to fret and worry—and to feel that God's church is in danger. Brethren, I would not have you shut your eyes to the dangers by which we are surrounded, but I would not have you dispirited by them, either! There are still many saints left in the world. There are still they who, like those in Sardis, have not defiled their garments. There are still some who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. There are still many earnest and faithful testifiers to the truth of God as it is in Jesus. So, although you may mourn over the evils of the times, you are bound to always give thanks to God that there are some "brethren beloved of the Lord" still left upon the face of the earth! David spoke of the saints that were on the earth in his day as "the excellent, in whom is all my delight." And David's Lord, our blessed Master, no doubt found no small solace, as a man, in associating with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, for He seems to have withdrawn from the multitude who mocked and scoffed and to have retired into the privacy of domestic piety—and there to have found joy and comfort in the

midst of the happy family that was so closely attached to Him. There are still in the world many of the precious sons of Zion who are comparable to fine gold and concerning whom the Lord says, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels." Be wise, my brothers and sisters, and let it be said of you as it was said of them of old, "They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another," for there is comfort to be found in the society of God's saints—let the times be ever so perilous and dark.

But I would advance a step beyond this preliminary observation and remark that when things are outwardly not as the children of God would like them to be, and when there is much within them that is not as it should be, they may often derive much solace by reflecting upon their true condition in the sight of God in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that many of you have grievous trials to endure. And I am well aware that if you look within, you will see much that will distress you. You will perceive that the old Adam still lurks within you and that notwithstanding all the force that has been brought against him by divine grace, he is still far too vigorous! It is true that some of you have also to suffer from poverty and that your lot is a very difficult one—yet we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, and you are, yourselves, bound to give thanks on your own behalf because notwithstanding your poverty, and notwithstanding your infirmity, and notwithstanding even the sin of which you have such cause to mourn, you are still "beloved of the Lord"—and in the person of Jesus Christ you are "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"! When faith recognizes the vital union which exists between Christ and the soul and realizes the consequent blessedness and security of the saint, then it cries, "I am bound to give thanks always unto God, for I am still beloved of the Lord notwithstanding all that causes me often to weep and mourn."

It is my purpose, this evening, to invite all of you who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to contemplate your true standing in the sight of God—that you may be uplifted from the dunghills of your complaints, shake off the ashes of your doubts, unwind the sackcloth of your fears, put on your beautiful garments of holy rejoicing and sing aloud unto Him through whose grace you are made worthy to be called "brethren beloved of the Lord." There are two topics on which I have to speak. First, *the titles mentioned in the text*. And, secondly, *the wearers of those titles*.

I. First, then, let us think for a while of THE TITLES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT—"brethren" and, "beloved of the Lord."

"*Brethren*" is a very special word—the utterance of it awakens an echo in every believer's heart. It is naturally a silver word, but spiritually God has transmuted it into gold. I do not wonder that a certain sect has appropriated this title, yet we equally claim the name of, "brethren," as our own, and we share it with all who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. The title, "brethren," is very hallowed and very precious to us—let us try to find out what it implies.

First, it indicates a common nature. Whatever opinions any may hold concerning the unity of the human race, there can be no difference of opinion about the unity of nature in those who are born of the same parents. Where should I expect to find a person more in sympathy with myself than my own brother? Where should I expect to find, beneath the cloak of heaven, another soul that should be more akin to mine than the soul of my brother? If there are not peace and love between us, where can they be found? However much we may differ from one another in some respects, there must be certain lineaments of feature or traits of character in which we are alike. But even if this is not so naturally, it certainly is so spiritually! All believers are alike partakers of the divine nature—we are all equally begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The inner life of all true Christians is the same—there is not a Baptist life and a Methodist life, or a Nonconformist life and a Church of England life. The divine life is one wherever it is bestowed. The life of my hand and the life of my foot are one and the same, pulsating from the same central source and maintained by the same power. And the life of God is the same in all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. This is something more than brotherhood—that idea does not cover the whole truth although it includes much of it. There is a distinct unity of nature in all the saints of the living God! Hence, brothers and sisters, I can never tolerate any attempts to limit communion between those who are really one in Christ. It always seems to me that it would be an infraction of the divine law if I were to say to a brother in Christ that I could not commune with him because of certain minor matters in which we do not quite agree. Besides, whether I am willing to do so or not, I cannot help communing with him for he is a part of Christ's mystical body of which I also am a part! So that unless I could myself get out of that body, or he could get out of it, which is impossible for either of us, I must remain in spiritual communion with him whatever I may do concerning the outward and visible symbols of that communion. No, more than that, if I could go to heaven and that brother still tarried here upon the earth, our communion would not be broken, for Dr. Watts was right when he sang—

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make!
All join in Christ, their living Head,
And of His grace partake."

The term, "brethren," also implies a common experience. The brethren in an earthly family have the same parents, they live in the same house, they partake of the some food, and they share all the privileges and varied experiences of the same household. So is it with those who are of the household of faith, the family of God. Their experiences may vary even as one child in the home differs from another, but there is much more similarity than there is diversity in the experiences of the living

children of the living God. We have all been broken in pieces. We have all been bound up. We have all been emptied. We have all been brought to the cross. We have all been led by one Spirit to drink of the same precious truth! We have not all subscribed to the same creed, yet in substance and in effect, the doctrine of all the children of God is, to a large extent, identical. They rely for salvation upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and therein they are all one. Their pilgrim path is through the same wilderness, they eat the same manna, they drink of the same Rock, they are led by the same cloudy-fiery pillar, and they come at last to the same heavenly Canaan and go no more out forever! They are and they must be one, not only because they are one in nature, but because the various processes through which that nature has to pass are so largely the same.

More than this, the title, "brethren," implies that we love one another. It is said that there is a lack of love in certain churches that profess to be Christian. Well, perhaps there is. I am not going to be an accuser of the brethren in that respect, but I believe there is a great deal more love existing among Christians than many persons imagine. Possibly, those who say there is a lack of love in our midst judge by the state of their own hearts, while those who really love the saints find that the saints also love them. Do not suppose, dear friends, because the preacher has sometimes to proclaim very unpalatable truths of God and because he sometimes delivers his message in stern tones, that therefore he has not a tender heart! Fidelity to the truth of God requires that it should be spoken in such a fashion as to secure public attention, and this involves the use of great plainness of speech and a manner of delivery which some may resent. And the man who honestly and fearlessly acts thus is more acceptable to God and has far greater and truer love in his heart than the one who says, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace! As I hate Satan and all his works, so my soul hates every false doctrine in this church and in every church! But as I love God and all that God loves, so am I desirous to love every child of the loving God. And I will further say that not only do I desire to love every child of God, but I think I really do. Do you not feel, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you meet a believer in Jesus, and begin to talk of the things that belong to His kingdom, you have fellowship with him in heart and spirit even though you had never seen him before? When we talk of Jesus, our love to one another soon begins to flow! The true basis of our communion with one another is that we are there in Christ Jesus—and that union manifests itself in love to all who are, as our text puts it, "brethren beloved of the Lord."

This word, "brethren," is a far-reaching word, for it further implies that all Christians have a common Father. Let all believers rejoice that they can unite in saying, "Our Father, who are in heaven." There is a straight line from my heart to the heart of God—and so there is from your heart, my brother or my sister in Christ—so our Father's heart is

our common meeting place! We were there in purpose before this world was created. We are there by faith at this moment and we shall be there by blessed experience when this world has passed away and time shall be no more! Having the same Father, we share equally in that Father's love. We may not always feel the same love to all our brothers and sisters in Christ, but God's love to us and His love to them knows no variation. I trust you all realize that our Father is quite impartial in His love to all His children and that all who are truly members of His family through their union to Christ shall have an equal share of it. Hence the tie of Christian brotherhood becomes a very solemn and a very precious thing, for it not only binds us fast to our Father in heaven, but it also binds us closely to one another! I pray that the members of this church may always act toward each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. I wish that among all the saints there might be a sort of spiritual Freemasonry so that whenever we might meet, we should recognize one another by the holy grip of Christian love. There are certain sacred passwords that are common to all the saints and I will defy the hypocrite or the worldling to pronounce them aright—but if he should be able to utter them with his lips—he can never really know their meaning in his heart. There are certain experiences that cannot be learned without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. There is a certain way of speaking about Christ that can never be acquired as a parrot learns to talk. There is a certain ring which God gives to His gold which is never bestowed upon baser metal—and there is a certain something about a true child of God which enables him to recognize others of the same family and which also enables them to recognize him so that when they come together, their hearts leap up at the thought that they are "brethren beloved of the Lord."

Perhaps I have lingered too long over that first title, so now I must turn to the second one, "beloved of the Lord." You do need my explanations here, for the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to give the divine explanation of this title of honor. Turn to the verse from which our text is taken and you will see that the first thought concerning the Lord's love to you is that of its antiquity—"We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you." You always were "beloved of the Lord"! He did not begin to love you when you first repented and turned to Him. He saw you in the glass of His eternal purpose and he loved you then! That love He proved many centuries before you knew anything about it, for His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior, had redeemed you 1800 years before you were born—He gave the fullest proof of His affection for you in laying down His life for you. There was nothing in you to merit this wondrous self-sacrifice on the part of Christ—on the contrary, you were His enemies, you profaned His holy name, and despised His sacrifice after you learned what He had done! But He gave Himself for you because *from eternity* He had loved you with a love that

would not be turned from its purpose by anything that He foresaw would be done by you!

In addition to the antiquity of the Lord's love to you, think also of its richness. The apostle says, "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Have you grasped the full meaning of that word, *salvation*, beloved? It does not merely mean salvation from hell, though that is included in it, but it means salvation from sin, salvation from the guilt and power of sin, salvation from your doubts, your fears, your troubles—salvation from that besetting infirmity of yours, salvation from the devil's dominion over you, salvation in all its fullness from first to last! To all this "God has from the beginning chosen you" who are "brethren beloved of the Lord"! This is no mean inheritance, no slender portion, no slight gift—indeed, it is not easy to find words in which adequately to describe all that God has done for you in choosing you "to salvation." It will need all eternity to fully explain the meaning of that great word! You are, indeed, "beloved of the Lord" in having such a priceless portion as this bestowed upon you!

Notice, next, the wisdom, of the Lord's love to you; "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Had it been possible for you to have had salvation without sanctification, it would have been a curse to you instead of a blessing. If such a thing were possible, I cannot conceive of a more lamentable condition than for a man to have the happiness of salvation without the holiness of it! Happily, it is not possible. If you could be saved from the consequences of sin, but not from the sin, itself, and its power and pollution, it would be no blessing to you. But the salvation to which God has from the beginning chosen you is inseparably linked with the cleansing and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit who operates within you through the instrumentality of faith! Your belief of the truth of God has a purifying influence upon your whole life and makes you desire to follow in the footprints of your dear Lord and Savior. Thus God shows His wisdom in the choice of the means which He blesses to your salvation—blessing you as much by the means as by the salvation, itself—blessing you as much in the road as in the end to which it leads! You are, indeed, "beloved of the Lord" in having the Spirit of God thus dwelling in you and bestowing upon you that precious gift of faith by which you are enabled to believe the truths of God!

Observe, too, in order to increase your joy in the Lord, the signs of this love. In the next verse, the apostle goes on to say, "Whereunto He called you by our gospel." Do you not remember, you who are "beloved of the Lord," when you were called by the gospel? Then was the eternal purpose of God fulfilled in your experience. Go back in thought to the time of your espousal to Christ. Recall the sound of the silver trumpet that then brought you into gospel liberty. You had been to the house of God hundreds of times before when that same trumpet was ringing out the glad refrain—

"The year of jubilee is come!
Return, you ransomed sinners, home"—

but your ears and heart had been sealed to the message! But that day the Lord opened your heart and unstopped your ears, so that you were numbered among the happy people who heard the joyful sound! Your calling proved your election, and it stands to you still as gracious evidence of God's eternal love to you. Happy are we, too, if we can say with the apostle, "whereunto He called you by our gospel." I know that however many may preach the gospel better than I do, there is no one who can preach a better gospel than the one I preach, for it is that gospel which "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." "Our gospel" is the best of gospels, the richest of gospels, it cannot be excelled, it cannot be equaled! In fact, it is the only gospel that is worthy of the name! You remember how Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another." That is to say, it is not another gospel and it brings only a curse both upon him who preaches it and those who receive it! But blessed are you who have been called unto salvation by "our gospel."

There is yet one more sign of God's eternal love which is to be seen by us in the future—"to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." We who believe in Jesus are so "beloved of the Lord" that He will never be satisfied until we share His glory! So be glad in the Lord and rejoice in the glorious prospect that He has set before you! God was not content to choose you to happiness here, but He has also chosen you to happiness hereafter! He was not satisfied with making a little heaven for you here below, but He has made a great heaven for you up above! He has not appointed an earthly paradise where He might sometimes come to you as He came to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but He has prepared a place for you in His own home in glory that you may dwell forever in your Father's house where there are many abiding places. Rejoice, then, "beloved of the Lord," that He has "called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"!

Of course it is not in my power to enable every Christian here to suck all the sweet out of this title, but it is in the power of the Holy Spirit to enable you to—and by the exercise of faith you may draw much of it out. I claim this title for myself—"beloved of the Lord"—and each brother or sister in Christ may claim it for himself or herself. "O man greatly beloved" was the title given to Daniel, and that is the title that is given to every believer in Jesus. "That disciple whom Jesus loved" was the distinguishing title of one of His followers when Christ was here in the flesh. And now that after the flesh we know Christ no more, we are His in such a special sense that every child of God is "that disciple whom Jesus loves." May you get a firm grip of that truth of God, beloved, and realize that Jesus loves you! You cannot obtain this assurance except by faith, but when you have believed, joy and peace will quickly follow upon the

heels of faith. No, they come hand in hand, for we have joy and peace in believing!

II. I have taken so long in speaking of these titles of honor that I have very little time left for speaking of THE WEARERS OF THESE TITLES.

Suppose, dear friends, you had all heard the gospel preached and that you understood the dignity and happiness of a Christian—what sort of a person would you suppose him to be? If I try to picture him for you, you will see how far your ideas and mine agree. I should think you would so imagine that a man who is "beloved of the Lord" would be the happiest man in the world. You naturally suppose that if the eternal God has loved him, if the infinite heart of the Most High has been set upon him from all eternity, he must experience the greatest imaginable delight in such a belief and he must feel that whatever else he may or may not possess, he is rich to the fairest possible extent in having the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit who is given unto him! I know that a sorrowful friend over yonder is saying, "If I really could say that Jesus is mine, I would be quite content to be poor. If I were 'beloved of the Lord,' I would not mind if I had to lie in a dungeon or even to be burned to death for His sake." So I conceive that those who are "beloved of the Lord" must be the most happy and joyful people to be found anywhere upon the face of the earth!

I suppose, too, that the influence of this love upon them would make them very careful not to offend their loving Lord. Naturally, the love of Christ would exercise such a constraining influence upon them that they would feel that men so highly favored as they are ought not to live as other men do—but that, being distinguished by such peculiar privileges, they should be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Without violating the proprieties of conjecture, I can conceive that the "beloved of the Lord" would be most heavenly-minded people. Having such treasure in heaven, they would naturally not care about the things of earth, but would set their affection on things above so that where their treasure is there would their heart be also. I think the believer would be longing and panting to get a peep through the pearly gates and that until he could be there with his loving Lord, he would often be singing—

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay!
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away!'"

Further, I can suppose that the "beloved of the Lord" are so grateful for their Lord's love that they are constantly telling others the story of that love; and that when they meet their fellow Christians, their constant theme of conversation is the riches of divine grace! I can suppose that these people are so different from others that wherever they go, they are looked upon with astonishment! Difficulties I suppose they have, but being "beloved of the Lord" they take their difficulties to Him and He enables them to overcome them by His grace. Trials I suppose they have,

but they are sure to go to God about them and He either removes them or gives the necessary strength to endure them. I suppose they are people who compass sea and land, not to make proselytes to their particular sect, but by holy self-denial and consecrated service to glorify God and extend the Redeemer's kingdom on earth.

Is not this what you are longing to do, beloved? Well, it is a good thing to have high aspirations, but it is an even better thing to turn those aspirations to practical account. Is there not something that we can do for Christ *tonight?* The Israelites found the manna in the wilderness, not by looking up to heaven, but by looking down on the ground. And instead of looking up to heaven for means of glorifying God, we may find opportunities of doing so all around our daily path! Let us, each one, ask ourselves these questions and answer them as in the sight of God—What can I do for God in my own family circle? What can I say about Jesus to my friends? How can I bring most glory to God in my own spiritual life? What choice gift can I bring to my Savior as Mary brought the costly ointment of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus? What tears of penitence can I weep before His marred visage? What holy faith can I now exercise in His risen and glorified person? Let me, as the "beloved of the Lord," with my largest ideas concerning His glory and the coming of His kingdom, see what I can practically do to show that I truly love Him by whom I am so greatly beloved!

I wish, brothers and sisters that the portrait of the happiest man in the world that I tried to draw a few minutes ago might prove to be your own likeness. Some of you are sad and despondent, yet you are the "beloved of the Lord." Then why are you so dispirited? You are heavy of heart tonight, but since you are the "beloved of the Lord," you should rejoice in Him whatever there may be to cause you present heaviness of spirit! You have been struggling with inbred sin and the fight has been so fierce that you have feared that you would be defeated—but as you are the "beloved of the Lord," you must be more than conquerors through Him who has loved you!

Some of you have come here tonight from the workshop where you have been laughed at and mocked—you have most painful recollections of the scorn with which you were assailed this very afternoon—but since you are the "beloved of the Lord," the day will come when these things will be reckoned among your highest honors. "Take that, John Bunyan," said one to a certain Christian as he pushed him into the gutter. "Oh," said the other, "you may push me into the gutter again if you can only prove my right to bear that noble name!" So may you say to those who persecute you for Christ's sake, "You may do it again if it pleases you, for it would be an honor to me to be spit upon because I belong to Christ." Cultivate that spirit, brothers and sisters in Christ, and let the thought that that you are the "beloved of the Lord" make amends for every cruel act or word on the part of His enemies. When the last trumpet sounds,

and the innumerable hosts of the redeemed are gathered together unto Christ—and you whom God has from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, you whom He has called by our gospel—when you obtain, I say, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will forget the little suffering that you have ever borne on His account and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory that you are forever to be numbered among the "beloved of the Lord"!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ROMANS 8:1-14.*

This wonderful chapter is the very cream of the cream of Holy Scripture! What a grand keynote the apostle strikes in the first verse!

Verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* [See Sermon #1917, Volume 32—IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "No condemnation"—that is the first note of the chapter. In the last verse it is "no separation." What glorious music there is here—no condemnation to those who are in Christ, no separation of them from Christ! Happy are the people who have a share in this double blessing—but unhappy are the men and women who know nothing of it! We will read it again—"There is therefore now no condemnation." There is a great deal of accusation, and a great deal more of tribulation, but there is no condemnation—not the least hint of it! Some condemnation we might have expected, but "there is therefore now *no* condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* I have broken away from its thralldom! The new law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the law of grace has set me free from the domination of the law of sin and death! Happy is the free man who is thus liberated by the grace of God.

3. *For what the law could not do*—God has done by His grace. "What the law could not do"—

3. *In that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin*—Or, as the marginal reading renders it, "by a sacrifice for sin"—

3-5. *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. For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh.* Unregenerate men, the men who remain in the state in which they were born; the men who allow their lower nature to have the predominance. "They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh." That is all that they care about, all that they think about, all that they toil for, all that they really "mind."

5. *But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Those in whom there is a new life begotten by the Holy Spirit—these mind the things of the Spirit. Each nature seeks its own things—the flesh seeks the things of the flesh, the spirit seeks the things of the Spirit. Judge you, my hearers, to which case you belong by this test—for what are you living for? That which you live for is the true index of your nature. Do you mind spiritual things or the things of the flesh?

6, 7. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* [See Sermons #20, Volume 1—THE CARNAL MIND ENMITY AGAINST GOD and #1878, Volume 32—A TRAITOR SUSPECTED AND CONVICTED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The old nature never will obey the law of God—it can never do so. What, then, is to be done with it? Improve it? No, my hearers, the only thing to be done with it is to let it die and then to bury it. In baptism you have a most significant symbol of what is to be done with the flesh—you are to treat it as a dead thing and, therefore, to bury it. Let the old life be crucified and put to death with Christ and let the new life take its place!

8. *So then they that are in the flesh*—Those who are still in the old nature, living for it, living to it—

8. *Cannot please God.* Men may wash this old nature, they may clothe it, they may decorate it, they may educate it, but there is no evolution which can produce grace out of nature. The child of nature may be finely dressed, but it is a dead child however gaudily it is attired. There is a vital eternal difference between the old nature and the new.

9. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you.* You saints of Rome to whom Paul was writing, and you who believe in Christ now—"You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you."

9. *Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* If Christ's Spirit has not quickened you, you do not belong to Christ. Some ministers preach a very general sort of gospel in which everybody has a share, but the Bible knows nothing of that sort of gospel! "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Do you know what it is to have the Spirit of Christ? If not, my hearer, do not deceive yourself—you are none of His. "If any man"—be he prince or magistrate, a member of Parliament or a doctor of divinity—"if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

10. *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* Hence the body suffers, the body is sick, the body decays, the body is under the dominion of death because of sin—but the Spirit is full of life because of righteousness.

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.* You believers may have a good hope concerning your bodies! "He that raised up Christ from the dead

shall also quicken your mortal bodies." Wait a while, therefore—what God has done for your souls He will, in due time, also do for your bodies! This should make you long for the day of Christ's appearing, as Paul says in the 23rd verse of this chapter, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," when Christ shall appear, and we shall be raised—

"From beds of dust and silent clay"—

the body itself born a second time, regenerate like the soul!

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.] We owe the flesh nothing! I mean the law of sin in our members—we owe nothing to that. It has been a curse and a plague to us. We are not debtors to the flesh, so we must not "live after the flesh."

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* If you live simply to gratify your ambition. If you live for avarice. If you live to please yourself—if you live for any earthly object which can be comprised under the term "after the flesh"—you will certainly be disappointed, for you will die and your hope will die with you!

13. *But if you, through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.* If you seek, by the Holy Spirit's power, to kill sin. If you try to crush all sinful desires. If you keep evil with a rope about its neck—if you mortify it—put it to death, then you shall live! Holiness is the mode of the Christian's life—sin is the way of the sinner's death.

14. *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 TOKEN OF THE SONS OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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A PROPHETIC WARNING
NO. 3301

A SERMON
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"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold." Matthew 24:12.

CHRIST had spoken to His disciples of earthquakes in divers places, famines and pestilences—but these were only the beginning of sorrows. Such things as these need not trouble Christians, for though the earth is removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, yet may the believer be confident and his heart may abide at rest. Even when the Master told His disciples that they would be hated of all men for His name's sake that needed not afflict them. He had taught them before, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." They were thus braced up to meet the fiery trial. Earthquake, pestilence, war and persecution fail to disturb the serenity of believers in Christ! But the evil spoken of in our text—this is the wound, this is the sorrow! Here is something to tremble at! "Because iniquity shall abound"—that is worse than pestilence—"the love of many shall grow cold"—that is worse than persecution! As all the water outside a vessel can do it no harm until it enters the vessel itself, so outward persecutions cannot really injure the Church of God. But when the mischief oozes into the church and the love of God's people grows cold—ah, and then the boat is in sore distress! I fear that we are much in this condition at the present hour. May the Holy Spirit bless the alarming prophecy now before us to our awakening!

I. Notice, first, THE CAUSE OF THAT GRIEVOUS CHILL OF HEART which is here spoken of—"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold." When love grows cold, it is a serious sign. Then the heart is affected—affected with a chill! Is not this the forerunner of death? What is the cause of it? According to our text, it is the abounding of iniquity!

Sin does its best to destroy divine grace. So much sin, so much the less of holiness, so much the less of every Christian grace! Sin is like a poisonous atmosphere—if a man has to live in it, he has good need to pray that he may not be overcome by it. You and I, seeing that we are in this world and cannot go altogether out of it, will come into contact with evil. In our daily avocations however careful we are, we must encounter this infection. We cannot but feel that the evil around us is a hindrance to our holiness and a detriment to our growth in grace. When the society around the Christian becomes flagrantly wicked, corrupt and offensive, it is difficult for him to maintain the purity of his life and the strength of his spiritual character. At this time, we live in an atmosphere which

hinders our growth, yet in the early days of Christianity the Lord's people had, as a, rule, to live in worse society than that which surrounds us today! I will not say this without an exception. There are quarters of London, I am told, as vicious as ever existed in Corinth, or in old Rome. And I am afraid that some of the grossest vices which we dare not even mention abound in this city. We have a fringe of respectability which barely conceals the licentiousness and abomination which abound. I have been reading today some details as to the number of illegitimate births and I am perfectly astounded at the awful wickedness of this land! We call ourselves a Christian country. Do not *dare* to speak so falsely! This is growing to be a heathen land—part of it bowing before images, another part howling out, "There is no God," and a third secretly reveling in unutterable filthiness.

Still, the most of us do not come into contact with vice to the same degree as the first Christians did. Society in the Roman Empire was utterly rotten. It is a wonder that God permitted the world to exist in that loathsome age! It tended greatly to the depression of Christian principle for infamous crimes to be tolerated in the society which surrounded the faithful. Look at these first churches which some think so much of! They were not half as good as the churches of today, bad as these are. Take the church at Corinth, for instance. Did you ever hear of a church in our day which allowed drunkenness at the Lord's Supper? Have we personally met with a church which would knowingly allow a person living in incest to remain in its membership? I hope not! But gross offenses had become so common in general society in Paul's day that it did not strike even Christian people that some of these things were wrong! Iniquity abounded and it was greatly detrimental to grace.

Again, *iniquity is especially injurious to the growth of love*. Because iniquity abounded, therefore the love of many grew cold. Men inside the Christian church found themselves betrayed by other members of the church. Frequently, the heads of the brothers and sisters were sold to the executioner by hypocrites like Judas. That would greatly tend to injure Christian love. Men began to suspect one another. You did not know that the man who sat next to you at the Lord's Table would not tomorrow inform against you and get blood-money for you! Therefore suspicion entered with its wintry breath. It was natural that it should be so, albeit that there was sin in it, yet you and I would have probably fallen into the same. All around, men were so loathsome that Christian love, which teaches us to pity the most degraded and to do good to the most unworthy, found it a difficult struggle to live. Godly men endeavored to win the ungodly from their lusts, but they found themselves persecuted in consequence—the more they sought to do good, the more they were hated—and this put their love to a severe test.

I think that you can see why our Savior has given us a warning in this particular form.

Iniquity is naturally opposed to grace, but it is most of all injurious to the grace of love. If sin abounds in a church, it is little wonder if the love of many should grow cold. Young members introduced into the church

after a short time find that those whom they looked upon as being examples are walking disorderly and using lightness of speech and of behavior. Those young people cannot be very warm in love—they are led to stumble and are scandalized. Older saints who have for years held onto their way in integrity, and by grace have kept their garments unspotted from the world, see those around them who have come into the church who seem to be of quite another race, who can drink of the cup of Belial and of the cup of the Lord, who seem to follow Christ and the devil, too! Seeing this evil, these godly men and women gather up their garments in holy indignation and find it difficult to feel the love of purer days.

Oh, friends, if the frost of sin rules in a church, every tender flower is injured and nothing flourishes! Love is a sensitive plant and if it is touched by the finger of sin, it will show it. The lilies of love's paradise cannot bloom amid the smoke and dust of unholiness!

Because iniquity abounds even in the professing church, the love of many is growing cold today. What a sermon one might preach upon this!—but I shall not do anything of the kind. I am not so desirous to deplore the evils of others as to watch against evils within myself. I am not so anxious to make you discover transgression in the church as to make you watch against it in your hearts—for rest sure of this—if you give sin any license in your heart, your love will grow cold! You cannot walk in love to Christ and yet live in the love of sin. If today you have indulged an unholy temper, if you have given way to covetousness, if you have in any way transgressed against the Lord, you will not feel that warmth of love towards Jesus Christ which you felt yesterday! Your life will have lost much of its beauty and its sweetness. Cry to God that He would give it back to you! Do not rest satisfied until it is perfectly restored.

II. Now let us consider THE SERIOUS CHARACTER OF THIS EVIL. "The love of many shall grow cold." It is a very dreadful thing that love in any man's heart should grow cold. Observe the bearings of Christian love and you will see the sin of it under various aspects.

Our love is, first, *a love to the great Father*—our Father who chose us before ever the earth was, by whom we have been begotten again and received into His family. If our love to Him grows cold, what mischief that must bring! Coldness towards the father in a family—do you know any household afflicted in that way? I should be very sorry to be a member of it! Coldness of love to the father? Why, that household is scarcely a family! It has lost the bond which holds it together and constitutes it a family. May the good Lord save us from this ruin of all holy unity!

Next, our love is *love to Jesus Christ*, "who loved us and gave Himself for us." If love to Jesus should grow cold, the result would be grievous! Is there any spiritual grace within you that can be in a healthy condition when your love to Christ is declining? Are you right anywhere if your heart is wrong towards your Lord? Can you do anything earnestly when love to Jesus is chilled? Can you sing aright? Can you pray aright? Can

you live aright? Do not let us dream of bearing fruit if we are severed from the vine! It is vitally important that we should love Jesus with all our heart, soul and strength!

Christian love also embraces *the truths of God*. They that love God and His divine Son, love the truth which He has committed to them. The church is the trustee of the gospel—she is "the pillar and ground of the truth." And when men begin to play with the truth of God and think that one set of doctrines is as good as another, and that nothing is of any particular importance, evil must come! In former days our fathers counted it a small thing to go to prison for a doctrine, or to be burnt to death for a testimony! Look at the multitudes in Holland who were drowned, or who were tied to ladders and roasted to death for nothing but their conviction that believers should be baptized! Nowadays, people consider Scriptural views of baptism to be a mere trifle. I question whether our present Broad Churchmen think that there is any doctrine worth a person's losing the first joint of his little finger for! As to burning to death for a truth of God—that must seem a great absurdity to these liberal theologians! Now that things have reached this pass, need we wonder that heresies and all manner of errors rush in torrents down our streets? When she can afford to trifle with the truths of God, what is the church worth?

Our love is also *love to our fellow Christians*. This is a vital principle. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." But when members of churches have no love to one another; when a professor does not care at all what becomes of his brothers and sisters, has the church any Christianity left? No, it has a name to live, and is dead! Christianity is gone when the heart is cold—its very life is mutual affection.

Then, again, we are to *love the ungodly and the unconverted*. It is by love that we are to win them to Christ. But if the church has no love to the dying sons of men, what is she worth? Where will be her missionary operations? What will be the use of her ministry? Think of her Sunday schools without love to the children! Think of people pretending to win souls who have no love for them and do not care whether they are lost or saved. Can the church sustain a worse loss than the losing of her fervent love to perishing men? And yet, if iniquity abounds, this is the great risk we run—compassionate love will cease to minister to man's miseries!

Beloved, when we love best, how little is our love compared with what it ought to be for Him who left the royalties of heaven for the shame and sorrow of our nature! If we glowed with seraphic fire night and day through a life as long as that of Methuselah, our love could not repay the love of Christ! If that love, poor as it is, grows colder, what will it come to? Oh, eyes that are to look upon the Well-Beloved forever and ever, if you cease to see beauty in Him, now, what has blinded you? Oh, hearts that are to glow forever with delight in the presence of the reigning one, who once was crucified, what ails you if you grow cold when you most need His love, and are receiving most from Him? I cannot bear it that we should love Jesus so little! It seems to me horrible! Not to have your

heart all on fire for Christ Jesus is immoral! Let us love Him to the utmost! Let us ask Him to give us larger hearts and to fire them with the same love that is in His own, that we may love Him to the utmost possibilities of affection!

Ah, then, beloved, think again. Suppose our love grows cold—do you not see how it paralyzes the entire system? If the reservoir is empty, you cannot expect to get much water from the pipes. If the heart grows cold, everything will be coldly done. When love declines, what cold preaching we have! All moonlight—light without heat—polished like marble and as cold! What cold singing we get—pretty music made by pipes and wind, but oh, how little soul-song!—how little singing in the Holy Spirit, making melody in the heart unto God! And what poor praying! Do you call it praying? What little giving! When the hot is cold, the hands can find nothing in the purse and Christ's church, and Christ's poor, and the heathen may perish, for we must hoard up for ourselves and live to grow rich! Is there anything that goes on as it ought to go when love grows cold? I should like to act throughout life as I have when my soul has been stirred to its inmost depths with affection for my Lord! I would continually act as if I had just seen *Him* and had put my fingers into the print of the nails! I would live as if I had been just sitting with Mary at His feet, yes, and were still sitting there! I would speak for Him, work for Him and give for Him as if I had freshly lifted my head from John's place upon His bosom!

III. Thirdly, THE SOLEMN DANGER of the spread of this mischief.

I will read you the text translated accurately. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of *the* many shall grow cold." That is a more saddening expression than "the love of many." It is, "the love of *the* many." That is, of the major part of the church—the bulk of it. This supposes a dreadful state of things because when *the many* have become cold, *they keep one another in countenance*. One cold brother says to the other, "What is your temperature?" "I think I am far below zero." "So am I," says the first one, "and we are about right." If the majority are warm, then the cold ones are thawed, but if they are all below zero, then they freeze into a wretched compactness! It is the most sober, respectable church you ever knew—they have no quarrelling—everything is so comfortable and orderly. Alas, they are frozen together, and their peace is that of death! The love of the many has grown cold and they are full of mutual admiration for their quietness.

They have nobody to rebuke them. If the many have grown cold, then the few among them, instead of being able to rebuke with authority, are themselves snubbed. "He is a terribly fanatical young man! That zealous fellow never leaves anyone alone!" "He will grow out of that," says one, "by the time he gets to my age he will be as prudent as I am." Yonder good woman feels great anxiety for the conversion of souls and she is making a stir. A lady of repute declares that she is too forward, or has got a bee in her bonnet. Active people are looked upon as rather troublesome when the love of the many grows cold. The few have a hard

time of it and if they do venture upon a rebuke, they are soon snuffed out—this confirms the evil.

And then *the tendency is to grow still colder*. They go on freezing. There is no telling how cold people can be. I have been burnt with cold and I suppose you have been too. I have preached in places whose spiritual temperature was that of an icehouse and, preach as hard as I could, nothing could possibly come of it, for my words fell to the ground like lumps of ice! Colder and colder churches become till, at last, the great God who breaks up icebergs in due season, destroys a church and its place knows it no more!

IV. In the presence of the danger which is seriously threatening many churches, there is A CALL FOR SERIOUS ACTION ON OUR PART. What is that serious action?

Why, it is, first, that we should remember that if the love of the many may grow cold, then *our love may grow cold!* What are we that we should think ourselves secure where others are in danger? If other men as good as we are, have gradually cooled down, may not we? Let us be watchful and careful—and let us go to God for more grace.

Let us notice, next, that if the love of the many grows cold, it is not much use our complaining about it, but *the few must get together and pray*. The real vitality of a church seldom lies in the many, but generally in the few. Inside the election there is another election. Do you remember that out of Christ's disciples there were twelve? Out of the 12 there were three? Out of the three there was one? And so election has rings within rings. Inside the nominal church**—**(we cannot say whether they are all God's people or not)**—**the many may grow cold, but there ought to be a remnant who abide in life and love. God grant that we may belong to it! We must at once grow warmer. We must live nearer to Christ. We must be more enthusiastic. Oh for a band of choice spirits—men fit to walk with Christ in white, for they are worthy—men who will be prepared to follow the Lamb wherever He goes! The Spirit said, "You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." And so in every church there are some that have not grown idle or heretical! Let them get together and help each other! I thank God for those whom the Lord keeps very near to Him—may their number be daily increased! May each one of us be filled with the Spirit! When I hear of one minister after another giving up the old-fashioned gospel, do you know what I say to myself? I resolve that I will stick the closer to it! If the many cannot bear Calvinistic doctrine, I will be more Calvinistic than ever! The more men do not like the truths of God, the more they shall have it! Let this be our line of action. If men become worldlier, we will become more Puritanical. If professing Christians do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ, we will ask our Lord to give us sevenfold of His Spirit, that we may maintain His truths!

Suppose you expected a famine in London as there was in Paris during the siege? Everybody who could do so, would get in a hundred-fold supply of provisions. Every good housewife would lay out every penny that she could get and fill her cellars full of food. There is going to be a *spiritual* famine—therefore buy the truth of God and sell it not. Go

to your Lord and get larger supplies from Him. Do not go to one another for it. That will be like saying, "Give us of your oil"—and your companions will wisely reply, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you." Go to your Master and ask Him to fan the fire within you to a great heat, that if there should be cold everywhere else, there may be warmth in your bosoms! The Lord help you to do this, dear friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 24:1-28.

Verse 1, 2. *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciple came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* The King, having finished His first discourse in the temple, left it, never to return—"Jesus went out and departed from the temple." His ministry there was ended. As His disciples moved away with Him towards the mount of Olives, they called His attention to the great stones of which the temple was constructed and the costly adornments of the beautiful building. To them the appearance was glorious, but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father's house, which ought to have been a house of prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves and soon would be utterly destroyed! Jesus said unto them, "See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail—at last he gave orders that the whole city and temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. This was so thoroughly done that the historian says that there was but nothing to make those that came there believe it had ever been inhabited!

We sometimes delight in the temporal prosperity of the church as if it were something that must certainly endure—but all that is external will pass away or be destroyed. Let us only reckon that to be substantial which comes from God, and is God's work. The things which are seen are temporal.

3. *And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?* The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives until Jesus reached a resting place from which He could see the temple (Mark 13:3). There He sat down and the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?" These are the questions that have been asked in every age since our Savior's day. There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples inquired first about the time of the

destruction of the temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming and of "the consummation of the age" (R.V. margin). The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious and that could only be fully understood as that which He foretold actually occurred. He told His disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned His Second Advent and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

4-6. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for His disciples was not that they might know when "these things" would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time. Therefore, Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." They were to beware lest any of the pretended messiahs should lead them astray—as they would pervert many others. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, giving out that they were the Anointed of God—almost every page of history is blotted with the names of such deceivers—and in our own day we have seen some come in Christ's name, saying that they are Christ's. Such men seduce many, but they who heed their Lord's warning will not be deluded by them.

Our Savior's words, "You shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars," might be applied to almost any period of the world's history. Earth has seldom had a long spell of quiet—there have almost always been both the realities of war and the rumors of war. There were many such before Jerusalem was overthrown. There have been many such ever since and there will be many such until that glorious period when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." "See that you be not troubled" is a timely message for the disciples of Christ in every age! "For all these things must come to pass." Therefore let us not be surprised or alarmed at them, "but the end is not yet." The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end—the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. It was *an* end, but not *the* end—"the end is not yet."

7, 8. *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All there are the beginning of sorrows.* One would think that there was sorrow enough in "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places," but our Lord said that "all these" were only "the beginning of sorrows"—the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede His coming, either to Jerusalem, or to the whole world. If famines, pestilences and earthquakes are only "the beginning of

sorrows," what may we not expect the end to be? This prophecy ought both to warn the disciples of Christ what they may expect and wean them from the world where all these and greater sorrows are to be experienced!

9. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake.* Our Lord not only foretold the general trial that would come upon the Jews and upon the world, but also the special persecution which would be the portion of His chosen followers. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake." The New Testament gives abundant proof of the fulfillment of these words. Even in Paul's day, "this sect" was "everywhere spoken against." Since then, has there been any land unstained by the blood of the martyrs? Wherever Christ's gospel has been preached, men have risen up in arms against the messengers of mercy and afflicted and killed them wherever they could.

10. *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.* This would be a bitter trial for the followers of Christ, yet this they have always had to endure. Persecution would reveal the traitors within the church as well as the enemies outside. In the midst of the chosen ones there would be found successors of Judas who would be willing to betray the disciples as he betrayed his Lord. Saddest of all is the betrayal of good men by their own relatives—but even this they have, many of them, had to bear for Christ's sake.

11, 12. *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.* What could not be accomplished by persecutors outside the church and traitors inside, would be attempted by teachers of heresy—"Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." They have risen in all ages! In these modern times they have risen in clouds till the air is thick with them, as with an army of devouring locusts! These are the men who invent new doctrines and who seem to think that the religion of Jesus Christ is something that a man may twist into any form and shape that he pleases. Alas that such teachers should have *any* disciples! It is doubly sad that they should be able to lead astray "many." Yet, when it so happens, let us remember that the King said that it would be so.

Is it any wonder that where such "iniquity abounds" and such lawlessness is multiplied, "the love of many shall grow cold"? If the teachers deceive the people and give them "another gospel which is not another," it is no marvel that there is a lack of love and zeal. The wonder is that there is any love and zeal left after they have been subjected to such a chilling and killing process as that adopted by the advocates of the modern "destructive criticism." Verily, it is rightly named "destructive," for it destroys almost everything that is worth preserving!

13. *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* Again our Savior reminded His disciples of the personal responsibility of each one of them in such a time of trial and testing as they were about to

pass through. He would have them remember that it is not the man who starts in the race, but the one who runs to the goal who wins the prize—"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." If this doctrine were not supplemented by another, there would be but little good tidings for poor, tempted, tried and struggling saints in such words as these! Who among us would persevere in running the heavenly race if God did not preserve us from falling and give us persevering grace? But, blessed be His name, "the righteous shall hold on his way." "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

14. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* The world is to the church like a scaffold to a building. When the church is built, the scaffold will be taken down—the world will remain until the last elect one is saved—"Then shall the end come." Before Jerusalem was destroyed, "this gospel of the kingdom" was probably "preached in all the world" as far as it was then known. But there is to be a fuller proclamation of it "for a witness unto all nations" before the great consummation of all things—"then shall the end come" and the King shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and decide the eternal destiny of the whole human race!

15-18. *When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand), then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes.* This portion of our Savior's words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation," that is, the Roman ensigns with their idolatrous emblems, "stand in the holy place," they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived—and they did "flee into the mountains." The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages "in Judaea," availed themselves of the first opportunity for eluding the Roman armies, and fled to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews. There was no time to spare before the final investment of the guilty city. The man "on the housetop" could "not come down to take anything out of his house," and the man "in the field" could not "return back to take his clothes." They must flee to the mountains in the greatest haste, the moment that they saw "Jerusalem compassed with armies" (Luke 21:20).

19-21. *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your flight is not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* It must have been a peculiarly trying time for the women who had to flee from their homes just when they needed quiet and rest. How thoughtful and tender was our compassionate Savior in thus sympathizing with suffering mothers in their hour of need! "Flight…in the winter" or "on the

sabbath day" would have been attended with special difficulties, so the disciples were exhorted to "pray" that some other time might be available. The Lord knew exactly when they would be able to escape, yet He bade them pray that their flight might not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath! The wise men of the present day would have said that prayer was useless under such conditions—not so the great teacher and example of His praying people—He taught that such a season was the very time for special supplication!

The reason for this injunction was thus stated by the Savior. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Read the record written by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem and see how truly our Lord's words were fulfilled. The Jews impiously said, concerning the death of Christ, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Never did any other people invoke such an awful curse upon themselves and upon no other nation did such a judgment ever fall! We read of Jews crucified till there was no more wood for making crosses—of thousands of the people slaying one another in their fierce faction fights within the city. Of so many of them being sold for slaves that they became a drug in the market, and all but valueless! And of the fearful carnage when the Romans at length entered the doomed capital and the blood-curdling story exactly bears out the Savior's statement uttered nearly 40 years before the terrible events occurred!

22. *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.* These were the words of the King as well as of the prophet and, as such, they were both authentic and authoritative. Jesus spoke of what "should be," not only as the Seer who was able to gaze into the future, but as the sovereign disposer of all events. He knew what a fiery trial awaited the unbelieving nation and that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." If the horrors of the siege were to continue long, the whole race of the Jews would be destroyed! The King had the power to cut short the evil days and He explained His reason for using that power—"For the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." Those who had been hated and persecuted by their own countrymen became the means of preserving them from absolute annihilation! Thus has it often been since those days—and for the sake of His elect the Lord has withheld many judgments and shortened others. The ungodly owe to the godly more than they know, or would care to admit.

23-26. *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Therefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth. Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.* It is a grand thing to have such faith in Christ that you have none to spare for impostors. It is important not to distribute your faith too widely. Those who believe in a little of

everything will, in the end, believe nothing of anything. If you exercise full faith in that which is sure and steadfast, "false Christs and false prophets" will not be able to make you their dupes! In one respect, the modern teachers of heresy are more successful than their Judean prototypes, for they do actually "deceive the very elect," even though they cannot "show great signs and wonders." One of the saddest signs of the times in which we live is the ease with which "the very elect" are deceived by the smooth-tongued "false Christs and false prophets" who abound in our midst. Yet our Savior expressly forewarned His followers against them—"Behold, I have told you before." Forewarned is forearmed. Let it be so in our case. Our Savior's expressive command may be fitly applied to the whole system of "modern thought" which is contrary to the inspired Word of God—"Believe it not."

27. *For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* When HE comes, we shall know who He is and why He has come. There will be no longer any mystery or secret about "the coming of the Son of man." There will be no need to ask any questions then! No one will make a mistake about His appearing when it actually takes place. "Every eye shall see Him." Christ's coming will be sudden, startling, universally visible— and terrifying to the ungodly! "As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west." His first coming to judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem had terrors about it that till then had never been realized on the earth—His last coming will be still more dreadful.

28. *For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* Judaism had become a "carcass," dead and corrupt—fit prey for the vultures or carrion-kites of Rome. By-and-by there will arrive another day when there will be a dead church in a dead world—and "the eagles" of divine judgment "will be gathered together" to tear in pieces those whom there shall be none to deliver! The birds of prey gather wherever dead bodies are to be found—and the judgments of Christ will be poured out when the body, politic or religious, becomes unbearably corrupt!

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FAITH IN CHRIST'S ABILITY
NO. 3302

A SERMON
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"Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this?"
Matthew 9:28.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon verses 27 to 30, are #1355, Volume 23—OUR LORD'S QUESTION TO THE BLIND MEN and #1560, Volume 26—THE PLAIN MAN'S PATHWAY TO PEACE—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

I WANT to lay special emphasis on the word, "this," in the text—"Believe you that I am able to do *this*?" The question of Jesus referred to one particular thing—it was not intended to apply to the general power of Christ to heal the sick or to raise the dead—it concerned the specific malady from which these two men were suffering. The question meant did they believe that Christ was able to cure their blindness? Among professing Christians, there is much so-called faith that is not really faith. Many of us profess much more in our creeds than we believe in our hearts and we hold a great deal more in theory than we do in reality. For instance, I suppose there is no professor of religion here who would dispute the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to do anything and everything—we believe that He has all power in heaven and in earth. And yet, if it came to be a matter of personal detail and He said to us, "Believe you that I am able to do *this*?" we might not all be able to answer as promptly and as confidently as the blind men did, "Yes, Lord."

I. I am going to speak about this matter, and I start with the very simple statement that FAITH, IN SO FAR AS IT IS TRUE, DEALS IMMEDIATELY WITH THE CASE IN HAND.

True faith believes that Jesus Christ is "able to do this." It believes, of course, that He is able to do twenty thousand other things, but *it believes especially that He is "able to do this"*—to forgive this sin of which I am so deeply conscious, to remove this trial with which I am now so sorely afflicted, to sustain me under this temptation which so fiercely assails me, to strengthen me to accomplish this duty which so clearly is before me. As each special case arises, faith will exercise itself upon that particular thing and believe that Christ is "able to do *this."*

There are solemn thoughts connected with unbelief concerning "this" which Christ is able to do. Over there is a brother who is in such a plight that he thinks there is no way of deliverance for him out of it. He has a task before him which he hardly dares ask his Lord to enable him to

perform because he lacks the necessary faith in his Lord's power and willingness to help him! Now, my dear friend, as you are in doubt in this case, I want to ask you what is to prevent you from doubting in the next difficulty that occurs to you—and then in the next after that, and so on? You say that it is only upon this one point that you are in doubt and that you think you have very good reasons for not believing in this particular case? But the next circumstances that occur to you will very probably furnish you with just as weighty reasons for doubting—and so will it be with each succeeding case as it arises. It seems to me that you are shut up to this alternative, either to trust God in this case or else to confess that you do not intend to believe Him in *any* case. I know you will urge that the present case is a very peculiar one, but I shall remind you that the next one will also be a very peculiar one. I have not lived as long as some of you have but, during the years that I have been able to observe what has been passing around me, I have noticed that every year of my life has been a crisis in the affairs of the nation—at least so the papers have always told us and so have some good people always told us! I think it is very likely that the present time is a most solemn crisis and I also think with equally good reason, that this is a most solemn crisis in your history and that if you do not believe now, you are not likely to believe in the next crisis that comes to you. The fact is, you must either believe God always or you must never believe Him! If you think Christ is not "able to do *this*"—forgive this sin, remove this trial, overcome this temptation, or strengthen you for this duty—you will probably think the same when the next testing times comes.

Moreover, it seems to me that *if you doubt God concerning any one trial, you give up the whole case*. You would have me believe that your present trial is very peculiar and strange. Well, suppose I admit that it is? Still, if you do not believe concerning *this*, you have given up the whole case, for what Christ claims is *omnipotence*—and if there is any one thing that He cannot do, then He is not omnipotent! If there is any one heart too hard for Him to break, if there is any one sin too strong for Him to enable me to abandon, then He is not omnipotent. If you look this thought fairly in the face, I think you will scarcely dare to rob your Lord of one of the most glorious of His attributes! You would surely hesitate to put forth that right hand of yours to snatch from His crown one of its most precious gems! No, you would sooner lose your life than commit so traitorous a crime as that—yet you do practically commit it if you do not believe that He is "able to do *this,"* whatever, "this," may be and, therefore, you do virtually say that He is not almighty!

Besides, *your doubt concerning God's power sets up a new god*. Do you startle in alarm at that statement? It is true, for that which is mightiest in the world is God—but if there is *anything* which surpasses the power of God—something that is more potent than *omnipotence*, that something must be god! I only put the matter thus to show you that you are obliged

to believe that God can deliver you out of your present desperate plight, or else you must become an idolater! You must feel that your difficulties and trials are greater than God and, therefore, you deify them! Of course you do not mean to do that! You feel a cold shiver go through you at the bare thought of such blasphemy, yet you practically do it whenever you doubt that God is "able to do *this*," whatever, "this," may be!

Further, to doubt God's power to do "this," whatever it may be, *is challenging every attribute of the divine character*. I could prove this if I had the time, but I will indicate only one attribute of God, that is, His truthfulness. Take such a promise as this, "He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble." Now, if you doubt God's power to fulfill that promise, you practically challenge His veracity! Can you calmly contemplate such a sin as that would be? Yet it seems to me that you cannot avoid committing that sin unless now, by simple faith, you believe that He is "able to do *this*." But grant that God is omnipotent, once really accept that truth of God in your heart and then you will feel that there remains no strait into which you can be brought out of which He cannot deliver you, that there is no temptation which may assail you from which He cannot preserve you, that there can be no position of peril in which He cannot protect you and out of which He cannot bring you unharmed! May the Holy Spirit graciously reveal to us the unsafe, treacherous, boggy pit that would swallow us up if we doubt that God is "able to do *this*"—and may He enable us to realize that it is safe walking and happy walking when we walk by faith!

II. My second statement, which is as simple as the first, is that TRUE FAITH, ESPECIALLY IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION, MUST BE PERSONAL.

If I have any true faith in Christ at all, I must believe that He is "able to do *this*"—that is, that He is able to do for me what He has done for many who are now in glory—and what He is doing for many who are rejoicing in His salvation here on earth! I know that I am addressing many who believe in the Bible. At least you say that you do and that you believe that Jesus Christ is able to do everything. That is the theory of your faith, yet you do not believe *this*—that Jesus Christ is able to save you *now*. You have got an idea in your mind that for some reason or other, on account of some lack of preparation in you, or for some equally foolish reason, the simple act of faith in Christ would not be the means of bringing salvation to your soul! You imagine that your case is not one that is covered by the promise of God, or encompassed by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

If that is what you think, that Christ cannot save you—why do you not doubt whether He can save others? In fact, *why do you not doubt whether He can save any sinner who ever lived?* You tell me that your case is a very peculiar one. I will grant you that, but then the case of the

next sinner you meet will also be a peculiar one. He is as honest a man as you are and he will tell you that there is something very peculiar about his case. I have very seldom talked with any person under conviction of sin who did not think that his case was different from that of anybody else—and very surprised has he been when I have told him that his words just described my own experience when I was under conviction of sin! If you believe that Christ cannot save you because of some peculiarity in your case, is it not equally reasonable or unreasonable that you should believe that He cannot save another sinner because of some peculiarity in his case? In this way you would soon get to believe that Jesus Christ cannot save at all! "No," you say, "I shall never believe that." But that is practically what you do believe! You do not believe that Jesus Christ is a potent Savior! You may think that you do, but if the matter were put to the test and you regarded every other sinner's case as you regard your own, there would be just as good reason to suppose every other case to be hopeless as to conclude that there is no hope of salvation for yourself! If you are strictly reasonable in your belief, you must either believe that Christ can save you or that He can save nobody at all!

Then, as I said before under the previous head, *if you do not believe that Christ can save you, you give up the whole case*. You have probably, all of you, held as one of the undisputed articles of the Christian faith that Christ is omnipotent. But supposing that your case is one in which His blood has no cleansing efficacy—supposing that you are so vile that He cannot and will not receive you, supposing that your heart is so hard that He cannot soften it—then He is not omnipotent! That is as clear as anything can be, for here is a case that has defied and defeated Him! Oh, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon that there is a man here who professes to believe the Bible, yet He holds that Christ is not omnipotent! "Oh," you say, "I do not hold that!" But you do practically hold it, for if you thought Him to be omnipotent, you must conclude that He is "able to do this," that is, to save you!

More than that, *disbelieving Christ's power to save in your own case is virtually making yourself god*. "Oh, no!" you say in horror at the bare mention of such a thing! "I never did that!" Stay a moment and let me prove it to you. You believe that there is something in you which cannot be overcome by divine power. You think that there is something in you which makes it impossible that you can be saved. Now listen, the most mighty of all forces must belong to deity—but if there is in you some force of wickedness, some hardness of heart, some obstinate willfulness which you imagine God really cannot overcome, then you are practically making out that the evil in you is more powerful than *omnipotence* and greater than God! Is not this very strange, as well as very wicked? You thought you were making yourself out to be very humble, but it turns out that you are very proud, lifting up yourself to the very throne of God and

seeking to usurp His place! This is what you are practically doing when you assume that Christ is not "able to do *this*," that is, to save you. My dear friend, look at the enormous guilt in which such unbelief would involve you and start back from it with the utmost abhorrence! And believe that Christ is mighty to save, yes, that He is almighty to save even you!

I say again, as I said upon the first part of my subject, *this unbelief of yours challenges all the divine attributes*. In believing that Christ cannot save you, you are dishonoring the character of God in the person of His Well-Beloved Son, for you have set a limit to His power although He said that all power in heaven and in earth had been given to Him! When He asks, "Is My arm shortened that it cannot save you?" you answer, "Yes, Lord." When He says, "Is My ear heavy that it cannot hear your cry?" you reply, "Yes, Lord." You may not dare to say it with your lips, but you really mean it in your heart—and that is even worse! You are denying the truth of Christ's promise. He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yet *you* say, "Lord, I would come to You, but I would never get any rest. I would trust you, but I would never be saved." You suppose either that Christ has promised more than He can perform, not knowing that He was doing so, which is challenging His omniscience, or that He has deliberately promised more than He knew that He could do, which is challenging His truthfulness and honor! He has commanded that this message should be preached to every creature in the entire world—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He also said, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." This is His declaration concerning every believing soul, so that if you believe on Him, it is *not possible* that your case could be beyond the limit of His power to save! I am not talking now about His willingness to save. If I were, I would speak just as confidently, but just now I am referring to His power. Christ's own question to you, my dear friend, is the same that He put to the blind men, "Believe you that I am able to do this?"—That, is, to save you! Think of the solemn consequences of unbelief—see how shamefully it maligns and slanders the character of Jesus and then may His gracious Spirit sweetly compel you to believe that He is "able to do *this*," and to save even you!

After Christ had cured these blind men, He healed a dumb man who was possessed with a devil. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never so seen in Israel." I wonder if there is one here who thinks himself the biggest sinner in the world, the most hardened, the most hopeless. If so, and he believes in Jesus, Jesus will save him and then he, also, will be able to say, "It was never so seen in Israel." I know that when I found peace through believing in Jesus, I thought that it had never been so seen in Israel! And I have met with many others who have felt just the same about their own conversion. Well, supposing that it *was* never so

seen in Israel, then there are new honors and fresh glories for Immanuel and there is no reason why it should not be seen here tonight! At any rate, I pray God to show you the inconsistency of professing to believe the Bible and yet thinking that for some reason or other, or for all the reasons in the world put together, Christ is unable to save you!

III. My third statement, which is as simple as the first and second were, is that IN ALL MATTERS AFFECTING THE SOUL, THE VITAL QUESTION IS THAT OF FAITH.

"Believe you that I am able to do this?" must be the vital question concerning a soul's salvation! Personal faith with regard to Christ's power to save must be the main matter. Jesus did not say to these blind men, "Have you a proper sense of your blindness? Are you sufficiently sensible of the deprivation from which you suffer through the loss of your eyesight? Do you feel the degradation of the poverty which compels you to beg? Have you wept, moaned, groaned and grieved because you cannot see?" No such questions as these were put to them by our Lord! He simply asked them, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" There are various questions that many of you ask yourselves although Christ never puts them to you—His one inquiry is, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" If you can answer that question satisfactorily, you need not trouble about your own queries!

You will notice, too, that *Christ did not ask the blind men whether they loved Him*. He did not say to them, "I am not going to do anything for you unless your hearts are burning with love to Me." Oh, no! It would have been clean contrary to our Savior's nature to say to these men, "Are you really fond of Me? Then I will do what you desire." So, sinner, Christ does not ask you whether you love Him because He knows that you do not—yet you ask yourself this question again and again—"Do I love the Lord or no? Am I a lover of Jesus? I have heard His people say that they love Him, but do I love Him?" Now, this is a very proper question for you to ask yourself after you have believed in Jesus—but you must have the root-grace of faith, first, before you begin to look for its fruits. I hope that you will afterwards attain to that burning, fervent love that many advanced believers have to Jesus, but this is not the matter that concerns you just now. The question that Jesus puts to you now is, "Believe you that I am able to do this? Believe you that I can take your sins away and make you clean tonight? Believe you that I can take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh? Believe you that I can turn you, a lion, into a lamb? Believe you that I can give you the grace of repentance though you cannot repent without My aid? Do you believe that I am able to do all that needs to be done in order to save you?" This is the question Christ asks you now. I trust the time will come when He will say to you, "Do you love Me?" and that you will be able truthfully to answer, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

There was another question which Christ did not put to the blind men. He did not say to them, "*Have you feared whether you would ever have your sight*? Have you been frightened at the thought that you may have to grope about in darkness and poverty all your days? Have you been in such despair that you have almost feared that you would commit suicide unless your blindness could be cured?" No, Christ did not ask any such questions as these! His one inquiry was, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" Friends tell us sometimes about the terrors they have experienced before they came to Christ by simple faith, but it would be quite wrong on our part to conclude that such terrors are necessary! I believe that they are *never* necessary and that they are seldom useful—it certainly cannot be right to put them in the place of faith in Christ! Dear friend, I wish that you would answer the Master's question and leave all other matters alone until He asks you about them. He does not question you concerning your fears and your terrors, the plowing and harrowing law work of which some brethren are so fond of talking about. His first question is, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" Give Him an answer, and may the Holy Spirit enable you to give the right reply, "Yes, Lord," even as the blind men did when Christ put a similar question to them! The vital matter is faith in Jesus. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" O sinner, how glad and thankful I would be if I knew that you were saying in your heart, "I do believe that Christ is both able and willing to save me. And I cast myself into His arms now." If you have really done that, you are saved, and now you know, feel, and rejoice in His power to save all those who come unto God by Him! Trust in Jesus, for this is the vital sign by which we discern those who are chosen of the Father, regenerated by the Holy Spirit and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus! If you truly believe in Jesus, you are born of God—you need not fear that you shall ever perish, but you may even now rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

IV. I close with this fourth observation, that THIS QUESTION IS ONE WHICH WE MIGHT NATURALLY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT JESUS WOULD ASK.

It was a vitally important question, and it was by no means an unreasonable one. *If the blind men had not believed that Jesus was "able to do this," they would not have asked Him to have mercy upon them.* It would have been impertinence on their part, or something worse than that, if they had pleaded for mercy and yet had not believed that He was able to grant it to them! I should not feel pleased if a blind man came to me and said, "Will you be so good as to open my eyes?" I should feel morally certain that he was mocking me, for he would know as well as I do that I have not the power to give sight to the blind! Now, dear friends, some of you have been praying to the Lord to have mercy upon you—so you see that you have committed yourselves just as these blind men had!

You have not told anybody about it. Possibly it was behind the hedge, or up in the hayloft, or in that little bedroom of yours when no one but God could see you. Well then, how did you dare to pray thus if you did not believe that the Lord could do for you what you asked of Him? You did not mean to insult Him, did you? I think the very fact of your praying drives you to the conclusion that you do believe that He is "able to do this." If you do not, you must not pray anymore! "Oh," you say, "I cannot help praying." I am glad you cannot and I hope you never will cease praying, but if you go on praying, yet do not believe in Christ's power to save you, it is very much like a mockery of the Savior, for how can you pray with any sort of justification unless you can truly say, "O Lord, I do believe that You are able to save, and able to save even me"? I do not know whether the blind men at first fully believed in the deity of Jesus, but I assume that all of us hold that He is "very God of very God." I hope none of you have been led astray by the false doctrine that Christ is a mere man. You believe that He is the Son of God, so what is more reasonable than that He should say to you, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" You must give up your belief that He is divine or else you must believe that He is able to do this, that is, to save you! I have already shown you that *omnipotence* is essential to deity, so if you doubt that Christ is omnipotent, I do not see how you can believe that He is the Son of God. But inasmuch as you say that you do believe that He is the Son of God, and I have no reason to question your veracity, how can it be a question with you whether He is able to save you?

Besides, you know that *Christ has saved a great many other people* and this should encourage you to believe that He can save you. The blind men had probably heard of His miracles of mercy and so were stimulated to cry to Him on their own account. You have seen the change that Christ has worked in some of your relatives or friends—and this being the case, Christ certainly has the right to expect that you should believe that what He was able to do for them He is also able to do for you! Your case is not by any means as peculiar as you imagine. It can easily be matched by others where Christ's power to save has been abundantly proved. If you are a drunk, we can produce drunks who have been saved by Christ. If you are a swearer, we can show you swearers who have been saved by Christ. If you are a harlot, we can bring harlots who have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus and who are now living chaste and holy lives. If, on the other hand, you have led an outwardly moral life and cannot feel the deep conviction of sin that others have experienced—if you say, with Cowper—

"I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel.
If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel"—

we can find plenty of cases to match yours! Suppose you have a bad leg and you go to a doctor and say to him, "Doctor, you can see what is the matter with my leg, but I don't believe you can cure it." He would certainly not feel flattered by your doubt concerning his skill, yet he might say to you, "Well, it so happens that I have had many cases exactly like yours, and in every instance the remedies I have prescribed have been the means of producing a complete cure." If, after that, you still persist in saying that you do not believe the doctor can cure you, he would be fully justified in saying to you, "Then I think your unbelief is very unreasonable. Here in my book I have the record of many cases almost identical with yours, and as I was able to cure them, I have no doubt that I can cure you if you will only commit yourself to my hands and do as I tell you." In a similar manner, I venture to say that there is not a case in this house—there is not a case in the whole world to which there has not been a very close parallel in which the power of Christ has already been displayed—and, therefore, He has the right to ask every unsaved soul, "Believe you that I am able to do this for you?"

My dear hearer, I can most confidently assure you that He is "able to do this." I know the ways of unbelief, for I have walked there. But oh, happy, happy, happy day when I understood my Savior's grace and power at least in some degree! When I saw that, although I was a sinner, He came to save sinners, and although I was black with sin, His precious blood was able to wash me whiter than snow—and although I was naked, His righteousness supplied me with a robe in which I might even dare to appear before God, and although I was spiritually dead, His Holy Spirit was given to quicken me and make me live forever—thus in Christ all my soul's needs were fully met—and desperate as my case had appeared to myself, I had proved as so many before me and since have also proved that, "with God all things are possible." May you come to the same conclusion, dear friend, and cast yourself now upon the naked promise of God made in covenant with Christ and ratified by His most precious blood! If He does not save you when you trust Him, this Bible is not true. If any soul can truly trust Him and then be a castaway, I have no gospel to preach to guilty sinners! But that can never be the case, for He has Himself declared—oh that I could pronounce the words as He uttered them!**—"**Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come then, every one of you, and prove the truth of His blessed promise and so you shall be saved—and He shall have the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:18-38.

Verse 18. *While He spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshiped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead:*

but come and lay Your hand upon her, and she shall live. This was grand faith on the ruler's part, believing that the touch of Christ's hand would raise his dead daughter to life! We do not wonder that the Savior honored such faith as that at once!

19, 20. *And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment.* This was while He was on the way to the ruler's house. Jesus Christ can work many miracles while He is on the way to work other miracles.

21. *For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.* [See Sermon #1809, Volume 30—MAY I?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This also is wonderful faith—in this chapter we get among the great believers! The man believes that the touch of Jesus can raise the dead. The woman believes that the touch of His garment will make her whole!

22. *But Jesus turned about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.* [See Sermon #3020, Volume 53—GOOD CHEER FROM GRACE RECEIVED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ never comes short of our faith, but He often goes beyond it!

23. *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.* These were hired men and women who were brought in to act as mourners

24, 25. *He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put out, He went in*—There is a good deal that has to be "put out" before the Lord Jesus Christ will fully reveal His power to bless. He would have you put out your doubts, your fears, your wandering thoughts, your self-trust—in fact, everything that is contrary to His righteous rule. "When the people were put out, He went in"—

25-27. *And took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us!* See how busy our Lord was, and how ready for every application that was made to Him! And note how He adapted His power to every case that came before Him. First He heals an issue of blood. Then He raises the dead and now He is ready to open blind eyes! I wish the Lord might have such blessed business among us here—and He may have—for if you will cry to Him for your child, dead in trespasses and sins, He will make her live! If you will bring your blind eyes to Him, He will open them! And if you will come to Him with a disease that is sapping your very life, He will heal you! Give the Lord plenty of this holy work to do! Drawn wells, they say, are sweetest—and a Savior who is constantly used is most enjoyed!

28. *And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this?* That is the question the Lord puts to any who are in soul-trouble. "'Believe you that I am able to do *this*?'—to forgive your sins once and for all—to give you a new nature at this very moment—to make you, a sinner, into a saint—to save you, not merely for the next few weeks, but to save you *eternally* so that you shall see My face in glory with exceeding joy—'Believe you that I am able to do *this*?'"

28, 29. *They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.* That is what Jesus says to every person here, "According to your faith be it unto you." If you believe Christ a little, He will bless you a little, but if you believe Him up to the hilt, He will bless you to the fullest! Your faith shall never outrun the manifestations of divine love. Believe you this? Then you shall see it! "According to your faith be it unto you."

30-32. *And their eyes were opened and Jesus immediately charged them, saying, See that no man knows it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.* These miracles were worked so rapidly, and they concerned such different cases that as we read of them, we rejoice to see how Christ was ready for anything and ready for everything! It did not matter what case was brought to Him, He was never taken aback. Here He is just as fully prepared to heal the dumb as just now He was to cure the blind!

33. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke* —There is nothing like going at once to the root of the matter. Christ did not heal the dumb man, and leave the devil in him, but He first cast the devil out and then, "the dumb spoke." And this is His way of saving men. He renews them by His Spirit, He casts the devil out and then their despair goes, their prayerlessness disappears, their love of vice is killed! All evil is expelled when once the root of the evil is pulled up. "When the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke"—

33. *And the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never before seen in Israel.* [See Sermon #2482, Volume 42—AN UNPARALLELED CURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ had worked such miracles as the multitudes had never before seen! And they might well marvel.

34, 35. *But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages*—What the Pharisees said was of such very small consequence that, for the time being, Christ vouchsafed them no answer but this, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages." In like manner, it will be your best plan not to reply to slander. There are some lies that smell so strongly of the Pit from which they come that everybody will recognize their origin and, therefore,

you need not take the trouble to point out that they are lies. And the best reply to all scandal and slander is to go on with your work just as if you had never heard it. The Pharisees said that Christ cast out devils through the prince of the devils, and the very next sentence is, "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages"—

35-36. *Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them*—Yet Christ, while upon the earth in the flesh, never saw such multitudes as are gathered in London today! He never saw such multitudes as make up this nation! There never passed before the eyes of the Redeemer such multitudes as are crowded together in China and India today! No, the population of the world has wondrously increased since those days, so what must be the compassion of His heart when He sees the multitudes that are living in the world today? "When He saw the multitudes He was moved"—in the original, this is a very striking word—it signifies that He trembled with emotion, His inmost powers were moved, His heart was stirred "with compassion on them"—

36-37. *Because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.* Not the preachers, but the *laborers* are few! Not the talkers, but the laborers—the patient, plodding, resolute, disinterested, industrious toilers who really go in for winning souls for Christ—the men and women who do real work for God and do not play at Christian service as some do, making it a kind of amusement to go and do some little good now and then! It is these *laborers* who are few. You know the difference between a dock laborer, or a farm laborer, and the gentleman who takes a tool in his hand just for a pastime now and then.

38. *Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* [See Sermon #1127, Volume 19—HARVEST MEN NEEDED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is earnest workers that we are to pray God to thrust forth into His harvest, for still the harvest is plenteous and the laborers are few.

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"And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan...Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest has given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he tore his clothes."
2 Chronicles 34:15, 18, 19.

HILKIAH had found THE BOOK and it was a more important find than if he had discovered a mine of diamonds, or perpetual motion, or a new world! Oh, that Book, that wonderful Book! Was there ever anything like it under heaven? Well may it be a power when we come to think of what it is—the Book of the law of the living God! How reverently did he lift it from its hiding place, remove its dust and commence to read its title and contents! This particular Book of the law was probably the first five books of Moses, commonly called the Pentateuch. Some have thought that it was only the Book of Deuteronomy, but it is too late in the day for us to decide with confidence its exact form. We know that it was "a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses" (2 Chron 34:14), probably an autographed copy by Moses. Of that we cannot be sure, but whatever hand may have written the letters, what a Book the law of the Lord is! The Old Testament is a divine light which has led multitudes of saints to the Lord's right hand—and its luster is not dimmed by the New Testament, but increased thereby. Not one tittle of it has failed, or shall fail—it lives and abides forever! Taking an enlarged view of the law of the Lord today and holding in our hands two Testaments, both the Old and the New, what a marvelous Book the Bible is! Earth does not contain an equal wonder!

It is a Book which *has God for its Author,* for though there are many Authors and the Book is divided into many treatises, yet it is all of one as to its innermost Authorship, since holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. A divine originality runs through it all—marks of the divine mind abound in every portion and the Holy Spirit still inspires it all and breathes it into the hearts of believing readers. Matthew and Mark, and Luke and John are here, but we scarcely observe them as compared with the higher light, the light of God which illuminates every page! The Book is saturated with a heavenly life!

What God has written is to be received with the utmost reverence. It is a pity that so many treat this sacred volume as they would treat any ordinary book. They sit on the throne of judgment and sway the scepter of criticism, as if they would call God, Himself, to their bar! Surely they have never heard in their heart and conscience the sound of that question, "Who are you that *replies* against God?" If God is not its Author, this Book is a gross imposture and the sooner we treat it as such the better! But if God is its Author, let us bow before it obediently and accept it as our infallible directory.

As it has God for its Author, so it commends itself to us as inestimably precious because *it has God's mind for its matter*. In this Book of the Lord the chief subject is Himself and His ways and His grace towards us, His creatures. Here the Lord does not so much explain His works as His own personal ways, thoughts and designs to our fallen race. He does not take the pen in hand to explain to us what He has written in the stone book, or to open up to us what He has printed in letters of light in yonder constellations, but to reveal His glorious grace which He has caused to dwell in all its fullness in Christ Jesus our Lord! He has left us to find out what we may of visible things—a happy and healthful exercise for our minds, but He had something nobler to tell us when He inspired this Book. Herein He has told us His thoughts of man and of the Man, Christ Jesus; His thoughts upon our sin and the ruin that comes of it; His thoughts as to how we may be saved and what shall come out of that salvation. The windows of this Book look towards heaven and truly they are windows of agate—themselves precious and giving us a view of still more precious things! Its doors open into eternity and its gates lead into glory. Every page points to holiness and felicity and attracts us thereto. Precious Book! I would say of you what David said of Goliath's sword "There is none like that. Give it to me." You are marrow and fatness, honey, wines on the lees well-refined—yes, manna of angels and water from the Rock, Christ Jesus! Of all soul medicines you are the most potent! Of all mental dainties you are the sweetest! And of all spiritual food you are the most sustaining!

As the Book has God for its Author, and God's mind for its matter, so does it become invaluable to us because *it is directed to us*. It is not a letter written from God to the angels, nor is it sent to a race of beings alien from ourselves. This Book is for men and it is directed not to our curiosity, nor to any of our lower faculties, but to the soul of our life, to the vital spirit of our manhood! It is God's Word to the innermost man—to our immortal part. He speaks here not only to our ears, but to our souls. He directs His teaching not to that part of us which shall die, but to that part of us which shall never cease to be, but shall be immortal as Himself! If ever a man ought to concentrate all his faculties and pray to be in the best mental order, it should be when he comes to study the Word of God upon matters which concern his noblest being. God grant, therefore, that in our hearts we may feel deep reverence for this marvelous Book which we shall not now lose as Israel almost lost it—

whose copies will never become scarce, as they were in Josiah's day. The Word of the Lord will always be precious, but not through scarcity of copies, now that the Bible Society is scattering them thick as autumn leaves! They will always be gems for value and yet as pebbles of the brook for multitude!

He that reads this wondrous Book aright may well value it *because of the blessings which it will bring him*. It will tell him how to be rid of all his sin and free himself from the slavery of Satan. It will teach him how to bear his present burdens and quit all needless cares. It will be a guide to him through the maze of life, a pillow for the bed of death! It will give him joy and peace through believing when the thickest troubles shall gather round about him, and it will make him ready for the future world when brightest glories shall shine upon him! Whatever you need for time or for eternity, this Book shall either give it to you, or point you to Him who has it ready to give to you if you will bend your knee before Him! It is a golden mine of the truth of God and infinitely more—it is a treasury of blessings and delights, and even then I have not fully described it. It has for you, O sheep of the Lord, all that your Good Shepherd sees that you have need of! Here are the green pastures wherein He makes you to feed and to lie down—and here flow the still waters, whereof if a man drinks, he shall never thirst, but shall joy and rejoice in God forever! I do not wonder that Hilkiah and Shaphan had the same value for the smaller Book which we believers in Christ have for the larger edition of it—for even a fragment of it is priceless! I do not wonder that they considered their treasure to be worthy of being brought before the king. If they had discovered where hidden coffers had been concealed by Solomon and the great kings that succeeded him, they would not have procured so glorious a present for the king of Judah as when they suddenly stumbled upon this Book of the law of the Lord!

I. Tonight I shall try to speak of the whole question under three heads. And the first will be this—here is an instance of that PECULIAR PRESERVATION which God has extended to the Scriptures which He has inspired. It would seem, from this narrative, that copies of the Word of God had become extremely rare, for no other copy was known to exist. If anyone had known where there was a copy of the Pentateuch, the priest would have known, or the pious king's secretary would have been informed of it. These appear to have been gracious men, learned men—and men to whom the people came—surely if such a thing was procurable, they would have possessed a copy of the law of the Lord. Perhaps the faithful scattered up and down through Israel and Judah had copies of the Book, but they had grown so accustomed to conceal them from their persecutors that they kept the secret to themselves. If there were other copies, they were not known to those who had the best means of discovering them.

When Hilkiah discovered this copy of the Word of God, he was greatly surprised and overjoyed. What a singular providence it was that the Book was not quite destroyed! How fortunate that the one copy should have

been left! It is believed by many—and I think that their belief is correct—that this was a standard *copy*. If it was not the original, yet it was an authorized transcript which was to be regarded as the correct text—and it had been laid up in the ark of the Lord for that purpose. Perhaps in some dark hour, for fear that it would be discovered even in the secret shrine of the tabernacle, a priest had hidden it away. The tradition is that it was buried beneath a heap of stones when Ahaz was seeking out copies of the word to destroy them. By the divine providence of God this one standard copy had been preserved and now came to light! It may have been hidden carefully and then providence had provided the caretaker. It may have been thrown away carelessly—then providence had made even that carelessness to be the means of preserving the treasure. In any case, the law was still among men and it had now fallen into careful and reverent hands. The God who gave it had preserved it!

Now look along through all the ages and if you are a reverent believer in the word, you will be filled with grateful wonder that the sacred roll has been preserved to us! Through what perils it has passed and yet, as I believe, there is not a chapter of it lost—no, nor a verse of any chapter! The misreading of the copies are really so inconsiderable and are so happily corrected by other manuscripts, that our Bible is a marvel in literature for the comparative ease with which the correct text is discoverable! It seems to me that God's divine care has extended itself to the whole text, so that, with far less care than would be needed by any classic Author, the very words of the Holy Spirit may be known! As the wings of cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat, so do the wings of providence protect the Book of the Lord! As Michael guarded the body of Moses, so does a divine care secure the Books of Moses! I invite lovers of history and of famous books to look into the interesting story of the immortality of Scripture. Let us think of that special preservation with reverent gratitude. The God of Israel had given rules for the preservation of the Scriptures, but they had evidently fallen into disuse. It is expressly laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy that each king was to copy out the Book of the law for himself. We have no evidence that *any* of them did so! Most of the ordinances of the Lord to His chosen people were neglected almost as soon as they were given. Even in the wilderness, during 40 years, the rite of circumcision, which lay at the base of everything, was unobserved! The feast of tabernacles was not kept for many and many a year. And the Passover, the most solemn of all rites, was not carefully celebrated—indeed, it had never been properly observed from the days of Samuel to the days of Josiah! It had been altered and debased from its original form. Alas, Christian ordinances have suffered from the some tendency to change! This proves the depraved nature of man, and his unwillingness to walk in the path of obedience. The plan of preserving the Sacred Book by the kings' copying it had fallen into disuse and, therefore, the extreme scarcity of manuscripts around the court—yet even then, the word did not fail!

Nor was the Scripture alone in danger from the neglect to preserve it, but furious persecutions had been raised against the Holy Volume. The haters of it slew the prophets, broke down the memorials of God's goodness to His people and polluted the holy place of the Most High—and their rage did not spare His statutes. The law must be destroyed, or they would still be rebuked. You know, brothers and sisters, how from century to century that church which has no foundation in the Word of God has, with desperate determination, hunted after every copy of the inspired Volume to destroy it! It is not very long ago since that unchangeable church called the Scriptures "dangerous pastures." Who and what must the shepherds be who use such language concerning the law of the Lord? But with all their burnings, they have not destroyed the Book! With all their inquisitions and torture chambers, faith in Scripture has survived! Still the Book teaches and preaches with a divine unction and authority. What Popery could not do, infidelity shall not do! Infidelity, some years ago, was going to blot out the name of Jesus from under heaven! Its boastful champion said that he was but one man, but in a few years he would undo all that was accomplished by the 12 apostles! His name is left to curse—the work of God goes on better than ever it did and the grand old Book is scattered everywhere, falling fast and thick as snowflakes in the time of winter! I might almost say that the copies of the Bible are in number comparable to the sands of the sea! Think of nearly a million penny Testaments being scattered in a single year in this one land! These are leaves of the tree of life for the healing of the nations! There is a blessing in every line of the sacred record both for the present age and for years to come. This word will abide among men till time shall be no more. God be thanked for it!

The passage before us is a very beautiful instance of how under every difficulty, when every regulation has been neglected, and the utmost fury goes forth against the word, yet the word lives and abides forever! The fact is that providence is the ally of revelation. From the Word of the Lord, creation began—by the Word of the Lord creation is sustained and everything seems to know the source from which it came—and every creature lends itself to the preservation of that grand Word by which it exists! Depend upon it, brothers and sisters, the Book is not alone—God is always with it! God has put a wall of fire around the revelation of His will and with omnipotence He guards it against all who would harm it! God is always with those who tremble at His Word. And when there shall come times of darkness and of sorrow, and you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, never question what the end will be, for "the Word of the Lord endures forever." He that sits on the floods as King forever and ever will so order all things that His Word shall have yet greater sway and His gospel shall conquer the hearts of men!

But, oh, how should we love the Book, and how should we stand up for it, and guard it jealously, since God has guarded it so well! Let every man of God be like Solomon's valiant men of Israel who watched about the bed of the king, each man with his sword upon his thigh because of

fear in the night—for there is much fear just now for the truth of God. I mean, of course, to us poor puny beings there is danger—there is no fear in the great heart of the eternal! There is no fear as to the accomplishment of His purposes, for He is strong in power and not one fails. What our fathers preserved with their blood, we will preserve with our lives. That which bore them to a martyr's death, singing as they went, we will not consent to throw away! If any man has another gospel, let him keep it—I am satisfied with mine. If any man has found another bible, let him read it—I am satisfied with my mother's old Bible and the Bible of my ancestors. If discoveries are to be made concerning a new way of the salvation of men, let them make them who care to do so—the old way has saved me and the old way has saved multitudes of others—and therein shall I abide, God helping me, come what may! And so will you, my brothers and sisters—and together we will rejoice that God preserves His Book and continues to give His Holy Spirit with it! God will uphold His truth that is in this Book and the men that hold that truth shall be upheld. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven!" And similar eternal settlements are made for all whose hope is fixed upon that Word!

II. Having glanced at this, I ask you to think for a little upon another point—THE COMMENDABLE COMMUNICATION CONCERNING THIS BOOK. Hilkiah finds it. Hilkiah hands it to the royal secretary, whose name was Shaphan. Shaphan reads a bit of it and makes quite sure that it is what it professes to be—and then immediately he goes with it to the king. The king holds a Bible-reading with him and when the king has read the scared roll, himself, he summons all the people and reads the Book to them. The point is this: if you have found the Word of God, make it known to others; keep not this honey to yourself!

Hilkiah handed to Shaphan the Book without note or comment. It was the Book with no apocryphal matter rolled up with it. It was the Book of the law of God in its purest state. He who found the Book delighted in it, but he passed it on—and the next passed it on and the next passed it on—and the next circulated it still further. The entire nation soon heard of what was written in the Book. The handlers of the volume do not appear to have tarried long. Hilkiah rejoiced and said to secretary Shaphan, "I have found the Book of the law!" And Shaphan did not delay a month, but went straight away to let the king know. And the king, after he had torn his clothes, expressed his sorrow for national sin and inquired at the hand of the Lord's prophetess, published the divine message to the people and read the law to them. The moral is—continually make known God's Holy Word! If you have obtained light, let your brother light his candle at your candle. If you have seen anything of God, tell your brother what you have seen. Let not God's Book grow moldy in your own hand, but pass it on and let another read what you have read to your salvation and to your comfort, that he also may be saved and comforted! Let your light shine! Scatter the bread of heaven! Distribute the balm of Gilead!

How can we do this? Well, I believe that it is the duty of every Christian man not only to preach the gospel, and to tell to others of his own experience of it, but also literally to pass on the Book itself. You may possibly make a mistake as to your explanation of it, but you will make no mistake if you give away the Book, itself, and pray the Spirit of God, Himself, to explain it to the reader. Money should be spent by each one of us in scattering Bibles. With Testaments at a penny, who would not give Testaments away? With Bibles so cheap as they are, and withal so beautiful to look upon, many of them, who would not think it a good investment frequently to give to the young, to your relatives, to your friends, a copy of the Book? Suit the size of the copy to the person and so give that your present will be valued. What better marriage gift than a family Bible? What better present for an aged person than one of the large-print Bibles? Oh, what gladness you might give to many a humble cottager by the present of such a Book! I have seen them with their old thumbed Bibles, trying to read them when they have strained their eyes and I have pitied them. We who are getting old know the luxury of a fine large print! You who have the means should take care that there is not an elderly person who, for lack of large type, is unable to read the Word of God! I hope that few houses are without a copy of the Word of God—but while I hope so, I have often had my hopes very rudely dashed to the ground by discoveries of people who possess no Bible at all!

I also fear that millions who possess copies of the Word of God, never think of reading them! I have been at night, not far from here, in the houses of persons thought to be respectable—and there has been death very near and I have said, "Bring me the Bible, that I may read a passage of Scripture." And they have hunted high and low and none has been found! This was not for lack of means to buy, but for lack of care to have! It is for us, at any rate, to endeavor liberally to scatter copies of the Word of God.

You are doing this when you help the man who spends his life in the work of translation. How can there be Bibles to give away in foreign languages until the Book has been translated into them? The scholar must live while he has the work of translation to do. Subscriptions given to the Bible Society are a handing over of the Scriptures to tribes that sit in darkness—who by this means shall see a great light.

If you cannot give away Bibles, I believe you do a good work when you sell them, or give money to help to produce them cheaply. If you cannot afford a whole Bible, something is done when a portion is given away, or a gospel is left in a cottage. You can never tell what may come of a single portion of the Word of Gold—yes, of a leaf of it! Instead of regretting, as I have heard some do, that Bibles are sometimes sold for waste paper, and goods are done up in them, I am glad that it should be so! I admire the enterprise of Andrew Fuller, and some others long ago, who printed hymns upon papers which were to be used in the sale of cottons and other small wares. They gave those papers to tradesmen that they might do their goods up in them. So long as the truth of God does but travel, it

does not matter how. If you can place the Bible where men may read it, who knows what may result? I knew a friend who, in purchasing his tobacco, found it done up in a passage of the Word of God—and by the perusal of that portion became a converted man! Let us not be afraid of what will become of the Book, for it is quite able to take care of itself—only let us imitate Hilkiah and Shaphan and Josiah, and make it known wherever we have the opportunity! Have you bread to eat while the multitudes are dying of hunger in the streets, and will you eat your morsel alone? Then shame on you! Is the plague mowing down its thousands, and have you medicine that can stop the disease, and do you conceal the recipe and hide the remedy in your own chest? Then shame on you! Do you see millions going down to hell and have you the good news of how they may escape that place of misery and enter into glory? And will you not tell it, or will you not hand it on in the form of the Book? Then shame upon you! How is he a Christian who has no sympathy with the Bible Society? How is he a Christian who, in some shape or other, does not spread this matchless Word?

III. And now, lastly, I want to call your attention to the best thing of the whole and that is, notice THE IMPORTANT INFLUENCE OF THIS BOOK WHEN IT WAS READ.

We find that as soon as the king heard the words of the law, *he tore his clothes*. First of all, he read it. The Book has no value if it is not read. Nowadays, we do not so much need Bibles as Bible-readers. Are any of you in that condition—that you would not be without a Bible in your house—and yet you never read it? Do you treat this Book as a fetish? Do you reverence words which you do not care to read? Is there some kind of witchcraft about paper and binding in a certain form? Do you think it a very pious thing to put a big Bible under your arm and march to a place of worship with it, and yet never read it? Oh, fall not into such folly! It is the reader and the one who understands the word who gets the blessing from it! This Book is like a nut—you must crack the nut by reading and meditation—and so get the kernel, or it will not feed your soul!

Now, the first result of this Book upon the king was that he tore his clothes. How many here present, if they would but read the word and if the Holy Spirit would bless it to them, would have to tear their hearts, if not their garments? You, my friend, if you are not born-again, if you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, are in such a condition that if you knew your danger, the joints of your loins would be loosened and for fearful astonishment you would be ready to fall to the ground! You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, but do not know it! You lie under the wrath of God! The curse of the law is upon you and you do not know it—and all for lack of reading and believing what this Book would tell you—would tell you most assuredly and infallibly! I fear there is never a congregation without a considerable number who have need to read this Book, if for nothing else, in order that they might know their real state. There is a prayer which I often pray and I venture to commend

it to many here. I pray, "Lord, let me always know the worst of my case." I cannot bear the idea of being self-deceived, of fancying that I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing when, in God's sight, I am naked, poor and miserable! Read your Bibles, that you may be honest with yourselves—that you may not deceive by thinking that you are something when you are nothing! That is the first effect of the word. "Oh," you say, "it would make me miserable even to read it." Very likely it would, but by such misery you would come to sure and healthful happiness. By such a disturbance you would come to a lasting and acceptable peace.

After the king had torn his garments, *he then began to inquire after the God who had sent this Book*. Now, notice this. If any of you have never done this, pray that you may read the Book—yes, read the more terrible parts of it as well as the more cheering portions—in such a way that, having read it, you may seek this God who thus speaks to you in loving faithfulness. Endeavor to learn of Him how you may be saved. Labor to know Him *personally*, for it is written, "Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace." It is of no use to be acquainted with the Scriptures if you are not acquainted with God! You may read the Scriptures till you perish unless you see God in the glass of Scripture, for it is to Him that you must come! A personal Christ must have personal dealings with a personal sinner, or else there will be no personal salvation. And the value of the Book lies mainly in this—that it does not let you stop at itself, but it points as with a finger of light to the cross, and with a still small voice it whispers, "There your hope lies. Look there!" The Lord Jesus takes up the cry of the Book and utters that gracious command, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." O that you would look and live! Scatter the Bible, Christian people, in order that it may be like a sharp two-edged sword to kill self-righteousness and that it may also be a finger of love to point sinners to the cross of Christ!

After this happened and Josiah began to understand the Book, *he entered upon a reformation*. I will not say how many things in England need reformation, but certainly we need it in a great many forms—ecclesiastical, doctrinal, social, moral and political. The Bible is the greatest of reformers. You thought, perhaps, I should have applied that term to Luther, or Calvin, or Zwingli—but this is the reformer that reformed Luther! This is the teacher that instructed Calvin! This is the prophet that fired the heart of Zwingli! While this Book is in existence, error will always be in danger of overthrow. An open Bible, and men may quibble and criticize, and invent new doctrines if they please—but this is the Rock on which they will split. As God lives, His truth must live! And all that is of man's imagining and scheming, and that comes not out of this Book shall be broken to pieces! The grass withers, but the word abides. "Whoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." If you seek to have the social fabric purged of the leprosy which now eats into its very walls, scatter this Book! If you want to uplift the fallen and to purify the defiled,

scatter this Book that men may be cleansed by it! If you want to see the church of God made one and her various dividing errors put away, scatter this Book! If you desire to see a blessed unity in the truth, scatter this Book! If you would dispense a perfect blessing, scatter the Bible, for all good lies here! We need no novel teachings to restore the glory of the church—we only need to come back to the purity of Scripture! That great reformation which broke down all the idols in Judah and Israel came of the discovery of this Book! And there remains for us at this day no better means of reform and revival! God send to England this choice mercy so that it may become a Bible-reading nation, a Bible-loving nation, a Bible-obeying nation—and that shall be the best thing that can happen to our native land. God grant it!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *2 CHRONICLES 34:14-33.*

Verse 14, 15. *And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a Book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the Book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the Book to Shaphan.* This was a very remarkable find. Of all the discoveries that they might have made, they could have discovered nothing that would work so much good to all the people as this "Book of the law of the Lord given by Moses."

16-19. *And Shaphan carried the Book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to your servant, they do it. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest has given me a Book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he tore his clothes.* Such was his horror upon discovering how they had all sinned and how many terrible judgments were to be inflicted upon them because of all that long time of sin, that he tore his clothes.

20, 21. *And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the Book that is found.* Oh, that all who read God's Book now would do as young Josiah did! If there is any difficulty in a Book, the short way to get to understand it is to enquire of the Author. And, surely, never is there greater wisdom than having read any of the deep mysteries or solemn threats in this volume and feeling ourselves staggered by them, we enquire of the Lord concerning them! I believe that there is many a puzzling passage in the Bible on purpose that we may be driven to enquire of the Lord about it. If the Book were all so easy of understanding that at the first reading of it, we could comprehend all its

meaning, we might, perhaps, stay away from God—but He has purposely given us many dark sentences and made the sense to be somewhat obscure in order that we may wait upon His enlightening Spirit and so obtain instruction, for the Spirit of God is more useful to us even than the word itself is! Great as the blessing of the Book is, the blessing of the living Spirit is still greater and anything is good that drives us to Him. That which had influenced the mind of Josiah was the terror of the Book.

21-28. *For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the Word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this Book. And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe, (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college), and they spoke to her to that effect. And she answered them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Tell you the man that sent you to me, Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the Book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall you say unto him, Thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which you have heard, because your heart was tender, and you did humble yourself before God, when you heard His Words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbled yourself before Me, and did tear your clothes, and weep before Me, I have even heard you, also, says the LORD, Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.* When God selects an instrument for His own service, how well He tunes it for the use to which it is to be put! Here is a woman, a married woman, and she is selected to be the Lord's prophetess to the king—but never has any man spoken more bravely than she did. Her opening words show a holy courage which is lifted above all fear of men—"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Tell you the man that sent you to me," for before God kings are only men and though Huldah was only a subject of Josiah, see with what real dignity God's ordination had invested her. Josiah was not to succeed in the reformation of Israel. He was true and sincere, but the people were steeped in hypocrisy, formality and idolatry—and they did not go with the king in all his root and branch reforms. They still clung in their hearts to their idols and, therefore, they must be destroyed and the nation must be carried away captive. It was, however, a very singular promise that God gave to Josiah—"I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace." Yet he was mortally wounded in battle, so how could that promise be fulfilled? You know how it could be! However we may die—if sword or plague or fire consume the

saints among the rest of mankind—their very deaths and graves are blessed! There was no fighting about Josiah's grave—he was buried in peace. Pharaoh-Necho had killed him, but he did not destroy the land—and Josiah was allowed to be buried amid the great lamentations of a people who only began fully to appreciate him when he was taken away from them!

29, 30. *Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the Book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.* That was a grand Bible-reading, with a king for reader and all his princes and all his people gathered to listen to the Word of God! What could he have said better, had he been the greatest of orators? To read out of this blessed Book must surely be to the edification of the hearers.

31-33. *And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the Covenant which are written in this Book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their father.*

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GRACE ABOUNDING
NO. 3304

A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 15, 1866,

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."
Romans 5:20.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole verse are #37, Volume 1—LAW AND GRACE and #2012, Volume 34—GRACE ABOUNDING OVER ABOUNDING SIN—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THERE has been a long battle in this world between man's sin and God's grace. If it had been a fight between man's sin and God's justice, it would soon have come to an end. Picture to yourself the flames of hell and see there what God's justice can do when it comes into conflict with human guilt. When God goes forth to war against the ungodly, His might is indeed terrible. Divine justice makes short work of sin—it treads it under foot and stamps it out—even as men do with sparks of fire, for God hates sin with a perfect hatred. And when His anger is aroused against it, He tears it in pieces as the lion tears his prey in his fury. But, happily for us, the conflict with which we are just now concerned is not that between justice and sin but that between grace and sin! God's milder attribute of mercy has entered the field and in our text Paul tells us the result of the battle. It looked for a time as if sin would gain the victory, for it abounded more and more, but at the last the banner of grace waved triumphantly over the battlefield, for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

I. Without any further preface I am going to give you several illustrations of the truth of our text, beginning with those we find in the chapter itself. Paul has been writing concerning the principle of representation—THE FEDERAL HEADSHIP, FIRST OF ADAM AND THEN OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. He has been telling us about our fall in the first man and our salvation in the second man, the Lord from heaven. He has been describing our ruin under our first federal head and our redemption by our second covenant head, the Lord Jesus Christ—and in both cases, our text is clearly illustrated. It does seem at first sight as if the setting up of Adam as the representative man had been the means of making sin to abound because as soon as sin overcame Adam, it overcame the whole race of mankind! It appears as if it would have been better to have put every man on probation on his own account and

to have let him stand or fall according to his own good or ill behavior. It seems as if it must have been a comparatively easy victory for sin to overthrow the whole race by a single blow. Certainly, sin did gain a great victory in the Garden of Eden and therein it abounded. But Paul shows that it was by this very principle of representation that "grace did much more abound," for it is through the death of one, even Jesus Christ, our Lord, that all believers live! It is the righteousness of this one that a multitude whom no man can number shall attain unto everlasting life!

Now it appears to me that if the other system had been adopted, the plan of each one standing or falling by himself, there would have been no hope of salvation for any one of the whole race of mankind! We believe that the angels did so stand or fall, each on his own account. Satan was not the federal head of all the angels and consequently, when he fell, they did not all fall, but a considerable number of them did—and no hope of their restoration to the favor of God is given, but we are told that, "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." I think it is more than probable that, had you and I been left to stand or fall on our own account, we would all have fallen—and then we would have fallen to rise no more. But now, as we fell in the person of one representative, it has become possible for us to rise through another representative—and as many of us as have believed in Jesus, have risen from the fall of Adam—and are delivered from the death which was the consequence of Adam's sin and are made alive in Christ Jesus by a new spiritual life in virtue of our union with our risen Lord! By the federal headship of Adam, sin did indeed abound—the floodgates were pulled up and torrents of iniquity inundated the whole human race! But by the federal headship of Christ, divine grace does much more abound, so that all who believe in Him shall be eternally saved! I think this was the meaning of the apostle when he wrote the words of our text. And this is one illustration of the general truth of God that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

II. A second illustration of this truth of God can be found in the first part of the verse from which our text is taken. "The law entered, that the offense might abound." Through no fault in itself, but through our depravity, THE LAW INCREASES THE GRAVITY OF OUR OFFENSES.

You know that if you give your child no commands, he cannot disobey you. But the moment you give a command, the natural inclination of the child to disobedience turns the command into an occasion for sin. The more commands God gives, the more possible it is for man to sin. When water is cast upon lime there follows great heat and smoke. Yet the water was not hot. Put your lips to it and you will find that it is a sweet and cooling draught, but it produced heat when mixed with the lime because of the inherent heat in the lime. So, when God's commandment is cast upon a man and he kicks against it, the fault is not in the

commandment, but in the man's *wicked heart* which rebels against it. Paul says, "I had not known sin, but by the law." He would have been just as truly a sinner in himself, but the sinfulness would not have come out if it had not been for the law's prohibitions and restrictions against which he rebelled. The law of God is something like the medicine which a doctor gives to a patient who has some internal disease, but the medicine throws it out upon the skin—yet it is far better that it should be thus thrown out than that it should lie hidden in the system and lead to the patient's death. The law acts like this, especially upon those who are under conviction—it throws out the sin that is within them and lets them see it in its true character. The law comes like a policeman with a search warrant, and says, "There is a criminal concealed here, and I have come to discover him." Perhaps you say, "There is no criminal here, I never harbor thieves or other bad characters." But the officer produces his warrant and searches you through and through and at last you have to admit that he is right even though you did not suspect the true state of affairs.

It seems a very dreadful thing that the effect of the law should be to make the sinner worse than he was before—"the law entered that the offense might abound." But that is just where our text comes in—"where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The more necessary the law's exposure of sin is, the more glorious is the grace that cleanses from the sin! The law, like a candle, shows me my blackness, but that same revelation, of which the law is only a part, also shows me the precious blood of Jesus which takes all my blackness away and makes me whiter than snow! As I hear the thunders of Sinai and am full of terror as the lightning sets the sky ablaze, I turn to the dear, patient Lamb of God, and as I see Him suffering for me, I say to Him, "Oh, what wondrous grace it must have been by which You did deliver me from all this terrible wrath! Blessed Lamb of God, how much I owe to You, for You have hushed the law's loud thunder and given my soul a quiet and safe hiding place!" The work of the law upon the enlightened conscience is a very healthy operation—it is like a sharp needle that goes through the soul, but it draws the golden thread of mercy after it—or like the sharp plow which breaks up the ground and prepares it for the seed which in due time shall bring forth the harvest to God's praise and glory! Whenever the entrance of the law makes the offense to abound, may God grant us grace to receive the gospel so that grace shall much more abound!

III. Now follow me in thought while I conduct you to a spot where we shall find a third illustration of the truth of our text, that is, THIS PLACE CALLED CALVARY. Surely that is the spot where sin did most abound, yet where grace abounded even more!

Look in at the council chamber of the Sanhedrim and hear them charge the Son at God with blasphemy, and say if sin did not abound

there! See Him hurried away to Pilate's hall and to Herod's judgment seat, "despised and rejected of men." Behold how they set Him at nothing and mocked Him—how they plucked out His hair, defiled His blessed visage with their accursed spit, crowned Him with thorns and assailed Him with insult upon insult and cruelty upon cruelty—and then say if sin did not, indeed, abound there! See Him toiling painfully through the crowded streets, scoffed at by the ribald multitude, but mourned by the daughters of Jerusalem. Watch Him as at last He ascends the hill of doom. See Him hanging on the cross in indescribable agony while the heartless spectators jeer and scoff and make a jest even of His dying cries, and then say if sin did not abound there! What foaming billows of iniquity rolled up around that accursed tree, swelling and rising until they completely immersed the Lord of life and glory in their horrible depths! Yes, verily sin abounded there—surely it was the darkest day in human history! Wicked men had killed kings before, but that day they killed the King of kings! They had been regicides before, but now they became deicides! They killed the Son of God and cast Him out of the vineyard, saying, "This is the heir, and now that we have killed Him, the inheritance shall be ours." Sin abounded so much that it put out the light of the sun! So heavy was it that it cracked the solid earth and tore the rocks asunder and caused graves to open, while the great veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom!

Yet "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Oh, for an angel's tongue to tell out the wondrous mystery! My poor lips are quite unequal to this tremendous task—it is vain for me to attempt to describe the grace that so gloriously abounded in our Lord upon the cross—the grace that flashed benignantly from those languid eyes! The grace that fell in cleansing drops from those opened veins! The grace that poured in torrents from that pierced side! The grace that heaved tossed and struggled convulsively in those tortured limbs! The grace that fought and wrestled and, at last, conquered in that anguished spirit—the grace that even then began interceding for the transgressors as Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—the grace that cried with a mighty voice, "It is finished," before the Savior bowed His head and gave up the ghost; the grace that ascended up on high, leading captivity captive and giving gifts unto men. Of this grace I will not dare to speak further than to say—may it be your happy lot to sail upon that sea of grace, for fathom it you never can! May you drink from that fountain of divine grace, for you shall never be able to drink it dry! May God give you the bliss of knowing in your own experience how much grace abounds through the atoning sacrifice of Christ upon the cross!

Oh, that I had the tears of Baxter, and that my soul were all aglow as the soul of Whitefield used to be, while I plead my Master's cause! O my hearers, nothing so clearly shows the terrible depravity of human nature as this—that man has become so utterly wicked and debased as to

believe that Christ is not still "mighty to save"! What a vile wretch man must be and what a base thing human nature must be when any can deliberately doubt the power of Christ to save the lost! The inspired declaration is that "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Yet this wicked heart of ours finds it impossible to believe this until the Holy Spirit comes and with supernatural energy enlightens the understanding, sways the will, controls the judgment and brings the soul to rest in Jesus Christ! Oh, how guilty we must be that we will not believe that what God says it true, that we will not believe though millions of witnesses before the throne of God attest the truth of God that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

IV. Thus we have had three illustrations of the truth of our text. And we may find a fourth IN MAN'S NATURE, for there, also, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Look at Adam in the Garden of Eden, a noble being, supreme among all the creatures around him. The lion crouches at his feet, the leopard sports about him, the dove nestles in his bosom and all birds and beasts come at his call and yield obedience to his command. But do you see that serpent coiled around a tree? That is the brute embodiment of sin and it has come there to do incalculable mischief! Wait a little while and you may see Adam and Eve driven out of the garden where they were once so happy—for the sin to which they so readily yielded has brought a heavy curse upon them and upon all their descendants. As you read the stern sentences pronounced upon each of them by the lips of Jehovah, Himself, you realize that in their case sin has indeed abounded! Then remembering what I have already said to you about the principle of representation, you will realize that Adam's fall involved the fall of every one of us! What Mark Anthony is supposed to have said concerning the death of Julius Caesar might well be said with regard to the effect of Adam's fall upon us—

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down."

If you want to see how sin has abounded, go down the street and look upon some of those who have been drinking what has been truly called "liquid damnation." I need not describe the sight, for all of us are, alas, more or less familiar with it. Nor need I picture other fallen creatures in whom sin is to be seen in some of its most repulsive aspects. We will not think of them in the self-righteous spirit of the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men, but we will sorrowfully confess that what they now are, any of us might have been had providence and grace not prevented it!

If you want to see further what ruin sin has worked, I would take you to the graveyard. We will not ask the sexton to open the graves—the sight and smell would be more than we could endure—but he could tell us

some strange tales of the remains of the noble being whom God made to have dominion over all the works of His hands. This is what he has come to now—an empty skull and a few dry bones! This is what sin has brought him down to—to be food for worms!

But I will not linger over that dark part of the subject. Think how grace has much more abounded even where sin did most abound. Grace comes in and finds man under sentence of death—hopeless and polluted and full of everything that is obnoxious in God's sight! What does grace do in such a case at that? I answer by pointing you to that wondrous vision that John had in Patmos when he saw, "One like unto the Son of man…His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." Who is this for whom all heaven rings with hallelujahs, while hell trembles at His word, and millions upon earth own allegiance to Him? Who is this? Why, 'tis the man, Christ Jesus, who once slept as a helpless babe in His mother's arms, who afterwards toiled at the carpenter's bench at Nazareth and who breathed out His earthly life amid the untold agonies of Calvary—but who is now exalted at His Father's right hand, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." "Ah," you say, "that is all true concerning *Him*, but we are not up there with Him." But faith says that we are if we are truly trusting in Jesus, 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: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Now you see how gloriously true our text is! Sin did us untold damage, but grace has given us more than sin ever took away! Sin robbed us of silver, but grace has given us gold! Sin slew this body of flesh, but grace has given us a spiritual body which shall live forever! Sin threw us down among the masses of this fallen race, but grace has lifted us up and set us among the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus! Yes, 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." Verily, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

V. There is a further illustration of the truth of our text in some WHO ARE NOW PRESENT WITH US.

There are some now in this house in whom sin abounded in certain special ways at which I shall only just hint. They were drunks, swearers,

unchaste. They dishonored their father and mother, they sinned against light and knowledge, they disregarded God's Word, they stifled the rebukes of conscience. In brief, "sin abounded" in them. But now, through grace, a great change has come over them and they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus! And among us all there are none who love Christ more than they do—and none who serve Him more zealously than they do! You know that it is very often the case that those who have been the greatest sinners became the greatest saints. Those who were the devil's corporals and sergeants, no—his captains and generals—when they are truly converted, become the boldest and bravest soldiers of the cross! It is hardly necessary to remind you of John Bunyan, once a very notable sinner, who became a very prince in our Israel and who felt that, in his case, grace had indeed abounded to the chief of sinners! Many of us ought, indeed, to love much, as I trust we do, because we have been forgiven much. Divine mercy has covered and blotted out a vast mass of sin that we had committed and now, remembering with humility and shame all our past offenses, we pray that we may prove in all our future lives what holy and useful men and women God's grace can make of us. Surely, dear friends, you will not serve God worse than you served the devil! When you had a bad master, you were a good servant to him—but now that you have a good Master, the best Master you can ever have—do not be a bad servant to Him! May the Lord grant that great grace may abound in all who have been great sinners!

But as there are exceptional cases, I will come to something that will include us all. Kindly turn to the little book that records your life history written out upon the pages of memory. As you look over those pages, you who have known the Lord for some years, what do you think of yourselves? The men who think much of themselves must surely be those who do not think at all! But those who really do think must see very much in their past lives which causes them to blush. Looking back upon the years since we first came to Christ, what a multitude of sins we have committed! If our own children had treated us as badly as we have treated our heavenly Father, what would we have done with them? What a marvel of patience our heavenly Father has been in His dealings with us! I look at my pulpit work and I have to confess that sin has abounded there. I look at my private life and I have to acknowledge that sin has abounded there. As you look at your Sunday school class, my brothers and sisters, I think that you, too, must admit that sin has abounded there. As a husband, as a wife, as a child, as a master, as a servant, as a tradesman, as a statesman—whatever may be your position in society, do you not have to say with sorrow that sin has abounded there? But, dear friends, has not grace also abounded? Yes, that it has, for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Do not ever got into such a

state of heart as to groan over yourselves so that you cannot praise the Lord for His abounding grace! Oh, do praise Him, do bless Him, for He well deserves to be praised! Sin abounds, so be humble. But grace much more abounds, therefore be thankful! Sin abounds, so be watchful. But grace does much more abound, therefore be confident that God will give you the victory through Him who has loved you!

VI. Now lastly, IN THIS WORLD SIN ABOUNDS ON A VERY LARGE SCALE.

Stand on your watchtower, Christian, and look over the world as far as you can. A great proportion of it is still shrouded in the dense darkness of heathenism and uncounted millions are bowing down before blocks of wood and stone. Think, too, of the vast multitudes who put their trust in the false Prophet, Mohammad, and are quite content with the parody of Christianity that they find in the Koran. Then remember with sorrow how large a proportion of those who are called Christians are simply worshipers of Mary instead of believers in Jesus, or who bow down before images, icons, relics, crosses, and I know not what! If we turn to Protestant Christianity, what a vast mass of hypocrisy, formality, inconsistency and everything else that is evil is mixed with that which is genuine and true! All over the world sin abounds. See how many lands are still cursed by war. What infamies are perpetuated in all our great cities! Yes, and in many of our little country villages, too! God must have been amazingly patient to have borne so long with our wicked race. As the flood in Noah's day was universal, so does sin cover the earth today—it prevails over the tops of the mountains, it abounds in all the valleys and plains.

This prospect is very alarming and for missionaries it would be very depressing if they did not believe that where sin abounds, grace shall much more abound. But the day is coming oh, hasten, you wheels of time, and bring the happy hour!—when suddenly the pedestal upon which any false god is seated shall shake and totter to its fall! When the crescent of Mohammad shall wane forever! When the harlot of the seven hills shall cease to corrupt the earth with her fornication and when the beast, and the false prophet, and the devil and all his hosts shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night forever and ever. Yes, the day is coming—God speed it!—when the people on every island and of every continent shall hear the joyful sound of the gospel of God's grace! The day is coming when Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God, when India's many millions and the far-off Chinamen and Japanese and other children of the East shall no longer sound the praises of any false god, but shall delight in confessing that Jesus Christ, the son of David, is also the Son of God, King of kings, and Lord of lords, and their own and only Savior! The little spring that burst up like a rippling rivulet from the foot of Calvary's cross has swollen into a mighty river even now—its tides are increasing, its floods are swelling,

its depth is growing and the day is coming when, like a mighty ocean, it shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the deep! And floating across that sea of glory shall be heard the millennial anthem, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"

Then, at the last, so many of us as have believed in Jesus shall be gathered with Him in that great city, the New Jerusalem, whose twelve gates are twelve pearls, whose walls are jasper, and whose street is of "pure gold, as it were transparent glass"—that city of which John says, "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Well may we sing—

"Jerusalem! My happy home!
Name ever dear to me—
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?
Oh when, you city of my God,
Shall I your courts ascend,
Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?"

Ah, well, in due time we shall get there and then, when looking down from our serene abode, we shall be able to read the whole drama of human history, from the creation to the fall of Adam, from the fall to the cross of Christ, and then to the final consummation of all things—this will be the summary of it all, at least as far as we are concerned—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" If it should be my happy privilege up there, upon some sunny mount, to descant upon this theme in more flaming words than I can use tonight, and of you who are of a kindred spirit with me will help to tell the story to the principalities and power in heavenly places, and the harpers standing on the sea of glass will strike their harps afresh and sing again the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb—their songs will be in harmony with our theme tonight—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." So let us go forth to our various occupations on the morrow believing that, though sin abounds, grace shall yet more abound! Let us live so that all may see how grace abounds in us and let us help to spread the wondrous story of what this grace has done for us, that others may seek that grace for themselves—that grace which abounds to the chief of sinners, that grace which is the portion of all who believe in Jesus, that grace which shall in God's good time be crowned with glory, that "grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved!" Oh, that all here might share in that grace! God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5:1-11.

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith*—But why, "therefore"? Because of the verse preceding it—"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Christ died to atone for our sins, Christ rose again to secure our justification, "Therefore being justified by faith"—*We have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ.* [See Sermon #1456, Volume 25—PEACE—A FACT AND A FEELING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We have peace, we know that we have. We enjoy it. It is not a thing of the future. We have peace, a deep calm like that which came to the disciples when Christ hushed the winds and waves to sleep. "We have peace with God." His peace has entered into us, we possess it now, but it is all "through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is all war apart from Him, but all peace through Him. We poor sinners, being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

2. *By whom also we have access by faith*—That is to say, we come near to God. We have the *entry* of the King's palace—"we have access by faith"—

2. *Into this grace wherein we stand.* With firm foot and confident heart, we stand in God's presence. Happy people!

2. *And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* What a window hope is! It looks toward heaven—we have only to look out that way and then we can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

3. *And not only so, but we glory*—We hope for glory—"the glory of God," and we already, "glory." But in what do we glory? "We glory"—

3. *In tribulations also*—That is the blackest thing a Christian has—his tribulations. So if we can glory in *them*, surely we can glory in anything! "We glory in tribulations also"—

3. *Knowing that tribulation works patience.* A man cannot prove that he has patience if he has never been tried. Christian patience is not a weed—it is a cultivated plant. We only get patience through our trials.

4. *And patience, experience; and experience, hope.* You cannot make an experienced Christian without trouble. You cannot make an old sailor on shore, nor make a good soldier without fighting. Here is that window of hope, again. Sanding at the back of our experience, we look out the window and what God has done for us is a token of what God *will* do for us!

5. *And hope makes us not ashamed.* Peace gives us courage, hope takes the blush out of the cheek when we confess Christ, for we remember the glory that is to be revealed in Him and in us, so how can shame come in?

5. *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* [See Sermons #829, Volume 14—THE PERFUMING OF THE

HEART and #1904, Volume 32—THE PERSONAL PENTECOST AND THE GLORIOUS HOPE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God's love is like sweet perfume in an alabaster box—the Holy Spirit breaks that box, pours out the love of God into our souls and the perfume fills our entire nature!

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* [See Sermons #1191, Volume 20—FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE? and #1345, Volume 23—FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT?—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When we had no power to do anything that was good, when we were weak and hopeless, then Christ died for us! This is a wonderful gospel expression which ought to bring comfort to those here who have no pretense of godliness, "Christ died for the ungodly."

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.* However upright and just a man may be, nobody thinks of dying for him.

7. *Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.* That is to say, for a generous, kind, noble-hearted man, some might dare to die.

8. *But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* [See Sermon #104, Volume 2—LOVE'S COMMENDATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We were neither righteous nor yet good, yet Christ died for us. "Oh," said a little boy once to his mother, "I do not think so much of Christ dying for men. I think I would be willing to die if I could save a hundred men by dying." But his mother said," Suppose it was a hundred mosquitoes—would you die for them?" "Oh, no!" he said, "I would let the whole lot of them die." Well, we were much less in comparison with Christ than mosquitoes are in relation to men, yet He died for us—good-for-nothing creatures that we are! Well does one say, "God shows part of His love to us in many different ways, but He shows the whole of His love in giving Christ to die for us." Here you see His heart laid bare, the very heart of God laid open for the inspection of every believing soul! To die for saints would be great love, but to die for sinners, while they are yet sinners, and regarding them as sinners—this is love with emphasis—the very highest commendation that even divine love can have!

9. *Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* See, it is a less thing for God to preserve us when we are justified than it is for Him to justify us while we are yet sinners! The final perseverance of the saints may well be argued from their conversion—their entrance into Glory is guaranteed by the ransom price that Christ has paid for their redemption. He died to save sinners, so how is it possible that He should let saints perish? Oh no, that can never be! "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

10. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* [See Sermon #2587, Volume —"MUCH MORE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Notice that while we were His enemies, He blessed us. So now that we are reconciled to Him, will He not still bless us? If He reconciled us to Him by the death of His son, will He not save us by His life, now that we are reconciled to Him? Does He make us His friends, intending afterwards to destroy us? Perish such a thought! This verse is like a trident, it is a three-pronged argument for our eternal safety! I will read it again. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

11. *And not only so*—Surely we have got high enough when we have reached an absolute certainty of our eternal salvation! Yet we are to go still higher! "And not only so"—

11. *But we also joy in God*—Even now we joy in God, "although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olives shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls," yet do "we joy in God"—

11. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ*—Every blessing comes to us through Him! How Paul delights to harp upon that string! He says continually, "through our Lord Jesus Christ"—

11. *By whom we have now received the atonement.* [See Sermons #1045, Volume 18—JOY IN A RECONCILED GOD and #2550, Volume 44—JOY IN GOD—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Through our Lord Jesus Christ we are at one with God! We are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. All our sin is forever put away. We have received the atonement and we rejoice in the God of our salvation. Glory be to His holy name forever and ever!

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A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING
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A SERMON
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"Jesus said unto them, Have you understood all these things?"
Matthew 13:51.

THIS is a question which might often be asked of us when we have been reading the Scriptures, when we have been attending upon the public means of grace, or when we have been partaking of the Lord's Supper—"Have you understood all these things?" It were well for someone to run up to us, as Philip did to the eunuch, who on his return from Jerusalem was reading in his chariot, and say to us as Philip did to him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Or the question might be put to us, "Do you understand what you hear? Do you understand even what you say?" I fear there are hundreds of religionists in this country who never think of understanding that which they attend to under the name of religion. They pass through the habitual forms, listening to and it may be, joining in the liturgy, till at length the service is finished, the day is over and the thing is done! The language of devotion has thus slipped through the lips without having leaped from the heart. Among ourselves, I fear there may be many who are content with listening to the sound of gracious words, who never pierce through the shell of the words into the kernel of the meaning—satisfied with the external, which is nothing—they miss the internal, which is everything!

"Do you understand these things?" then, is a question which may be asked and should be asked often of every worshipper, for it is only so far as we enter into religious worship, *understanding* what we are doing, and casting our hearts into it, that it can be at all acceptable to God. The Lord's prayer is quite as good said backwards as forwards if you do not say it from the heart. There is quite as much likelihood of a benediction in a number of words thrown out pell-mell, without any kind of connection, as there would be in the best-arranged sermon, if there is not an attentive ear and an understanding heart. Words that touch not the understanding glide over us as oil over a slab of marble, without effect. Men may perish with the gospel in their houses! They often do perish with the gospel ringing in their ears, for until they understand its importance, it cannot become a soul-saving word to them!

Nor can it become a sanctifying word to any except as far as they receive it into the understanding. If we were to hear the gospel in Latin, after a fashion never so orthodox, one might be no more edified by it than

by listening to so much blasphemy, because it is not the thing heard, but the thing understood and received into the heart which blesses the soul. Do let me exhort all of you who are in the habit of going up to the house of God, never to be content unless you feel that you have got a hold upon the truth of God that is being taught. O you Christian people, I beseech you not to be satisfied with merely the terms of theology without getting into the pith and marrow of them! To realize in your own soul, by experience, the meaning of a doctrine is the only way of knowing it! Those men never forget a truth who have had it burned into them as with a hot iron, by feeling the bitterness of their soul for need of it and the preciousness of that truth to their soul when they receive it. He who does not receive the truth of God in the very power and force of it has but a name to live while he is dead.

I think these observations are warranted from the fact that though our Lord preached the mystery of the kingdom of heaven in the plainest parables to the listening crowd, the very plainness of His speech, in using familiar metaphors to make spiritual truths common, became, through the hardness of their hearts, embarrassing to them—they stumbled at the mere outward figure, but never learned the inward meaning! It was to His own chosen twelve, His favored and elect ones; He expanded the riddles when He took them aside and then afterwards inquired of them lest they should have missed the meaning of His exposition, "Have you understood all these things?" The outward testimony of the gospel may be addressed to the multitude, but the *understanding* of it is conveyed with transparent clearness to His own people. To hear it is a privilege, but such a privilege as may end without the salvation of your soul and with the aggravation of your doom! But to understand it is the privilege which leads to eternal life—and happy are they who thus find the way to God's right hand.

I. Let us first consider this searching question**—"**Have you understood all these things?"—as spoken to those who can humbly, but yet confidently, say, "YES, WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THESE THINGS."

I believe there are many of us here who, although we would not like to boast of what we know and could but confess our ignorance before God, yet dare not be so false to our own experience as to deny that we do know the things which make for our eternal peace. We can say with the man whose eyes were opened, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." We understand at least as much as this—that we are sinners, lost and ruined in ourselves, and that in Jesus all our help is found. We understand that we were cast away in the first Adam, and that our rescue is found in the second Adam, to whom we look and to whom we are now united by a union that can never be broken. We understand this, also, that upon His advent into this world, upon His holy life, His blessed death, His resurrection, His ascension and the power which He now possesses at the right hand of the Father—upon Him in all these

respects we rest, and rest entirely! If we have not learned enough to understand all mysteries and open up all prophesies, yet we do know that Christ is precious to our soul, that He is the appointed Savior, that He is *our* Savior and that we are saved through Him. Yes, blessed be His name, we can say that we have understood, in our measure, all these things—not as we shall understand them, not as we shall know them, by-and-by, when clouds and darkness shall all have disappeared and we shall be in the clear light of the throne of God—but we have understood these things sufficiently to be led to cast ourselves on Jesus and to be affected in our daily life and conversation by the truths which Jesus Christ has taught us!

If we have thus understood all these things, what then? *Let us be thankful to God with all our hearts that we can say as much as this*, for this understanding of divine truth is not due to any natural intelligence that we possess! We were by nature blind as bats to the things of divine truth. Neither is it by searching that we have found out God, for it was by His searching after us rather than by our searching after Him. If we have received an understanding to know Him and the height and depth of His precious love, truly we have received it as a free grace gift from the hand of our Lord! Had He withheld it, we would never had found the Savior! But it is because He, out of His own good pleasure, irrespective of anything in us, was pleased to touch our eyes with eye-salve that we should see, and to bring us out of darkness into His marvelous light! It was because of His rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace that we have been made what we are! Come, then, let us bless the name of God! Do we feel distressed with remaining sin? Yet let each one of us remember, "By the grace of God I am what am." If I have but little grace, let me be thankful for that little—I might have had none at all. And if I am struggling with corruption, let me be thankful that I have grace to struggle with it, for time was when I would have enjoyed my corruptions instead of lamenting and deploring them! Whatever trial may depress my spirit, let me not rob my God of a song, but if, indeed, He has made me to understand the things which save my soul, let me praise Him and extol Him for His amazing grace towards such an undeserving one—the least deserving of all His family!

Further, brothers and sisters, if you have been led to understand these things, *ought not this to encourage you to seek to understand more?* The young beginner in grace should feel that it will not be impossible for him to grow to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus because grace has quickened him and made him a babe. That is the greatest thing—to be made alive at all! When grace has gone so far as to give me life and put me in the family of God, I need not fear but what grace will nurture that life and ultimately bring me to perfection! If I find myself growing in God's garden, though I am the tiniest plant in all the bed, yet it is such a mercy to be in the garden at all—I who was a wild rank weed out in the

wilderness before—that I will not doubt but what He will water me when I need it and that He will tend and care for me till I shall come to perfection. Never think, dear Christian friend, that you cannot master the gospel doctrine! Why, you have learned that Christ is yours—that is the secret of the Lord! All other doctrines after this are learnable and comparatively easy. Give yourself up to the teaching of the divine Spirit. Wait upon Him in believing prayer and He that has led you through the veil will not keep back the keys of any of the chambers of the temple that shall be profitable for you to enter! Having understood so much, it behooves you to hope to understand more—and as an intelligent believer in Christ, it becomes you to seek to understand more!

And surely if you have understood all these things, my dear Christian friend, you should not be backward to tell them to others! We are not sent in the divine school to be scholars merely for ourselves. We are to be in this world as pupil-teachers—pupils always, but teachers, too; pupils learning constantly at the Master's feet, and at the same time, teachers instructing others in the truths of God we know. Let it never be supposed that the office of teaching in the Christian church can exclusively belong to one man, or to one class of men! It belongs to every Christian man, and to every Christian woman, too! You cannot teach beyond what you have been taught of God, and it is in proportion as you are taught of God that your teaching takes a wider sphere. But you must teach what you know! You will seldom learn much to your own profit unless you are diligent in imparting knowledge and edifying one another, for it is in the distribution to the rest of the brotherhood of the good things which God has given you that you shall enjoy the blessing of the Lord which makes rich! If you will not communicate to the backsliding, to the desponding and to the feeble, the comforts which God gives you, you have cause to fear that in your time of trouble you may have those comforts withheld which you once stifled in your own breast, not knowing how to use them for the church's benefit! Never keep a truth of God to yourself, my brother! Have you found honey? There are other mouths that would gladly know its flavor and there is enough in that Jonathan's forest of the Scripture for all the hosts of Israel to eat! They cannot exhaust it! Thus would I have you tell others what a dear Savior you have found; let other candles be lit from your candle, and your candle shall burn none the less brightly! But rather in this it may be said that to enrich yourselves in all knowledge, you must enrich others with the knowledge that you have!

"Have you understood all these things?" There I will leave you, dear people of God. May your hearts glow and your thoughts be stirred in pondering this question of the text when you are alone!

II. But SOME WHO THINK THEY UNDERSTAND ALL THESE THINGS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM.

In all our congregations we have many who would say, as quickly as the question was heard, "Do you understand all these things?" "Indeed I

do! I have been a hearer these 30 years. I tell you, sir, I know the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism! A man is not going to deceive me—as soon as I hear a sermon, I can tell at once whether it is sound or unsound." Well then, dear friend, I am glad to hear that you have so much knowledge. But I want to ask you—Is your life in accordance with what you know? Knowing the right from the wrong so well, is your life conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, or are you living for the world as if you did not know anything about these things? Because, let me say to you, dear friends, it is a very, very solemn thing to have a sort of understanding of divine truth, but not to be affected by it so as to repent of sin, so as to live unto God, so as to seek after holiness! All this religion of yours will be a painted pageantry for you to go to hell in—it will be nothing better than a millstone tied about your neck to sink you deeper and deeper! It were better, very likely, for you that you never had known the way of salvation at all than that having known it, you should have done despite to it and have lived in opposition to its spirit and its precepts! You had better have been born in the interior of Africa and never have listened to the missionary telling of the crucified one, than to have been born in London and fostered under an orthodox ministry, if you mislead your soul with a name to live while you are dead, boasting about your knowledge, but never proving your holiness! Talking about faith, but having a faith that is lifeless, producing no fruits, resulting in no works answerable to your profession! I charge you, knowing professor, to remember your solemn responsibility! I beseech you, as you love your own soul, not to make a downy bed out of your knowledge, for it shall be a thorn in your dying pillow! I charge you not to make hell hotter to yourself than it need be by taking all this knowledge in and panting after more, while you forget that "to obey is better than sacrifice," to trust is better than to boast, to love is better than to rival and to serve out of simple affection is better than to chatter, to discuss, to criticize and to censure!

It were well if everyone who understands the things of the gospel, or who think he does, would constantly examine himself about this business, especially those of us who are ministers. It is a very easy thing for us to be self-deceived—probably easier for us than for any other people because, having a sacred office for a secular vocation, we handle these things every day. Assuming it to be our duty to admonish others, we are prone to resent admonition ourselves. If we have not been converted, it is the least likely thing in the entire world that we ever will be. I have made the remark myself, and I have heard it verified by others, that for pew-openers to be converted is a thing probably unheard of. They are busy here and there, till they are known to forget their own obligation to worship! Unless they are converted before they take that office—concerning which I think we should make strict inquiry—in all likelihood they never will be because they are so concerned about the

pews, and about putting people in them, and I know not what besides, that it seems impossible for them to give their ears to hear, or their conscience to feel, or that the voice of truth should ever reach them. Next to them comes the preacher who is always dealing with the shell of truth. When he sits down to read the Bible, he cannot help thinking whether this or that text would make a sermon. When he is praying, often the temptation is to glide into a kind of ministerial prayer—not the prayer of a poor sinner coming near to God!

Perhaps, after all, the least likely person to get a blessing is the knowing professor! I tell you that the drunk and the harlot are often rescued when such professors are not even reached with the thrilling message! The sermon which is made useful to a man who never heard the gospel before is of no use to the hard-headed critic, because he knows too much to get any good out of it! Oh, there are some people you cannot preach to aright. If the Holy Spirit Himself were to speak, they would accuse Him of being heterodox! If an angel from heaven were to deliver the truth of God fresh from the mouth of God, he would not satisfy them. They are always on the look-out for a word amiss. They are always seeking, if they can, to pick holes, detect flaws and find fault—this is their trade, their craft, the thing at which they are expert—to make the message of mercy a kind of target into which they may shoot their arrows! These men seldom, I might almost say, never, get a blessing. I do not see how they can. The infinite mercy of God can do what it will, but seldom does God's sovereignty light on these shallow professors who are eaten up with conceit. Oh, for a solemn searching, a sincere self-examination of our hearts! Perhaps we may find that our heads are growing and our hearts are shriveling. Some children die early because they get the rickets. Their heads are too big, poor things, and there are many professors with big heads and small hearts. Alas, they have not got the life of God in them at all! God save us from this temptation!

III. Are there not in every congregation SOME WHO WOULD HARDLY KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION—"Have you understood all these things?"

They do understand them, yet they do not. They do up to a point theoretically comprehend them, but spiritually and experimentally, they discern them not. Fearing lest there might be in the present assembly such as really do not understand the very first principles of the truth of God, I would pointedly and earnestly address myself to their particular case. My dear friend, it would be a very dreadful thing for your soul to be lost for lack of knowledge and to perish for lack of understanding! Solomon says that for the soul to be without knowledge is not good. You tell me that you understand the gospel. I reply to you, then why do you not accept it? You know you are lost, you tell me. You know that Jesus Christ is set forth as the only Savior and you know that a simple trust in

Him will save you. How is it you can continue peaceful and happy while you are not a partaker of the grace of God? How is it you can remain satisfied when knowing there is but one way of salvation, you have not yet entered upon it, when, acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, and to be the only way of salvation, you have lived up till now a despiser or a neglecter of Him? I would gladly hope—for it would be the only excuse I could offer for you—that perhaps, after all, you really do *not* understand these things which you think you do. Let me remind you now—you are an unsaved sinner, you are lost, your sin has condemned you, you fell in Adam, you have sinned personally and actually and you are condemned to die! It is not that one day you will be condemned—you are already condemned! At this present moment you are spared and allowed to go about this world, but you are like a criminal in a condemned cell! The sentence has gone out against you and only God's long-suffering keeps that gleaming axe from falling and utterly destroying you! Do you understand that? Have you really got that thought into your mind? There you are, just like a man about to be beheaded, with your neck on the block, and the axe lifted up—and it may fall—while I am yet speaking, the axe of death may fall and you, soul and body, may be lost forever before that clock ticks again! You know this, but do you really understand it? Will you try to understand it? Will you try to make it real to your thoughts tonight? For I think if you would, there might be some hope that now you would escape from your present ruin and lift up your heart to the great Father of mercies, and say, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

You know another truth of God and you say you understand it. Let me put it to you. Jesus Christ came into this world. He was God's only-begotten Son, but He became man and as man, for man He suffered. God most punish sin, but He punished Jesus Christ for the sins of His people. And those who trust Him are secure because Jesus Christ was their substitute—and they go free. Now, there is no other hope of redemption from the fiery wrath of God but by having a part and lot in the substitutionary work of Christ! You know that, but you have not got a part and lot in it and you must be lost if you continue without that part or lot. How is it that you can be quiet? You sleep soundly at night. You eat and drink cheerfully and you sometimes enjoy a merry ringing laugh. How can you revel in the pleasures of sense? How can you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids until you get the one thing necessary, the one thing which alone can make eternity happy—that infinite future upon which you are so soon to enter? If Jesus Christ, standing in heaven, is preached to you tonight and you are bid to believe in Him, and you do not believe in Him, then you do, as far as you can, crucify Him afresh and open His wounds again and make them bleed! Do you mean to do that? Do you understand that this is what you are doing every day? Would you, dear friend, would you call God a liar? And yet the Apostle John says that, "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar

because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." Do you understand what this unbelief of yours really is? You doubt Christ! That is to say, you do not think Christ to be truthful, or good, or able, or strong! Oh, but you say, you know better than that! Then, if you know better why do you act as if you did not know better? If He is able to save, and willing to save, O my dear hearer, why not come to Him as you are and cast yourself at His feet—and rest in Him in whom your only rest can be found? "Have you understood all these things?" then, is a question which you cannot, after all, answer in the right way! I beseech you never to rest until you can!

Should there be, my dear hearers, something which keeps you back from Christ, arising not so much from your need of will as from your need of knowledge, may God the Holy Spirit stir up your desire and never let you rest till you know Christ, till you so hear that your soul shall live! How shall you know? He is the great teacher, but in the use of means He will teach you. Be content in attending the house of God where Christ is most preached. Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Him. Go to the Father of mercy and plead with Him ere you sleep. Pray to Him thus, "Father, if there is some sin that I do not know to be a sin; that I am indulging in, and that keeps me from Christ, show it to me and enable me to give it up. Or if it is a sin which I do know, but seem to have struggled with in vain, my Father, strengthen me that I may cut off the right arm and pluck out the right eye sooner than cherish those vain delights which bode my everlasting destruction." Plead with Him thus—"O my God, I want to know Your Son! Reveal Your Son in me, for so I read You do to Your people. Reveal your Son in me by the Holy Spirit! I am a poor, blind, ignorant sinner, but teach me, for have You not given the Spirit of God on purpose to be the teacher of the ignorant and the instructor of the babes?" Plead with the Lord, and plead always with the recollection that you cannot ask because you deserve, but you must ask because Christ deserves! Plead His wounds, His blood, His death, His infinite merit and you shall, before long—I am certain of it—you shall before long, in answer to your cries, receive light from the Word, and in that light you shall see light and you shall understand the things which make for your peace!

I am deeply concerned for some of you, especially for such of you as often listen to my voice, that I may not forever keep on talking into your ears and never reach your hearts. What? Am I to rock your cradle and send you to sleep that you may sleep yourselves into hell? Is mine to be the voice that is really to increase your responsibility and not to be the means of bringing you to Jesus? I pray God to avert so dreadful a result to all our ministry, but may you be led this very night—for God's people have been praying for you—may you be led this very night to confess that you do not understand what you ought to understand and go to the great

and wise God to teach and instruct you! And as surely as His word is the truth of God, He will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go and bring you to Himself. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Thus says His own word, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Trust: that is the main matter. To believe is to trust, to rely on, to depend upon—he that depends upon Jesus, trusts Him, believes in Him, is saved! May we be of that blessed number and His shall be the glory. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:1-23.

Verses 1, 2. *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a boat, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.* I think I can see the little ship at a convenient distance from the shore so as to keep off the multitudes of people, in order that the Savior might speak more freely. There He sits with a boat for a pulpit. There were no conventionalities about the Lord Jesus when He was upon the earth—He was willing to speak to the people anywhere from any pulpit whatever!

3. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.* [See Sermon #2842, Volume 49—THE SOWER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was probably at that season of the year when the sowers were going forth to sow their seed, so Jesus pointed to them as to a living text. He was always wide-awake to make use of everything that occurred round about Him. "A sower went forth to sow." For what else should he go forth? Yet some sowers that I know of do not go forth to sow, but to exhibit themselves and to show how well they can do their work. This man aimed at sowing and nothing else. Oh, that all preachers did the same!

4. *And when he sowed, some seeds feel by the wayside.* He could not help that. He was not sent to pick the soil, that would be too much responsibility for him. If we had to preach only to certain characters, we should be taking up all our time in picking out those characters! And probably we would make many mistakes while trying to do it. Our business is to scatter the good seed broadcast. We are not to dibble in the Word of God—we are to throw it as far as we can, and to let it fall wherever God pleases. "Some seeds fell by the wayside"—on ground trodden hard by the passers-by.

4. *And the fowls came and devoured them up.* Those fowls are always ready to devour the good seed. Wherever there is a congregation meeting to hear the word, there are always plenty of devils ready to do their evil work! "The fowls came," they had not far to fly. The birds know a sower by the very look of him, so they hurry up and come wherever the seed may be cast that they may devour it. O Lord, keep the fowls away or,

better still, break up the soil so that the seed may enter and not lie upon the surface!

5. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth.* There was a pan of unbroken limestone an inch or two below the soil, but there was no depth of earth where the seeds could grow.

5. *And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.* They seemed to be converts, but they proved to be worthless. They were enthusiastic, carried away with excitement, but all was soon over with them "because they had no deepness of earth." Everything was superficial, there was no depth of character, or feeling, or emotion.

6. *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.* [See Sermon #2844, Volume 49—THE SEED UPON A ROCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They seemed to be alive at the top, but they were really dead below. How many there still are of that sort—they make a bold profession, but it is only for a while—and then they wither away.

7, 8. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground*—Thank God we do not lose all our efforts! If one in four succeeds, it is great deal for which we ought to praise the Lord. So, brother, sister—

"Sow in the morn your seed,
At eve hold not your hand.
To doubt and fear give you no heed,
Broadcast it over the land."

8. *And brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.* There are degrees even in fruitfulness—Christians are not all alike. Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing everywhere! We do not get it, and can scarcely expect it, but let us thank God if we have "some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."

9-12. *Who has ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciple came and said unto Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has.* [See Sermon #1488, Volume 25—MORE AND MORE, OR LESS AND LESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is so even in common things—the man of intelligence who has a good groundwork of education, picks up something everywhere—but the ignorant man learns nothing anywhere. He only finds out more and more of his own ignorance till there is taken away from him even that which he had. Oh, that the Lord would give us a good groundwork of saving knowledge so that we might go on learning more and more under the Holy Spirit's teaching!

13-16. *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear,*

and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is grown gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. It is awful thing when God gives men up to spiritual blindness and dullness and hardness, but it does happen. If you hear the word and refuse to receive it, you do, to that extent, harden your heart. And if you continue to do so, you will by degrees lose the capacity for understanding the word. Take heed what you hear! O my dear hearers, I am afraid that many of you are not aware of the solemn responsibility of hearing the gospel and of the terrible peril of having your ears made dull and your heart made hard! I am responsible for preaching faithfully to you, but you are equally responsible for hearing what is preached. Let us not waste any opportunity that we have of hearing the word, but use it wisely and well that we may be able to give a good account of it before God in our fruitfulness.

Now, if the Savior's main design, in the use of parables, had been that men should not understand Him, He could have answered that end better by not speaking at all. But see how mercy blends with justice, and gives them another opportunity of hearing the word. They might have come to Jesus even as His disciples did, and asked Him questions, and He would have explained the truth to them. If any of you today hear anything which you do not understand, go to the Lord about it in private prayer and He will explain it to you. I tremble lest any of you should hear the word and not receive it and yet be content! That is the worst state of all for anyone to be in! May God save you from it! But as for you who know the lord, "blessed are your eyes, for they see." Those are blessed eyes that can really see. Eyes that cannot see are a trial, but "blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." It is nothing but the grace of God that can make our ears spiritually hear. He that made the ear can alone make an open passage from the ear to the heart. If you have received this blessing, be very grateful for it, and bless the God of grace for giving it to you!

17. *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.* To you Christian people, there is given a very full revelation of the truth of God. You live in the mid-day glory of the gospel, but the "prophets and righteous men" of old lived in the morning twilight. Be the more grateful and bless the Lord with all your hearts.

18, 19. *Hear you, therefore, the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is*

he which received the seed by the wayside. There are many such hearers! They just hear the word and that is all. They are very much like the countryman who said that he liked Sunday, for it was such an easy day—he had nothing to do but go to church, put up his legs and think of nothing. There are far too many hearers of that sort who think of nothing and, therefore, they get no good out of what they hear.

20, 21. *But he that received the seed in the stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it, yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by-and-by he is offended.* He soon ceases even to profess to be a Christian! He jumped into religion and he jumps out again. Revival always produce a large quantity of such people, and yet, if there is one soul truly saved, the revival is a success as far as that one is concerned.

22, 23. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he that received seed in the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it.* Knows what it means, thinks it over, takes it in as the good ground takes in the seed and keeps it—

23. *Which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* I say again—Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing! Yet let us not forget to give God thanks if we have sixtyfold or even thirtyfold.

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SATAN, SELF, SIN AND THE SAVIOR
NO. 3306

A SERMON
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"And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many."
Mark 5:9.

I THINK the text suggests to us *something about Satan*, *something about self* and also *something about sin and the Savior*.

I. Without any preface, let us at once seek to find in the text SOMETHING ABOUT SATAN.

Although an unclean spirit, Legion, like his master, Satan, is very apt to lie. There is no doubt that here, in the presence of Christ, he spoke the truth when he said, "My name is Legion: for we are many." So the first thought suggested by the name, "Legion," is that *there are many demons* against whom we have to be on the watch in this world. There is one great master power of evil who is called, "your adversary the devil," but there are also multitudes of demons under his control who are all, like himself, full of hatred to God and to goodness and bent upon doing as much harm as they can to the kingdom of Christ among men. We do not know how numerous these evil spirits are, but there is reason to believe that there are very many of them, so that it will be no easy task to overcome them—and it is no wonder that there is so much evil in the world when there are so many evil spirits constantly seeking to lead men astray.

The next idea connected with the name, "Legion," is that of *organization*, for a Roman legion was not merely a large band of soldiers, but it was a thoroughly organized band of several thousands of men who had taken the oath of allegiance to the Roman emperor and who yielded implicit obedience to the centurions and other officers who were placed in authority over them. In like manner we have reason to believe that the vast multitudes of evil spirits are not an undisciplined mob, but that they are organized and controlled even as they were when the devil and his angels fought against Michael and his angels. No doubt they are able to consult and conspire together, and to work unitedly for the attainment of some common end. Satan is called the prince of the power of the air, and the name, prince, implies followers who come and go at his command and do his bidding. We who have most to do with fighting against this demoniacal legion know that we have no easy task, and we can say, as Paul did, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this

world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It would be impossible for us to be victors in this dread conflict had we not on our side one who is mightier than all who can be against us!

But the name, "Legion," not only suggests the idea of many who are thoroughly organized for fighting, it also conveys the idea of *unity*. The unclean spirit said, "My name is Legion," as if the legion were himself and he were the legion. It is a great art in war when a whole battalion can be made to move as one man. The Roman phalanx was so often victorious because the men composing it were compacted into one solid body—and that seems to be one of the characteristics of the powers of darkness. It is a sickening thought that while Christians frequently quarrel, we never hear of devils doing so. The church of God is divided but the kingdom of darkness appears to be one. Whatever internal strife there may be between evil spirits, we have no hint of it here—they all seemed to act in complete unison. Whether hate is a more compacting principle than love, I will not venture to say, but certainly these haters of God and of His truth appear to be knit together as though they were one devil rather than a multitude of evil spirits! Yet the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ are not knit together as one man under His blessed rule. Herein lies the force of the evil one—that his host is so united as to be called a legion, moving forward in absolute union as one great evil power! As you, beloved, think of this great host all banded together for one purpose—and that purpose your destruction—flying like vast hordes of locusts bent on devastating every place they visit, you must realize that *you* can never overcome the numerous, organized, united forces of evil by your own unaided strength!

The name, "Legion," also suggest a great band of soldiers *marshaled for war*—not a company of people engaged in peaceful avocations, but an armed host marching to battle at their commander's orders! The Roman legionnaires were protected with heavy armor and they carried short sharp swords with which they did terrible execution. When they went forth to war, it was as when a tornado sweeps away the stubble or a fire sets a forest ablaze until it is utterly consumed. They were mighty men, trained and disciplined for war from their youth up! And Satan and his henchmen have been for these six thousand years familiar with the art of injuring and ruining men! They are expert in the use of their deadly weapons—they know what arrows in their quiver will find the joints in your harness, my brother, and what fiery darts will be most effective against you, my sister. While reading the 18th Psalm today, I especially noticed what David says in the 5th verse, "The sorrows (the marginal reading is "the cords") of hell compassed me about," as though some infernal powers had cast ropes all around him and were drawing them ever more tightly hoping to enclose the psalmist in bonds from which he could not escape! Then he adds, "The snares of death confronted me," as though his enemies, whether men or devils, had laid deadly traps in which they hoped to ensnare him. This is what the evil spirits are constantly doing with regard to you, beloved, and you would be wise if

you do what David tells us that he did—"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears"—and then you, too, will before long be able to say with David, "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me."

Further, the name, "Legion," is *of historical interest*. I have not time to relate the brave deeds of some of the most noted of the Roman legions. The record of them was cherished by their successors just as the heroic exploits of famous British regiments are kept in memory in our own land today. As you think of the legions of evil spirits that are still doing their wicked master's will, you will see that they have some things in their past history wherein they can glory, though their glory will be turned to shame. The banners of our soldiers tell of victories won on many a hard-fought field. The first inscription on the black flag of Diabolus is the one word, "Eden." If Satan can be capable of any enjoyment, it must be a very sweet morsel for him to roll under his tongue when he thinks of the victory that he gained in Paradise, when the whole human race, in the person of its representative, Adam, was so ignominiously overthrown! It is true that since then he has had more defeats than victories and that, by this time, he must have had at least many a foretaste of that final bruising of his head which was foretold in the garden, yet he still perseveres in his hopeless task of leading on his condemned legions against the followers of that great King against whom he revolted so long ago. The indomitable pluck of Satan is a thing which deserves to be imitated by Christians. The only point in which I can hold him up for your admiration is this—desperate as his cause is, he still presses on with it! Foiled as he has been ten thousand times, he is still ready for the fray. Oh, that we had half as much holy courage as he has of unholy impudence, that we might face our foes as boldly as he faces his! With such a blessed cause as our Master's is, oh, that we had valor worthy of it!

So, Christian, I bid you again to look at your great adversary, that you may realize how stern is the conflict in which you are engaged. You are often afraid of Satan, but he is never afraid of you. If you turn your back in the day of battle, it is not likely that he will turn his. If you are to come off more than conqueror in this lifelong fight, you must be no mere feather-bed soldier. If you have only the name of a Christian, and not the nature of a Christian, defeat must certainly await you. Count the cost of this campaign before you commence it—see whether your force of one thousand is likely to prevail against your adversary's hundred thousand—and then, as you realize your own insufficiency, cry to the strong for strength! Rely upon your Almighty ally, and in His might go forth to this holy war rejoicing in the assurance that "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

II. Now, turning from that part of the subject, let us next find here SOMETHING ABOUT SELF.

I believe there are some persons in this congregation who are, in a measure, desirous of salvation, yet they despair of ever being able to attain to it. We generally have some in these seats who are anxious about their eternal safety, but who fear that they never can be saved—their sins are too many, their infirmities too great, their temptations too strong and the circumstances in which they are placed too unfavorable. They conclude that while other sinners may be saved, there is no hope for them. Let us see how the case of this poor demoniac resembles theirs! Someone has said that his answer to Christ's question was, first, the proud opposition of a heart that wanted an argument for resistance to Christ and, secondly, the mournful complaint of a being conscious of its miserable condition! In each case it may be instructive to some here.

First, there was *much pride* in the answer, "Legion, for we are many." And there is also much pride in those sinners who despair of being saved because of the greatness of their sin. When men are resolved not to part with their sins, they generally use one of these two arguments. They either say, "Our sins are so great that we know we shall never get to heaven, so we may as well keep on sinning." Or else, "We can turn from sin whenever we please. Repentance is such a simple matter that we can attend to it at any time, so we will put it off as long as we can." These are quite opposite extremes, but the exchange from the one to the other can be made very rapidly. If a man needs an excuse for clinging to his sin, he can always find one, and any lie will satisfy the soul that is resolved not to be saved! Suppose, my friend, you were suffering from some deadly disease which a noted physician offered to cure, but you were unwilling to take his medicine? Your foolish heart might suggest to you two reasons for not taking it. The first would be, "My case is so desperate that no medicine can do me any good." And the other would be, "The medicine is so potent that if I take it in a year's time, when I am much worse than I am now, it will still cure me." Neither of these would be a valid reason for not taking the medicine at once! And if a man died through refusing to take it, a verdict of *suicide* would be perfectly justifiable! There are multitudes of souls who are lost because they do not believe that Christ can save them and, on the other hand, probably there are quite as many lost because they think it is such an easy thing to be saved that it can be settled any time that they please! I implore you, dear friends, not to use any argument for refusing Christ! Why should you argue yourselves into eternal ruin? Have you not some better use to which to put your wits than to reason on Satan's side to your own destruction? Rather, account the testimony of God's word that your sins, even though they may be a legion, or more than that, are not too many to be forgiven! Believe that there is efficacy in the precious blood of Jesus to make you whiter than snow and that He is "mighty to save" even you, for, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." If you are possessed by a legion of demons, trust in Him whose almighty arm can overthrow the whole lot of them!

This name, "Legion," also suggests to us *the mournful utterance of self-consciousness sorrowing over its sin.* Surely in this congregation there are some who are saying, "Alas, our sins are many and they have brought us into a most pitiful plight! We have not only withered hands, but we have lame feet, we have blind eyes, we have deaf ears and, worst of all, a heart that is dead as the stones of the street! From the soles of our feet to the crown of our head there is no soundness in us—just wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." My dear friends, if you truthfully utter that sorrowful lament, I am glad to hear it! And whether you know it or not, that state of things is really a reason why God is likely to save you! Let me remind you of some of the arguments that we find in the word of God. There is one in the 18th Psalm to which I referred you just now. David says of the Lord, "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me." He was unable to cope with his adversaries, so he trusted the Lord to deliver him—and He did! There is a similar argument concerning the stone that covered the Savior's sepulcher. The women said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, "for"—for what?**—"**for it was very great." If it had not been very great, they might have rolled it away themselves! But as it was too heavy for them to move, the angel rolled it away for them. David is a great master of this kind of argument. In Psalm 25:11, he prays, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." That seems a strange plea to urge, yet it is one that prevails with God. If I plead to be pardoned because I am *not* a great sinner, I am legal and carnal. But if I plead to be pardoned because I am such a great sinner, I am moved by an evangelical motive and there is room for the display of divine grace to one who confesses his need of it! This is like the poor sufferer who cries out to the doctor, "O sir, do attend to me, for mine is a desperate case!" Or like the beggar in the street who pleads, "Give me help, for I am starving." You must use your need and the greatness of your need as an argument with the Lord! There are some whom I know here who would almost give their eyes if they could only feel their sin as much as you do. They want to be troubled more about it, they want to despair more over it. Well, they are foolish, and so are you! They are foolish in desiring to despair more, and you are foolish in wishing that you did not despair as much. You should, all of you, give up looking to yourselves, and go to Jesus just as you are and trust to Him to save you!

III. Now I come to the last point, SOMETHING ABOUT OUR SINS AND OUR SAVIOR. Our sins are very much like Satan—they are his children and they are very much like their father.

Our sins may rightly be called legion. Oh, how many they are! I cannot count them, they are more in number than the sands of the sea or the stars of the sky! Yet while they are so many, I may also say of them that they are one, for there is a dreadful unity about our sin. One sin very

seldom checks another, it sometimes does, but more frequently one sin incites another. I have heard it said that some men would be mean if they were not proud, but I have seen people who have been very proud and also very mean. I have known some who have been very bad-tempered, but it was said that they would not display their temper in certain places because they feared they would be losers by doing so, only it was added that they indulged themselves all the more freely in other directions and so made up for their selfish self-restraint. Except in such ways as these, I do not think that one sin is a check upon another, but on the other hand, one sin very often leads to others. If you turn one devil out at the front door, he often comes in again at the back—and brings with him 10 other devils worse than himself! You must have proved how easy it is to get rid of one vice only to fall into another. Did you ever pray with all your heart against sloth, and then feel proud to think how busy you were getting? Then, when you got rid of your pride, you found that despondency was following close behind! And when you had fought against despondency and overcome it, there was presumption pressing to the front! So will you find it till your dying day, but I trust that you will also find that though your sins are many, and though there is a terrible unity about them by which they work together to ruin you, your experience will be, like David's, so that you will be able to say, "They were too strong for me, but the Lord delivered me."

That brings me to my last point, which is this: *the Lord Jesus Christ can as easily cast out a legion of sins as He can cast out one*. If I had only committed one sin in the whole of my life, I should have needed an omnipotent Savior to put away that one sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And if I could have committed all the sins that have ever been committed by all the sinners in the whole world, I should not have needed any greater Savior than I have now! If I had only one disposition towards evil, one vice that needed to be overcome, or one evil tendency that had to be counteracted, I should need the almighty power of the ever-blessed Spirit to accomplish the task. And if my heart is a cage full of unclean birds, that same Holy Spirit can drive them all out! When the Lord comes into the field of battle, we need not trouble about counting the numbers of the enemy, for He is the Lord of hosts, and He is, in Himself, mightier than all who can be gathered against Him—He can overthrow all the forces of evil as easily as He cast the legion of devils out of that poor demoniac!

Perhaps some of you are just now in great trouble because of your inward corruptions. It may be that you have lately had such a sight of them as you have never before had in all your lives. Well, dear friends, this may humble you, but I pray that you will not let it cause you to dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ. Never forget that the King of kings is still reigning supreme over all the powers of darkness! Satan may rage and rave in his great wrath, but there is a bit in his mouth and a bridle on his jaws—and he can be controlled and restrained just as the Lord pleases. He who rules the roaring billows and rides upon the wings of the wind can make all the forces of evil subservient to His will. Even when

the devil is permitted to attack the children of God, there is always a limit set beyond which he cannot go, as there was in the case of Job. To my mind, the poor patriarch sitting down among the ashes, smitten with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head, and yet resignedly saying to his wife, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" is a much nobler being than Satan reigning among the fiends of the pit! Job might have laughed Satan to scorn as messenger after messenger came to tell him that his oxen and asses were stolen and his servants slain by the Sabeans, that his sheep had been burned up by lightning, that his camels had been carried away by the Chaldeans and last and worst of all, that his children had been killed by the great wind from the wilderness that smote the four corners of the house where they were eating and drinking. And I think that was what Job practically did when, with sublime resignation, he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." How glorious was the patriarch's victory when he had been still further tried, yet was able to utter that grand declaration of his faith in God, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him"!

But how much more glorious was the victory of the man, Christ Jesus, over His great adversary and ours! When "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," was nailed to the cross, Satan thought that he had won the day. The old serpent had stung Him to death, vainly imagining that all was over with Him. I think I see the arch-fiend gloating over the awful agonies of the dying Savior and maliciously taunting Him as He hung there apparently forsaken by God and man. "Ah," he said, "Seed of the woman, I have indeed bruised Your heel. I have made men reject You and put You to death! I have vexed and tormented You, I have scorned and scouted You and You have not a word to say for Yourself. And now Your soul must soon depart out of Your body." Yet as the devil was still pouring out his vainglorious boasts and taunts, with a mighty voice, the expiring Savior cried, "It is finished," and in that moment His soul sprang upon the enemy and utterly routed him forever! "You have conquered, O Galilean!" is said to have been the dying cry of Julian the apostate, and Satan might have said the same, for when Jesus nailed to His cross the handwriting that was against us, "having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Himself," for that is the marginal reading of Colossians 2:15 and, therefore, with Dr. Watts—

"I sing my Savior's wondrous death;
He conquered when He fell!
'Tis finished!' said His dying breath,
And shook the gates of hell!
His cross a sure foundation laid
For glory and renown,
When through the regions of the dead
He passed to reach the crown"

Yes, Jesus triumphed in the very hour that looked like the time of His defeat! So praise Him, you bright spirits before the throne of God, and imitate Him, you saints still here below, for—

"As surely as He overcame,
And triumphed once for you,
So surely you that love His name
Shall triumph in Him too"—

even though your foes are named Legion, for they are many. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 5.

Verses 1-6. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* What a pitiful object this poor creature must have been—a terror to the whole region! So far as man was concerned, he was in an utterly hopeless condition, yet there was hope for him, for Jesus had crossed the sea apparently with the special purpose of healing him! Our Savior had proved His power over the winds and waves and He was about to show that demons were equally subject to His control.

6, 7. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshiped him, and cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the most high God? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not.* [See Sermon #2966, Volume 51—RESISTANCE TO SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The voice was the voice of the man, but the devil so completely dominated the whole of his being that he could only speak as the unclean spirit directed him.

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.* So that the demon's adjuration was an answer to the Lord's command, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit."

9-13. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand) and were drowned in the sea.* It is clear from this narrative that the demons knew that Jesus was the Son of the Most High God, and that He had absolute power to do with them whatever He pleased. It is also clear that they believed in prayer, and that they were all agreed in their supplication to

Him—and it is significant that Jesus granted their request. "Send us into the swine that we may enter into them." There was a certain congruity in the unclean spirits entering into the unclean animals, so, "forthwith Jesus gave them leave."

14, 16. *And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* What a wonderful sight that was for them to see! Yet they need not have been afraid—they ought rather to have rejoiced to see the poor demoniac "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind."

16, 17. *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.* Here is a second prayer in which many united—a very foolish and wicked prayer—yet the Savior did as these people wished. He would not force His company upon those who wanted Him to go, so He at once turned His face to the boat that He might "depart out of their coasts."

18, 19. *And when He was come into the boat, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus allowed him not, but said to him, go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.* [See Sermon #2262, Volume 38—CHRIST'S CURATE IN DECAPOLIS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is the third prayer in this chapter. Not like the two previous ones—the petition of many who were not Christ's followers. It was the earnest supplication of one who was so grateful for what Jesus had done for him that he longed to be always with Him. Yet it was not granted, because Jesus saw that the man could serve Him better by bearing testimony among those who knew him to the great things the Lord had done for him.

20. *And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.* His testimony not only made men marvel, but it helped to prepare the people to welcome the Savior when He returned to that region.

21. *And when Jesus had passed over again by boat unto the other side, many people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea.* How many missionary voyages Jesus made, sometimes to one side of the sea, sometimes to the other side! What an example of holy diligence He is to us! So long as He lived here below, He never ceased to labor for He never ceased to love.

22. *And, behold, there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet.* It was an unusual thing for a ruler of the synagogue to be at the feet of Jesus, yet that is the best place for us all! If God has placed any of you in an eminent position, it will well become you to fall at the feet of Jesus as Jairus did. There is no place more suitable, no place more honorable, no place more

profitable than at the feet of Jesus! What brought Jairus there? It was his great need—and that is what will bring us there—a sense of our great need.

23. *And sought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.* This was great faith, yet it was also little faith, for he limits Christ's power to His bodily presence and he stipulates about the way in which the cure is to be worked! "I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed." Yet we never like to criticize faith, there is so little of it, and it is so precious a thing that we are glad to see it anywhere—and especially in a ruler of the synagogue! Oh, that we all prayed thus for our little daughters and our little sons—"Lord, come and lay Your hands on them! There is sin in them and sin means spiritual death—come and lay Your hands on them, that they may be healed and live forever."

24. *And Jesus went with him.* He will always regard true prayer! If we can believe, Jesus will come.

24, 25. *And much people followed Him, and thronged Him. And a certain woman*—There were many in the throng around Jesus who did not touch Him, and there were many who touched Him, but not as she did! So she is singled out from the crowd. "A certain woman,"—

25-28. *Which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.* [See Sermons #827, Volume 14—THE FACULTY BAFFLED—THE GREAT PHYSICIAN SUCCESSFUL and #1382, Volume 23—THE TOUCH—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Was this woman sent, do you think, to encourage the faith of Jairus? It has been well said that the child of Jairus had been twelve years living, but this woman had been twelve years dying, so, if Christ could heal the woman who had been twelve years dying, He could raise the child who had been twelve years living! It is significant that there should have been this equalization of the number of years in the two cases. Although Jairus seemed strong in faith, he was not really so. He put the best side of his faith forward, while this woman, who was strong in faith, yet coming behind Christ and touching Him, as it were, by stealth, put the worst side of her faith forward. We have known this to be the case in others—some who seem to be strong in faith are none too strong. And some who seem to be very weak in faith are much stronger than they seem.

29-31. *And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciple said unto Him, You see the multitude thronging You, and say You, Who touched Me?* They spoke too fast, as we also sometimes do. It would

have been well if they had said nothing which looked like questioning their Master's word.

32, 33. *And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.* [See Sermon #514, Volume 9—TELL IT ALL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The miracle had been worked in her, yet she was fearing and trembling because she perceived the imperfection of her way of approaching the Savior! Probably, after we are saved, we see more of our mistakes than we did before. And when the blessing really comes to us, we begin to be anxious lest we should lose Christ because of some misapprehension in our way of finding Him. The woman "fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth."

34. *And He said unto her, Daughter*—This was a very unusual way for Christ to speak to a woman, so careful was He in His speech, but then she was a very exceptional woman! "Daughter"—

34, 35. *Your faith has made you whole, go in peace, and be whole of your plague. While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house a certain man who said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further?* This ruler of the synagogue was on the brink of getting the blessing he sought and then the very worst news comes to him! It may be that just now some of you have seemed to receive the sentence of death to all your hopes, yet you are on the very verge of getting the blessing. It is often so—just when the devil knows that the blessing is near, he struggles the hardest with the soul that is seeking it. Do not be cast down if that sentence of death comes to you, but still believe.

36-39. *As soon as Jesus heard the words that was spoken, he said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps.* Jesus knew what He was about to do and, speaking with the knowledge of the miracle He was about to perform, He said, "The damsel is not dead but sleeps." A charlatan, who wanted to make himself famous, and in order to increase the effect of the miracle, would have said, "The damsel is really dead," but the Savior, in His infinite modesty of heart, puts it thus, "The damsel is not dead, but sleeps."

40. *And they laughed Him to scorn.* Can you picture the scene? The people who had been hired to weep and wail had not much of the spirit of mourning in them, for they laughed directly and derisively—they turned upon the mighty Master of life and death and "laughed Him to scorn."

40. *But when He had put them all out*—That was the best way to answer the scorners. It is no good arguing with people who can cry or laugh to order! "When He had put them all out"—

40-42. *He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and they that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And immediately*—Notice how this word, "immediately," comes in again! It is the characteristic word in reference to Christ's miracles—they are usually worked at once. We read in the 29th verse, "Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up." Now we read, "Immediately"—

42. *The damsel arose, and walked.* Oh, that the Lord Jesus Christ would work some "immediately" miracles in our midst just now! He can do it if He pleases! Before this service ends, there may be some who shall have passed from death unto life, out of the darkness of sin into the marvelous light of grace! Blessed be God for this—who will it be?

42, 43. *For she was of the age of twelve years; and they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them immediately that no man should know it.* He did not want to blaze abroad the story of these wondrous deeds of His. The crowd was already inconveniently large, so that "He charged them immediately that no man should know it."

43. *And commanded that something should be given her to eat.* She might have continued to live by a miracle as she had been miraculously raised from the dead, but it was needless, and Christ never worked an unnecessary miracle. Do not look for miracles when ordinary means will suffice. "He commanded that something should be given her to eat." When life is given or restored, the next thing needed is nourishment! When you are made spiritually to live, be sure to attend a soul-feeding ministry—and diligently read the word—that you may get all necessary nourishment for your soul out of it.

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OVER THE MOUNTAINS
NO. 3307

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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

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

IT may be that there are saints who are always at their best and are happy enough never to lose the light of their Father's countenance. I am not sure that there are such persons, for those believers with whom I have been most intimate have had varied experiences and those whom I have known who have boasted of their constant perfectness, have not been the most reliable of individuals. I hope there is a spiritual region attainable where there are no clouds to hide the sun of our soul, but I cannot speak positively, for I have not traversed that happy land. Every year of my life has had a winter as well as a summer, and every day its night. I have hitherto seen bright days and heavy rains, and felt warm breezes and fierce winds. Speaking for the many of my brothers and sisters, I confess that though the substance is in us, as in the olive tree and the oak, yet we do lose our leaves and the sap within us does not flow with equal vigor at all seasons. We have our downs as well as our ups, our valleys as well as our hills! We are not always rejoicing—we are sometimes in heaviness through manifold trials. Alas, we are grieved to confess that our fellowship with the Well-Beloved is not always that of rapturous delight, but we have at times to seek Him and cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" This appears to me to have been in a measure the condition of the spouse when she cried, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved."

I. These words teach us, first, that COMMUNION MAY BE BROKEN.

The spouse had lost the company of her Bridegroom. Conscious communion with Him was gone, though she loved her Lord and sighed for Him. In her loneliness she was sorrowful, but *she had by no means ceased to love Him*, for she calls Him her Beloved and speaks as one who felt no doubt upon that point. Love to the Lord Jesus may be quite as true, and perhaps quite as strong when we sit in darkness as when we walk in the light. No, *she had not lost her assurance of His love to her* and

of their mutual interest in one another, for she says, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." And yet she adds, "Turn, my Beloved." The condition of our grace does not always coincide with the state of our joys. We may be rich in faith and love, and yet have so low an esteem of ourselves as to be much depressed. It is plain, from this sacred canticle, that the spouse may love and be loved, may be confident in her Lord and be fully assured of her possession of Him, and yet there may, for the present, be mountains between her and Him. Yes, we may even be far advanced in the divine life, and yet be exiled for a while from conscious fellowship. There are nights for men as well as babes, and the strong know that the sun is hidden quite as well as do the sick and the feeble. Do not, therefore, condemn yourself, my brothers and sisters because a cloud is over you—cast not away your confidence—but rather let faith burn up the gloom and let your love resolve to come at your Lord again whatever barriers which divide you from Him may be!

When Jesus is absent from a true heir of heaven, sorrow will ensue. The healthier our condition, the sooner will that absence be perceived and the more deeply will it be lamented. This sorrow is described in the text as darkness—this is implied in the expression, "until the day breaks." Till Christ appears, no day has dawned for us. We dwell in midnight darkness! The stars of the promises and the moon of experience yield no light of comfort till our Lord, like the sun, arises and ends the night! We must have Christ with us or we are benighted—we grope like blind men for the wall and wander in dismay.

The spouse also speaks of shadows. "Until the day breaks *and the shadows flee away*." Shadows are multiplied by the departure of the sun, and these are apt to distress the timid. We are not afraid of real enemies when Jesus is with us, but when we miss Him, we tremble at the shade. How sweet is that song, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me"! But we change our note when midnight is come and Jesus is not with us! Then we people the night with terrors—specters, demons, hobgoblins and things that never existed save in fancy, are apt to swarm about us—and we are in fear where there is no fear!

The spouse's worst trouble was that *the back of her Beloved was turned to her* and so she cried, "Turn, my Beloved." When His face is towards her, she suns herself in His love, but if the light of His countenance is withdrawn, she is sorely troubled. Our Lord turns His face from His people though He never turns His heart from His people. He may even close His eyes in sleep when the vessel is tossed by the tempest, but His heart is awake all the while. Still, it is pain enough to have grieved Him in any degree—it cuts us to the quick to think that we have wounded His tender heart. He is jealous, but never without cause. If He turns His back upon us for a while, there is doubtless a more than sufficient reason. He would not walk contrary to us if we had not walked

contrary to Him. Ah, it is sad work this! The presence of the Lord makes this life the preface to the celestial life! But His absence leaves us pining and fainting, neither does any comfort remain in the land of our banishment. The Scriptures and the ordinances, private devotion and public worship are all as sundials—most excellent when the sun shines, but of small use in the dark. O, Lord Jesus, nothing can compensate us for Your loss! Draw near to Your beloved yet again, for without You, our night will never end—

"See! I repent and vex my soul,
That I should leave You so!
Where will those vile affections roll
That let my Savior go?"

When communion with Christ is broken, in all true hearts *there is a strong desire to win it back again*. The man who has known the joy of communion with Christ, if he loses it, will never be content until it is restored. Have you ever entertained the Prince Emmanuel? Is He gone elsewhere? Your chamber will be dreary till He comes back again. "Give me Christ, or else I die," is the cry of every spirit that has lost the dear companionship of Jesus! We do not part with such heavenly delights without many a pang. It is not with us a matter of "maybe He will return, and we hope He will," but it must be, or we faint and die! We cannot live without Him—and this is a cheering sign, for the soul that cannot live without Him shall not live without Him! He comes speedily where life and death hang on His coming. If you must have Christ, you shall have Him! This is just how the matter stands—we must drink of this well or die of thirst. We must feed upon Jesus or our spirit will famish!

II. We will now advance a step and say that when communion with Christ is broken, THERE ARE GREAT DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF ITS RENEWAL.

It is much easier to go downhill than to climb to the same height again. It is far easier to lose joy in God than to find the lost jewel. The spouse speaks of "mountains" dividing her from her Beloved—she means that *the difficulties were great*. They were not little hills, but mountains that closed up her way! Mountains of remembered sin, Alps of backsliding, dread range of forgetfulness, ingratitude, worldliness, coldness in prayer, frivolity, pride, unbelief! Ah me, I cannot teach you all the dark geography of this sad experience! Giant walls arose before her like the towering steeps of Lebanon. How could she get to her Beloved?

The dividing difficulties were many as well as great. She does not speak of "a mountain," but of "mountains." Alps rose on Alps, wall after wall. She was distressed to think that in so short a time, so much could come between her and Him of whom she sang just now, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me." Alas, we multiply those mountains of Bether with a sad rapidity! Our Lord is jealous and we give Him far too much reason for hiding His face. A fault which seemed so small at the time we committed it, is seen in the light of its

own consequences, and then it grows and swells till it towers aloft and hides the face of the Beloved! Then has our sun gone down and fear whispers, "Will His light ever return? Will it ever be daybreak? Will the shadows ever flee away?" It is easy to grieve away the heavenly sunlight, but ah, how hard to clear the skies and regain the unclouded brightness!

Perhaps the worst thought of all to the spouse was the dread that *the dividing barrier might be permanent*. It was high, but it might dissolve. The walls were many, but they might fall. But, alas, they were mountains, and these stand fast for ages! She felt like the psalmist when he cried, "My sin is always before me." The pain of our Lord's absence becomes intolerable when we fear that we are hopelessly shut out from Him. A night one can bear, hoping for the morning, but what if the day should never break? And you and I, if we have wandered away from Christ and feel that there are ranges of immovable mountains between Him and us, will feel sick at heart. We try to pray, but devotion dies on our lips. We attempt to approach the Lord at the communion table, but we feel more like Judas than John. At such times we have felt that we would give our eyes to behold once more the Bridegroom's face and to know that He delights in us as in happier days. Still, there stand the awful mountains—black, threatening, impassable—and in the far-off land the life of our life is away and grieved.

So the spouse seems to have come to the conclusion that *the difficulties in her way were insurmountable by her own power*. She does not even think of herself going over the mountains to her Beloved, but she cries, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." She will not try to climb the mountains, she knows she cannot. If they had not been so high, she might have attempted it, but their summits reach to heaven! If they had been less craggy or difficult, she might have tried to scale them, but these mountains are terrible, and no foot may stand upon their long crags! Oh, the mercy of utter self-despair! I love to see a soul driven into that close corner and forced, therefore, to look to God alone! The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator! Where the sinner ends, the Savior begins! If the mountains can be climbed, we shall have to climb them, but if they are quite impassable, then the soul cries out with the prophet, "Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your presence, as when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your Presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your presence." Our souls are lame, they cannot move to Christ and lo, we turn our strong desires to Him and fix our hopes alone upon Him! Will He not remember us in love and fly to us as He did to His servant of old when He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind?

III. Here arises that PRAYER OF THE TEXT WHICH FULLY MEETS THE CASE—"Turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

Jesus can come to us when we cannot go to Him. The roe and the young hart, or, as you may read it, the gazelle and the ibex, live among the crags of the mountains and leap across the abyss with amazing agility. For swiftness and sure-footedness they are unrivalled. The sacred poet said, "He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places," alluding to the feet of those creatures which are so fitted to stand surely on the mountains' sides. Our blessed Lord is called in the title of the 22nd Psalm, "the Hind of the Morning"—and the spouse in this golden canticle sings, "My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart; behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

Here I would remind you that this prayer is one that we may fairly offer, because it is the way of Christ to come to us when our coming to Him is out of the question. "How?" you ask. I answer that of old He did this, for we remember "His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin." His first coming into the world in human form—was it not because man could never come to God until God had come to him? I hear of no tears, or prayers, or entreaties after God on the part of our first parents—but the offended Lord spontaneously gave the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Our Lord's coming into the world was untaught, unsought, unthought of—He came altogether of His own free will, delighting to redeem—

"With pitying eyes the Prince of grace
Beheld our helpless grief!
He saw, and oh, amazing love—
He ran to our relief."

His incarnation was a type of the way in which He comes to us by His Spirit. He saw us cast out, polluted, shameful, perishing—and as He passed by, His tender lips said, "Live!" In us is fulfilled that ancient word, "I am found of them that sought Me not." We were too averse to holiness, too much in bondage to sin to ever have returned to Him if He had not turned to us. What do you think? Did He come to us when we were enemies and will He not visit us, now that we are friends? Did He come to us when we were dead sinners and will He not hear us, now that we are weeping saints? If Christ's coming to the earth was after this manner and if His coming to each one of us was after this style, we may well hope that now He will come to us in like fashion, like the dew which refreshes the grass and waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men.

Besides, He is coming again in person, in the latter days, and mountains of sin, error, idolatry, superstition and oppression stand in the way of His kingdom—but He will surely come and overturn, and overturn till He shall reign over all! He will come in the latter days, I say, though He shall leap the hills to do it—and because of that I am sure we may comfortably conclude that He will draw near to us who mourn His

absence so bitterly. Then let us bow our heads a moment, and silently present to His most excellent majesty the petition of our text, "Turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

Our text gives us sweet assurance that *our Lord is at home with those difficulties which are quite insurmountable by us*. Just as the roe or the young hart knows the passes of the mountains and the stepping-places among the rugged rocks, and is void of all fear among the ravines and the precipices, so does our Lord know the heights and depths, the torrents and the caverns of our sin and sorrow. He carried the whole of our transgression and so became aware of the tremendous load of our guilt. He is quite at home with the infirmities of our nature. He knew temptation in the wilderness, heart-break in the garden, desertion on the cross. He is quite at home with pain and weakness, for, "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness." He is at home with despondency, for He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He is at home even with death, for He gave up the ghost and passed through the sepulcher to resurrection. O yawning gulfs and frowning steeps of woe, our Beloved, like hind or hart, has traversed your glooms! O my Lord, You know all that divides me from You and You also know that I am far too feeble to climb these dividing mountains so that I may come to You. Therefore, I pray You, come over the mountains to meet my longing spirit! You know each yawning gulf and slippery steep, but none of these can stop You. Hasten You to me, Your servant, Your beloved, and let me again live by Your presence.

It is easy, too, for Christ to come over the mountains for our relief. It is easy for the gazelle to cross the mountains—it is made for that end. So is it easy for Jesus, for to this purpose was He ordained from of old that He might come to man in his worst estate, and bring with Him the Father's love. What is it that separates us from Christ? Is it a sense of sin? You have been pardoned once and Jesus can renew most vividly a sense of full forgiveness! But you say, "Alas, I have sinned again! Fresh guilt alarms me." He can remove it in an instant, for the fountain appointed for that purpose is opened and is still full! It is easy for the dear lips of redeeming love to put away the child's offenses since He has already obtained pardon for the criminal's iniquities. If with His heart's blood He won our pardon from our judge, He can easily enough bring us the forgiveness of our Father. Oh, yes, it is easy enough for Christ to say again, "Your sins are forgiven!" "But I feel so unfit, so unable to enjoy communion." He that healed all manner of bodily diseases can heal with a word your spiritual infirmities! Remember the man whose ankle bones received strength so that he ran and leaped? And she who was sick of a fever and was healed at once, and arose and ministered unto her Lord? "My grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

"But I have such affliction, such troubles, such sorrows that I am weighted down and cannot rise into joyful fellowship." Yes, but Jesus can make every burden light and cause each yoke to be easy! Your trials can be made to aid your heavenward course instead of hindering it. I know all about those heavy weights and I perceive that you cannot lift them. But skillful engineers can adapt ropes and pulleys in such a way that heavy weights lift other weights. The Lord Jesus is great at gracious machinery and He has the art of causing a weight of tribulation to lift from us a load of spiritual deadness, so that we ascend by that which, like a millstone, threatened to sink us down! What else hinders you? I am sure that if it were a sheer impossibility, the Lord Jesus could remove it, for things impossible with men are possible with God!

But someone objects, "I am so unworthy of Christ. I can understand eminent saints and beloved disciples being greatly indulged, but I am a worm and not a man, utterly below such condescension!" Say you so? Know you not that the worthiness of Christ covers your unworthiness and He is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption? In Christ, the Father thinks not so meanly of you as you think of yourself! You are not worthy to be called His child, but He does call you so and reckons you to be among His jewels! Listen and you shall hear Him say, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you. I gave Egypt for your ransom; Ethiopia and Seba for you." Thus, there remains nothing which Jesus cannot leap over if He resolves to come to you and reestablish your broken fellowship!

To conclude, *our Lord can do all this IMMEDIATELY*. As in the twinkling of an eye the dead shall be raised incorruptible, so in a moment can our dead affections rise to fullness of delight! He can stay to this mountain, "Be you removed and be you cast into the midst of the sea," and it shall be done. In the sacred emblems now upon this supper table Jesus is already among us. Faith cries, "He has come!" Like John the Baptist she gazes intently on Him and cries, "Behold the Lamb of God!" At this table Jesus feeds us with His body and blood. His corporeal presence we have not, but His real *spiritual* presence we perceive. We are like the disciples when none of them dared ask Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. He is come! He looks forth at these windows—I mean this bread and wine—showing Himself through the lattices of this instructive and endearing ordinance. He speaks. He says, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone." And so it is. We feel it to be so—a heavenly spring-tide warms our frozen hearts. Like the spouse, we wonderingly cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Now in happy fellowship we see the Beloved and hear His voice! Our heart burns! Our affections glow! We are happy, restful, brimming over with delight! The King has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love. It is good to be here!

Friends, we must now go our ways. A voice says, "Arise, let us go hence." O Lord of our hearts, go with us! Some will not be home without You. Life will not be life without You. Heaven itself would not be heaven if You were absent. Abide with us! The world grows dark; the glooming of time draws on. Abide with us, for it is toward evening. Our years increase and we near the night when dews fall cold and chill. A great future is all about us! The splendors of the last age are coming down and while we wait in solemn, awe-struck expectation, our heart continually cries within herself, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14.

Let us read that well-known and most blessed chapter, John 14, which so clearly shows our Savior's tender consideration for the comfort of His people, lest the great grief excited in them by His impending death should altogether break their hearts.

Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* [See Sermon #1741, Volume 29—"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I think our Savior meant to say and really did say, "If you believe in God, you are believing in Me; and if you believe in Me, you are believing in God; for there is such a perfect unity between us that you need not, when I die, make any distinction between Me and God, but still believe in Me as you believe in the Father."

2. *In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.* "Wicked men will shut you out of My Father's house below: the temple at Jerusalem, through being still used for Jewish worship after all its ritual and ceremonialism have been abolished, will cease to be My Father's house to you; but there is a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and there is room for all of you there. When this country gets to be a desert to you, remember that there is the home country, the blessed glory land, on the other side of the river, and the Father's house there with its many mansions."

2, 3. *I go to prepare a place for you.* [See Sermon #2751, Volume 47—"A PREPARED PLACE FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* Jesus often keeps this promise in many senses. By His gracious Spirit, He has come again. By His divine presence in the means of grace, He full often comes again. By and by, if we die, He will come again to meet us. And if we do not die, then will the promise be fulfilled to the greatest possible extent, for Jesus will come again and receive in His own proper person those who are alive and remain unto His coming.

Anyhow, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself," remains one of the sweetest promises that was ever given to believers by the Lord

Jesus Christ! He did not say, "I will receive you to heaven." He promised something far better than that—"I will receive you unto Myself." Oh, what bliss it will be to get to Christ, to be with Him forever and ever!

4. *And where I go you know, and the way you know.* "At least, I have taught it to you. I have explained it to you. I have told you that I am the goal of your way, and the way to your goal. That I am the end, and also the way to that end."

5. *Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go and how can we know the way?* Oh, how much ignorance there may be where there ought to be much knowledge! It is not always the man who lives in the sunlight who sees the most. Thomas had been one of the 12 apostles for years. He had, during all that time, had Christ for his teacher, yet he had learned very little. With such poor teachers as we are, it is no wonder if our hearers and scholars learn but little from us, yet they ought to learn much from Christ—although I think that we learn nothing even from Jesus Christ, Himself, except under the teaching of the Holy Spirit!

6. *Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me.* [See Sermons #245, Volume 5—THE WAY TO GOD; #942, Volume 16—THE WAY and #2938, Volume 51—JESUS THE WAY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I am going to the Father—that is where I am going, Thomas, and you can only come to the Father by Me—don't you know that?"

7. *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.* For Christ is the express image of His Father, so that you always see the Father when you see the Son!

7. *And from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.* Thomas had made an advance in heavenly knowledge. He had taken a higher degree in divinity now that the Master had taught Him so much upon this most important point—"from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him."

8. *Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us.* It was not merely *one* of Christ's scholars, you see, who was so dull of comprehension—here is another of the dunces—Philip.

9. *Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and how say you, then, Show us the Father?* He who really knows Christ and understands Christ's character, understands, as far as it can be understood by man, the character of God. We know more of God from the life of Christ than we can learn from any other source.

10-12. *Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very work's sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My*

Father. The Lord Jesus Christ, after He had gone back to heaven, gave to His servants the power to do these "greater works"—the Holy Spirit resting upon them—in the gathering in of the nations unto their Lord. Whereas Christ kept to one little country, He sent His first disciples and He sends us still to preach the Gospel to every creature in the whole world, and He clothes His servants with all necessary authority and power to do the work He has committed to their charge.

13-14. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* There is the only limit to true believing prayer! There are some things which we could not ask in Christ's name—that is, using His authority in asking for them. There are some wishes and whims that we may cherish, and that we think we may pray about, but we have not Christ's name or authority to warrant us in expecting that we shall realize them and, therefore, we cannot ask for them in His name. To say, "For Christ's sake," is one thing, but to say, "I ask this in Christ's name," is quite another matter! He never authorized you to make use of His name about everything. There are only certain things about which you can pray in His name, such as are the express subject of a divine promise—and when you pray for one of those things, you shall prove Christ's words to be true, "If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it."

15-16. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter,* [See Sermons #1074, Volume 18—THE PARACLETE and #1932, Volume 32—LOVE'S LAW AND LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] The Paraclete, the Succorer, the Helper. The word, "Comforter," has lost its old meaning. You get it in certain old writings, when you read of such-and-such a man that he gave to someone else succor and comfort. There is more here than merely giving us consolation. It means Helper—"He shall give you another Helper." *Advocatus* is the Latin, and that, too, is the correct word. "He shall give you another Advocate"—

16, 17. *That He may abide with you forever; 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.* [See Sermons #4, Volume 1—THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; #754, Volume 13—THE SAINT AND THE SPIRIT and #2074, Volume 35—INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Worldly men are not cognizant of the existence of the Holy Spirit. They do not believe in Him—they say that there may or may not be such a divine being in the world as the Holy Spirit, but they have never come across His path. This, then, is one of the tests of true believers, the twice-born—they have received a new nature which enables them to recognize the existence of the Spirit of God and to feel the influence of His work—"You know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you."

18, 19. *I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me.* [See Sermon #2990,

Volume 52—THE BELIEVER NOT AN ORPHAN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Your spiritual sight, which discerns the presence with you of the Holy Spirit, will also discern My continued existence when I have gone away from you."

19, 20. *Because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in My father, and you in Me, and I in you.* [See Sermon 968, Volume 17—LIFE IN CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is something more for us to know. To know that Christ is in the Father is one thing, but it is still more for us to understand the next mystic unity, "you in Me, and I in you." Oh, wondrous combination of the Father and the Son, and of Immanuel, God with us, and ourselves!

21, 22. *He that has My commandment, 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. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?* [See Sermon #29, Volume 1—CHRIST MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Large-hearted Judas, very different from Judas Iscariot! He wants Christ to manifest Himself to all the world! He seems to have been a man of very broad views. He does not comprehend discriminating love and electing grace—He wants all the privileges of the children of God to be the privileges of the King's enemies—but that cannot be.

23. *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.* [See Sermon #2895, Volume 50—A BLESSED GOSPEL CHAIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ is sure to manifest Himself to those who love Him, but how can He manifest Himself to those who love Him not? They cannot see Him! They would not appreciate Him if they *could* see Him—they have no spiritual taste with which to enjoy Him.

24-26. *He that loves Me not keeps not My saying: and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. 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.* Do we sufficiently look to the Holy Spirit for divine teaching? We read our Bibles, I trust, with diligence—and also any explanatory books by which we may better understand our Bibles—but do we look up to the Holy Spirit and ask Him distinctly and immediately to teach us what is the meaning of Christ's words, and to bring them to our remembrance? I wish we did this more than we do.

27. *Peace I leave with you.* "That is My legacy to you."

27. *My peace I give unto you*—[See Sermons #247, Volume 5—THE BEST OF MASTERS and #300, Volume 6—SPIRITUAL PEACE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] My own deep calm of spirit, which is not ruffled

or broken though the contradiction of sinners continually annoys Me—"My peace I give unto you." Christ puts His hand into His heart and takes out of that priceless casket the choicest jewel it contains—His own peace! And He says, "Wear that on your finger, the seal and token of My love." "My peace I give unto you"—

27. *Not as the world gives, give I unto you.* "With an expectation of getting a reward for it. Neither do I give it to take it back again. Nor do I give it in mere pretense—I give it in reality, sincerely, disinterestedly, as your freehold possession forever."

27-28. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 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.* Christ as man had condescended to become less than the Father—He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, but now He was going back to take His own natural dignity again. We ought to rejoice in His gain! Though you may think it a loss not to have His corporeal presence, yet would you like to call Him away from yonder harps that ring out His praises and the perfect love of the Father with whom He reigns supreme? Oh, no, blessed Master, stay where You are!

29-31. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is comes to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. 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.*

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GATHERING IN THE CHOSEN
NO. 3308

A SERMON
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"Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together; a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born." Jeremiah 31:8, 9.

THERE IS a wonderful variety in the acts of God and yet there is a most singular uniformity. So complete is this uniformity that any deliverance which God works for His people will be found to be, in its main features, just like any other of His deliverances.

Starting—for it is a convenient starting-point—with the deliverance of God's people out of Egypt, there are many points of similarity between that marvel of mercy and the bringing back of the banished tribes from Babylon to their own land. There was a manifestation of the same gracious consideration, of the same omnipotent power, of the some efficient purpose worked out in all points according to God's eternal covenant. Then, taking another great leap, that return from Babylon is, no doubt, a very fair picture and a very excellent type of the gathering together in their own land of the Jews in the days that are yet to come when they shall say to one another, "Let us go up to the house of our God." Everybody will admit that it will be as great a wonder to see the Jews, who are now a nation scattered abroad throughout the whole world, once more dwelling together in Palestine, as it was for them to have been brought out of Egypt or delivered out of Babylon in days long past! But taking a still greater leap, this again is a type of the greatest of all deliverances—the deliverance neither of the Jews alone nor of the Gentiles alone, but of the whole chosen company who shall be brought out from all the lands of sin and error into which they have been driven by their first parents' fall and their own actual transgressions! They shall be brought out by the same almighty power, only on a far greater scale, and they shall meet, as in a common focus, in that Jerusalem above which is the home of all the chosen! I want to turn your thoughts toward that glorious future when the vast assembly of the redeemed will "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints."

I. And, first, I am going to show you that we have, in the text, DEITY MANIFESTED.

There is a divine ring about the text as there was in that ancient fiat which startled the darkness and caused it to flee away. "Let there be light, and there was light." So here the Lord says, "I will bring them and gather them…and they shall come…I will lead them. I will cause them to walk; they shall not stumble." It is, "I will," and, "they shall" all the way through! There is no admission of doubt or of the possibility of failure. Jehovah speaks in the sovereignty of His power and says, "I will do this, and I will do that," and there is not an, "if," or a, "perhaps," or a "maybe" to mar the certainty of the divine declarations—"I will" and "they shall."

Remember, beloved, that it was so in Egypt. "Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Yet, when the Lord smote his first-born with all the first-born throughout the land of Egypt, "he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as you have said." And when the time came for captive Israel to return from Babylon, God had but to speak and the iron bars snapped in sunder and the gates of brass flew open! So also shall it be in the latter days when the Jews are restored to their own land. By some mysterious influence which probably many of them will not be able to understand, they will be irresistibly drawn from all parts of the earth to Emmanuel's land and, meanwhile, that same divine energy is gathering together the chosen unto the great Shiloh, for "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Invisible bands of love are continually drawing to Christ those for whom He died. The mighty magnet of His atoning sacrifice is constantly attracting to Him the members of His redeemed family—more in one age than in another, yet always according to the eternal purpose and decree of God—for although He acts mysteriously and silently, yet He always "works all things after the counsel of His own will."

I do not know any theme upon which one might dilate with greater joy than that of the omnipotent energy of God as displayed in the salvation of sinners, yet it must always be understood that we proclaim this truth in complete harmony with the responsibility of man and his absolute free agency. I have always taught you that the *omnipotence* of God over the human heart is never exercised in such a way as to violate the free will of man. It would be a clumsy kind of *omnipotence* that would do as it pleased with men whether they were willing or not! But it is divine *omnipotence* that molds the will, enlightens the judgment and fashions the heart and mind and character of man according to the Lord's eternal purpose. Yet, on the other hand, let me beseech you never to let your ideas of the free agency of man prevent you from adoring the omnipotent sovereignty of God. We are not to have man's free will sitting on the throne! Its place is that of a humble servant waiting at Jehovah's feet. Let

the glorious truth of God that "the Lord reigns" be proclaimed in its fullest sense and let the man who dares to limit the sovereignty of God answer for it before Him who, with a rod of iron, would dash in pieces the potter's vessel that presumed to say, "Why have you made me thus?" We believe that when the great drama of human history is complete, it will conform in every jot and tittle to the eternal plan that was in the mind of God long before He spoke the great creative word which called the heaven and the earth into existence!

In the bringing up of Israel out of Babylon there were a great many questions to be considered. Would the king be willing to let them go? Would they themselves be willing to go? By what process could they be ranged under one leader? How could they be provided for and provisioned for such a long journey? By what means could they be safely conducted through the perils of the wilderness? How could they again be settled in a land which had become barren through the curse of God resting upon it? Yet, when the set time came, all these difficulties vanished! As God was in that plan of bringing His people back from Babylon, the king's heart was turned as the husbandman turns the channel of irrigation in the midst of the garden! As God was in it, the Jews sighed and longed to return to Jerusalem! As God was in it, they went back, not like trembling doves flying from pursuing hawks, but like a bannered host returning from the conquest loaded with spoil!

Just so is it with the sinner and the salvation of his soul—there are many questions that he may want to ask. How can prejudice be subdued? How can ignorance be overcome? Can the stubborn will be controlled? How is it possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin and the leopard his spots? But, when God comes forth to save, it is as though a man walked through cobwebs and brushed them away from him on either side, or as though a giant stalked through a host of pygmies and made them fly to right or left—

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?"

When He puts forth the fullness of His strength to effect His divine purpose, who shall say to Him, "What are You doing?" Therefore, you ministers of God, be bold, for you serve the Lord God omnipotent! You servants of Christ in every sphere, be brave, for you have not espoused a losing cause! Every one of you, though you may be but little in the army of the Lord, yet are**—**

"Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power"—

for His kingdom cannot be overthrown, it must spread until it fills the whole earth! And God, even our own God, must be exalted and the praises of His holy name and of His glorious work must go on ringing down the ages forever and ever!

II. Now turning to the second point, we see in the text DIFFICULTIES REMOVED.

Difficulties would naturally be suggested by unbelieving minds. It would be said, in the first place, that *the people had gone too far away ever to be gathered.* Yet the Lord says, "I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth." There may be at the present time, some of the Lord's chosen far away in Greenland, Labrador, and other lands of snow and ice. There were some, in the olden times, when the Moravian brethren went forth at God's command to bring to Christ those who belonged to Him in "the north country." There were also others in the far-away islands of the south—cannibals given up to the wildest passions—but Christ had bought them with His precious blood and a sacred instinct compelled John Williams and many other martyrs and missionaries to go forth to the apostolic task of turning savages into saints! It may be that God has many of His chosen ones at the present moment in the center of Africa—and if it is so, they shall not die before the gospel has been made known to them and they have been brought to trust in Him who loved them and gave Himself for them! Distance is no distance in the sight of God! He sees all the inhabitants of the globe at a single glance and His gaze is fixed upon the blood-bought sons and daughters of men wherever these may be dwelling! And He will gather them from all the coasts of the earth where their lot has been cast.

And as distance of space is no obstacle to the bestowed of God's mercy, so neither is the distance that is caused by the greatness of sin. "Now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ." There may be one among those whom I am now addressing who has gone to the cold "north country" of infidelity, where he stands shivering in the biting winds of doubt and skepticism. Ah, but my friend, God is able to bring you to Himself even from that dreary region! There may be some who have gone to the uttermost coasts of sin until they have become masters in iniquity, trafficking upon the broad sea of transgression and doing business in the deep waters of infamy and perhaps of blasphemy. Ah, but if you are among these who were given to Christ, God will gather you sooner or later—even if you have sold yourself to the devil, "your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." If you are, indeed, "bought with a price," Christ will surely gather you with the rest of His redeemed! By might and main He will conquer you, for when the Lord determines to bring His people to Himself, neither material distance nor moral distance can prevent Him from doing so!

There was also another difficulty—not only were these people in Babylon far away from Jerusalem, but *some of them were blind.* What did it matter to them where they lived? No landscape, even though it was as grand as that which Moses saw from the top of Pisgah, could have any attraction for them. Even if others go back, shall not the blind be left behind? Of what service are the blind? How shall they behold the beauty of the Lord? But the Lord said that He would bring back the blind with the others from the north country, and from the outcasts of the earth,

and we may apply this promise to those who are *spiritually* blind. How can you get at a man who will not see his own sin and who will not or cannot see the beauty of God's plan of salvation? How are you to get at those whose eyes are covered with the scales of prejudice? How can you reach the Romanist whose eyes are plastered up with ceremonies and superstitions? How can you convince the work-monger that his own good deeds, of which he thinks so much, are blinding him to the beauties of Christ? How can these blind ones be saved? Ah, beloved, no eye is too blind for God to pour light into it! And some of us can bear our personal testimony upon this matter. We would never have known the grace of God in truth if that grace had not come to us in our blind ignorance and enlightened us! May it be so with some who are here tonight! Is there a very ignorant person here? Well, my dear friend, do you know that you are a sinner, that you are guilty in the sight of God? Then do you know that Christ Jesus came into the world to save such guilty sinners as you are? If so, and you put your trust in Him, you are already wise unto salvation however little you may know about other matters! Learn the great truth that Christ died in the place of all who believe in Him and you will no longer be numbered among the spiritually blind!

With those blind people in Babylon there seem to have been *some lame folk* and an objector might have said, "Surely, if the caravan is to pass through the desert, it would be better to leave these poor limping ones at home! How can they ever be brought to Jerusalem?" But the Lord said, "The blind shall be led, and the lame shall be carried, but they must not be left behind." Now, there are some who are *morally* lame. If ever they enter into life, it will be among the crippled and the maimed. They seem as if they could not walk uprightly, there is a limp in their gait. Their knees are weak, they cannot pray as they would. Lame sinners—are you here tonight? Do you feel as if you cannot get to Christ, and cannot pray, and cannot do anything right? Well, do but cry to Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Turn your eyes to Christ, think of Him as He hung upon the cross and trust Him to save you, and you shall find that, lame as you are, you shall be brought safely home! Mr. Ready-to-Halt shall get to heaven as surely as Mr. Great-Heart himself!

Then there were some others of whom it was said that they could not possibly join the caravan—"*the woman with child and her that travails with child*." These were certainly unfit to go—they were in such a weak state that they could not take that long journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, yet the Lord said, "I will gather them and bring them," and so He did! Well, there are some like them in our midst tonight, burdened ones who have a load of sin pressing upon them, fainting ones whose souls are in a sacred travail. They would gladly run, but they cannot even stand! And they are all too apt to fall. But, O you who are thus soul-distressed, the blessing is that Jesus Christ will not leave you behind! You shall be brought with the rest of the chosen seed to the heavenly Jerusalem to praise and magnify your great deliverer forever and ever!

III. Now in the third place, we have in the text not only deity manifested, and difficulties removed, but we also have DESCRIPTIONS GIVEN.

How shall this great company be brought to the Jerusalem which is above? Listen! There is a mighty host on the march, but I hear no sound of trumpet, no voice of mirth, no song of joy! What do I hear? Weeping, mourning, lamentation—"*They shall come with weeping.*" That is the music to which sinners usually set out for the heavenly Canaan—seldom if ever is that start made without tears! It is not the shriek of despair. It is not the groan of disappointment. It is not the yell of rage, and hate. It is the plaintive wail of a soul that says to God, "I have sinned against heaven and before You, and are no more worthy to be called Your son." From those who compose that throng you may, every now and then, catch such sorrowful sentences as these, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." "My sorrow is continually before me. And I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sins." This is the kind of music that we hear from those who are setting out for heaven! Have you, my friend, ever practiced it? You will never sing in glory if you have never wept over your sin! I do not merely mean such tears as men and women shed, though these will probably not be absent, but I mean that you will experience that spiritual sorrow which is often too deep for tears. May God the Holy Spirit teach us to weep at the remembrance of our sin, to weep at the foot of the cross as we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born!

Listen again! Now I hear another note rising from the great caravan, the note of supplication. It is the hour of prayer. They have got beyond weeping into anxiety, desire, petition, request—and I hear many voices crying, "Save Your people who trust in You. Be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause Your face to shine upon us." In our day, the supplication takes some such form as this, "Reveal Yourself unto us, O Christ, for in You do we put our trust! In Your name have we set up our banners. Come forth, O Lord, as our Helper and Deliverer!" The march is with weeping and supplication—and I believe these two things will attend that caravan right up to the brink of Jordan! The last tear will be dropped in Jordan's flowing stream, for we shall sorrow no more and repent no more when we stand before the eternal throne of God! And the last prayer—at any rate, the last prayer that has any sense of sin in it—shall be breathed on the bank of the river which we cross to enter into glory!

I must next direct your attention to something in our text about the road the caravan has to traverse—"I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters." They had to pass through a wilderness in going from Egypt to Canaan, and also in returning from Babylon. And we, also, have to traverse the wilderness of this world in journeying to the better Promised Land above. But as they had water in abundance on their long marches,

we, also, have "the rivers of waters" of divine grace and almighty love. When we first began to seek the Lord, we found that one of the channels in which the precious rivers were flowing was this precious Bible at which we still quench our spiritual thirst. Then, when we trusted in Jesus, and confessed our faith in Him, we found the two ordinances that He instituted—believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper—to be as refreshing to our spirit as cold water is to the thirsty. I trust that you, beloved, while sitting under the sound of the word of God, have often been able to drink of the brook by the way. And certainly private prayer and intimate fellowship with God, and, above all, the secret and mysterious indwelling of the Holy Spirit have caused you "to walk by the rivers of waters," so that although the earth is in itself arid, "a dry and thirsty land where no water is," you have found that from the foot of the cross there flows a living stream from which all the chosen may continue to drink until they come to that "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

In the description of the caravan route we are next told that it is "*a straight way*." The path to heaven is not at all difficult to find. It would be very difficult to find the way to heaven by the rites and ceremonies about which some are so particular, but to those who trust in Jesus, the way of salvation is a very simple one, so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool in other things, need not err therein! If any of you are trying to find your way to heaven by the road of your own good works, you may well be puzzled, for you are off the right track altogether! But the believer's path is straight and plain. He trusts and he is saved! He looks and he lives! He believes God's word and he proves that it is true! You know that the way of policy, such as ungodly men often follow in this world, is a very crooked way, and Christians are sometimes tempted to tread that treacherous path. But that is the slimy way into which the devil led our first parents, and nothing but evil can come to those who walk in it! The giving up of the whole heart and soul to Christ is the simple way of being saved—and then yielding complete obedience to Christ is the simple way of living. The Lord's promise is, "I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way"—not in a crooked, twisting, winding, in-and-out way, but in a straight way—the way of faith in Christ and of unquestioning obedience to His commands.

The description of this straight way concludes thus, "Wherein they shall not stumble." It is a good thing to have a straight road, but it is a better thing to have also a sure foot! And God, who teaches His people to do right, also gives them grace to do it. These blind ones and lame ones and weak ones of whom I have been speaking, are upheld by sovereign grace in the narrow way in which the Lord is leading them. My eye seems to catch the glorious vision! I see the blind finding their way to the great center of eternal blessedness. I see the lame come running as though they had wings on their feet to speed them onward to the pearly gates above! I see the vast blood-bought throng, from the North, and the South, and the East, and the West, casting away, by divine grace, their

burden and their cares! And with the fetters of their sins snapped forever, streaming in crowds to the one blessed center—

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest"—

where we ourselves expect, by-and-by, to be! Angels and the redeemed from among men must be continually witnessing the arrival of those who, first chosen by the Father, then redeemed by the Son, then regenerated by the Holy Spirit, have repented of sin and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and by grace have been preserved in their march through the wilderness and brought home to that blessed city from which they shall go no more out forever! Well may we sing—

"O Paradise eternal!
What bliss to enter you,
And once within your portals,
Secure forever be!
In you no sin nor sorrow,
No pain nor death is known—
But pure glad life, enduring
As heaven's benignant throne!
There all around shall love us,
And we return their love
One band of happy spirits,
One family above."

IV. Now I must close when I have spoken but for a minute upon the last point, which is DIGNITY BESTOWED. "For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born."

Those who are brought out of the bondage of sin, as Israel was brought out of Egypt and Babylon, by the almighty power and grace of God, are acknowledged by Him as His children. John writes concerning Jesus, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave Him power (the right, or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." This relationship cannot be disputed and cannot be disturbed—and this is the relationship which exists between God and every pardoned sinner! Happy soul! Though once in the family of Satan and an heir of wrath, you are now a child and an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!

I think there are some here whose mouths are set a-watering for this same blessing and who are longing to be found among the innumerable multitude who shall be gathered in the heavenly Jerusalem at the last! Well, if you truly desire to be the Lord's, that is a sign and token that the Lord also desires to have you as His child! That is a true declaration in one of our hymns—

"No sinner can be beforehand with You."

If you really desire to have God as your God, and Christ as your Savior, God desires it, too, and Christ desires it. If you are willing to be saved, do not imagine that Christ is unwilling to save you! If you are coming to Christ, Christ is coming to you. No, He HAS come to you, or you would never want to come to Him! "Only believe." These are Christ's words to you now—believe that He is able to save you through the merit of His

atoning sacrifice and through the prevalence of His intercession before His Father's throne above. Trust Him! Trust Him to save you now, and then you also shall be among the redeemed of the Lord who shall return and come with singing unto Zion! Everlasting joy shall be upon your head! You shall obtain gladness and joy—and sorrow and mourning shall flee away from you forever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:1-28.

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.* How divinely He talks—as only God can talk! These people had rejected Him, yet He says, "They shall be My people," not only some of them, but all of them! "I will be the God of all the families of Israel." Behold the wonderful power of divine grace upon the hearts of rebellious sinners. There are no "ifs," and no, "buts," here! It is, "I will" and, "they shall." God knows how to work out His own purposes of love and mercy!

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.* If we ever do get true rest of soul, God must cause us to rest. As David said, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." The rest of the heart is a miracle of divine power!

3. *The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.* [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 all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is the source of everything that is good and gracious— "everlasting love." When God has once set that love upon His people, anything and everything that is for their good may come out of it! All temporal good and all eternal blessings will come out of everlasting love. Oh, that we might, each one of us, have grace to appropriate these blessed words to himself—"I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." They were given to Israel of old, but the spiritual Israel possess all the privileges of the natural Israel, and much more.

4. *Again I will build you, and you shall be built.* Whatever God does is done effectually—there is never any failure in His work.

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.* They had wept and mourned, but they were to dance! They had been very sad and disconsolate, but they were to take down their harps from the willows, and even to have their tabrets or timbrels again.

5. *You shall yet plant vines upon the mountain of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.* God makes the luxuries of grace to be common things to His people. Fare that once seemed so

rare as to be enjoyed only on high days and holidays shall become everyday meat to His people when their Lord reveals Himself to them!

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.* For many a year Israel had gone to Bethel to worship the calves, or stayed at home to adore the shrine of Ashtaroth. Now they were to go to Zion to serve Jehovah! See what the grace of God can do even for idolaters? If any of us have been bowing down to our idols, may we this day turn to the living God! May the power of His grace lead us to go heartily and unanimously to worship 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 from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.* Whatever God does, He does thoroughly. When He shall restore His ancient people, He will not leave the weak ones behind and if, today, we are enjoying His presence, the most afflicted and the most infirm among us shall know what the joy of the Lord means! The Lord grant it, and we will praise His holy name.

9. *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them.* Weeping and prayer go well together. There is no prayer like a wet prayer saturated with the tears of repentance.

9. *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way*— Hear this, you mourners! God will supply your need with rivers of waters, and He will make you walk in a straight way. Sometimes we are perplexed because the road seems to wind in and out like a labyrinth, but God can lead us in a straight way! "I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way"—

9. *Wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is My first-born.* They had forgotten their relationship to Jehovah, but He still remembered that they were His children.

10, 11. *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 and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.* They were the Lord's chosen people even when they were in captivity in Babylon! He had scattered them because of their sin, but He would gather them in His mercy.

12-14. *Therefore they shall come and bring 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: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; 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, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness says the*

LORD. What a blessed change this was for those who had sorrowfully cried, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" And we rejoice in a still greater change when the Lord brings us into spiritual liberty!

15-17. *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. 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.* A mother's sorrow over her lost babies is very great and long-enduring, but if she is a Christian, she shall meet them again in the land of the blessed, and shall be parted from them no more forever.

18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.* [See Sermons #743, Volume 13—EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF and #2104, Volume 35—THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a wonderfully expressive word that word, "bemoaning," is!

18, 19. *You have chastised me and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn You me, and I shall be turned; for You are the LORD my God. 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.* Hear what the Lord says about these bemoaning ones, these sin-loathing ones—

20. *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* Or we may render it, "Is this Ephraim, My dear son? Is this My pleasant child?" He is all that now that, and he begins to hate his sin!

20. *For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* Think of this, you who forget your God, you backsliders, wanderers from your Father's house!

20, 21. *Therefore My heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the LORD. Set you up way marks, make you high heaps.* Raise signs along the road at various points to let other travelers know the way in which they should go.

21, 22. *Set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? for the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.* Whereas the enemy had compassed Jerusalem round about, now Jerusalem was to be the besieger, and to compass her enemies and defeat them. Some interpreters think this is an allusion to the birth of the Savior, that "new thing in the earth"—the incarnation of the Son of God.

23-25. *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. This prophecy is to be fulfilled in the restoration of Israel to Palestine. Until that happens, the promise bears a spiritual meaning to all the children of God. O weary soul, you shall be satiated—that is more than being satisfied! You shall have as much of holiness and joy as you can hold! Plead His promise now, O sorrowful soul, and may God fulfill it to you!

26. *Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.* Well might it be. Poor Jeremiah, who so often wept over the woes of Israel, was the very man to be refreshed when he heard from God that He would visit His people in mercy, and bring them back to their own land! Happy dreamer, who dreams such a blessed dream as this, a dream that came true in due time!

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.* What a black list of words we first have here! God's way of dealing with His people when they wander away from Him is very stern. They must be brought back, but it will be over a very rough road. The Lord says that He "watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict." And in the same measure He now declares that He will watch over them to do them good. As our tribulations abound, so also shall our consolations abound by Christ Jesus! If you have been bitterly convicted of sin, you shall be sweetly convicted of pardon. The deeper God digs the foundation, the higher He means to build the house. Those who are brought to Him in great affliction very often afterwards know more of Christ and more of the love of God than any others!

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CHRIST THE SEEKER AND SAVIOR OF THE LOST
NO. 3309

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1912.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
Luke 19:10.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are sermons #204, Volume 4—THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN; #1100, Volume 19—GOOD NEWS FOR THE LOST; #2756 Volume 47—SAVING THE LOST; and #3050, Volume 53—THE ERRAND OF MERCY—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE have now considered six of the glorious achievements of our divine Lord and Savior, and it is time to conclude the series. [The other sermons in the series are #1325, Volume 22—CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW; #1326, Volume 22—CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN; #1327, Volume 22—CHRIST THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD; #1328, Volume 22—CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW; #1329, Volume 22—CHRIST THE DESTROYER OF DEATH; and #273, Volume 5—CHRIST TRIUMPHANT——read/download all these sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How shall we crown the edifice? The best wine should be kept for the last, but where shall we find it? The choice is wide, but amid so many wonders, which shall we select? What shall be the seventh great work concerning which we shall extol Him? Many marvels suggested themselves to me and each one was, assuredly, worthy to occupy the place, but as I could not take all, I resolved to close with one of the simplest and most practical. *His saving sinners* seemed to me to be practically the chief of all His works, for it was for this purpose that the rest of His achievements were attempted and performed. Had it not been for the salvation of men, I know not that we had ever known our Lord as the destroyer of death or the overcomer of Satan and, certainty, if He had not saved the lost, I am unable to perceive what glory there would have been in the overcoming of the world, or in the creation of all things new. The salvation of men was the prize of His life's race—for this He girded up His loins and distanced every adversary! The salvation of the lost was "the joy which was set before Him," for the sake of which He "endured the cross, despising the shame."

Although it seems, at first sight, that in selecting our present topic we have descended from the transcendent glories of our champion to more common things, it is, indeed, *not* so. The victories of our Lord which are written in the book of the wars of the Lord, when He led captivity captive and robbed death of his sting, may strike us as more astounding, but yet in very truth this is the summing-up of His great works—this is the

issue, the flower, and crown of all! "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," is a sentence as majestic as prophet ever penned when in fullest inspiration he extolled the Prince of Peace!

I. Notice, first, OUR LORD'S GRACIOUS MISSION—"*The Son of man is come.*"

When He was here among men, He could use the present tense and say, "*is* come." That was an improvement upon what prophets had to say, for they only spoke of Him as the coming one—as one who, in the fullness of time, would be manifested. The promise was amazing, but what shall I say of the actual performance when the word made flesh could say, "The Son of man *is* come"? To us, today, the coming of Christ to seek and to save the lost is an accomplished fact, a matter of history, most sure and certain. And what a fact it is! You have often thought of it, but have you ever worked your mind into the very heart of it—that God has actually visited this world in human form—that He before whom angels bow has actually been here, in fashion like ourselves, feeding the hungry crowds of Palestine, healing their sick and raising their dead? I know not what may be the peculiar boast of other planets, but this poor star cannot be excelled, for on this world the creator has stood! This earth has been trodden by the feet of God and yet it was not crushed beneath the mighty burden because He designed to link His deity with our humanity! The incarnation is a wonder of wonders, but it does not belong to the realm of imagination or even of expectation, for it has actually been beheld by mortal eyes! We claim your faith for a fact which has really taken place. If we asked you by faith to expect a marvel yet to come, we trust the Spirit of God would enable you to do so, that, like Abraham, you might foresee the blessing and be glad. But the miracle of miracles has been worked! The Son of the Highest *has been here*. From Bethlehem to Calvary, He has traversed life's pilgrimage. Thirty years or more yonder canopy of sky hung above the head of deity in human form. O wondrous joy! Say rather, O matchless hive of perfect sweets, for a thousand joys lie close compacted in the word, "Immanuel"—God With Us!—

"Welcome to our wondering sigh.
Eternity within a span!
Summer in winter! Day in night!
Heaven in earth! And God in man!
Great little one, whose glorious birth
Lifts the earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth."

Our Lord had come upon His sacred mission as soon as He was really the Son of man, for before He was known only as the Son of God. Others had borne the name of "son of man," but none deserved it so well as He. Ezekiel, for reasons which we need not now stay to consider, is called, "son of man," a very large number of times. Perhaps, like John in Christ's own day, Ezekiel had much of the spirit and character which were manifest in our Lord—and so the name was the more suitable to him. Certainly he had Christ's eagle eyes, Christ's spiritual nature and

was filled with light and knowledge—and so, as if to remind him that he who is like his Lord in excellence must also have fellowship with Him in lowliness, he is again and again reminded that he is still "the son of man."

When our Lord came into this world, He seemed to select that title of "Son of man" for Himself and make it His own special name—and worthily so, for other men are the sons of this man or that, but His is no restricted humanity—it is manhood of the universal type. Jesus is not born into the race of the Jews so much as into the human family. He is not to be claimed for any age, place, or nationality—He is "the Son of man"—and this, I say, is how He comes to man. So that as long as Christ is the Son of man, we may still say of Him that He comes to seek and to save the lost! I know that, in person, He has gone back to heaven. I know that the cloud has received Him out of our sight. But the very taking upon Himself of our humanity was a coming down to seek and save the lost—and as He has not laid that humanity aside, He is still with men, continuing to seek and to save even to this day! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." So that, if I treat the text as if Jesus were still among us, I would not err, for He is here in the sense of seeking the same end, though it is by His Spirit and by His servants rather than by His own bodily presence! He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," and that saying is found in connection with the agency which He has established for seeking and saving lost men, by making men disciples and teaching them the way of life! As long as this dispensation lasts, it will still be true that the great Savior and friend of man has come among us and is seeking and saving the lost!

II. Now, secondly, let us see HIS MAIN INTENT IN COMING HERE BELOW—"The Son of man is come *to seek and to save that which was lost.*" The intent breaks itself up into two points, *the persons*—the lost, and *the purpose*—the seeking and the saving of them.

Christ's main intent in coming here bore upon *the lost*. Proud men do not like us to preach this truth of God. It was but yesterday that I saw it alleged against Christianity that it discourages virtue and patronizes the guilty. They say that we ministers lift the sinful into the most prominent place and give them the preference above the moral and excellent in our preaching. This is a soft impeachment to which, in a better sense than is intended by those who bring it, we are glad to plead guilty! We may well be excused if our preaching seeks the lost, for these are the persons whom our Lord has come to seek and to save. The main stress and intent of the incarnation of God in the person of Christ lies with the guilty, the fallen, the unworthy, the lost; His errand of mercy has nothing to do with those who are good and righteous in themselves, if such there is, but it has to do with sinners—real sinners, guilty not of nominal but of actual sins—and who have gone so far therein as to be lost! Why do you quibble

at this? Why should He come to seek and to save that which is not lost? Should the shepherd seek the sheep which has not gone astray? Answer me. Why should He come to be the physician of those who are not lost? Should He light a candle and sweep the house to look for pieces of silver which are not lost, but lie bright and untarnished in His hand? To what purpose would this be? Would you have Him paint the lily and gild it with refined gold? Would you make Him a mere busybody offering superfluous aid? With those who think themselves pure, what has the cleaning blood of Jesus to do? Is the Savior a needless person and was His work a needless business? It must be so if it is intended for those who do not need it!

Who needs a Savior most? Answer this. Should not mercy exercise itself where there is most need for it? This world is like a battlefield over which the fierce hurricanes of conflict have swept and the surgeons have come to deal with those who lie upon its plains. To whom shall they go first? Shall they not turn first to those who are most terribly wounded and who are bleeding almost to the death? Will you quarrel with us if we declare that the first to be taken to the hospital should be those who are in direst need? Will you be angry if we say that the liniment is for the wounded, that the bandages are for the broken limbs and that the medicine is for the sick? A strange quarrel this would be! If ever it should begin, a fool must begin it, for no wise man would ever raise the question! Blessed Christ of God, we will not quibble because You also come in Your mercy to those who need You most, even to the lost!

And who do you think will love Him best and so reward Him best if He comes to them? The proud Pharisee in his perfection of imaginary holiness—will he value the Christ who tells him that He comes to wash away his sin? He turns upon his heels with scorn! What sin has *he* to wash away? The self-satisfied moralist who dares to say, "All these commands I have kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"—is he likely to become a disciple of the great teacher whose first lessons are, "Yet must be born-again," and, "Except you are converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"? The fact is that Jesus has no form or comeliness to those who have a beauty of their own! Christ gets most love where He pardons most sin. And the sweetest obedience to His command is rendered by those who once were most disobedient, but who are gently led beneath His sway by the force of grateful love. Yon sterile hills of fancied holiness yield Him no harvest and, therefore, He leaves them to their own boastfulness. But meanwhile, He scatters plenteous grain among the lowlands where the ground is broken and lies ready for the seed. He preaches pardon to those who know that they have sinned and confess the same—but those who have no sin, have no Savior.

But after all, dear friends, if Jesus did not direct His mission of salvation to the lost, to whom else could He have directed it? For truth to say, there are none but the lost on the face of this whole earth! The

proudest Pharisee is but a sinner and all the more a sinner for his pride. And the moralist who thinks himself so clean is filthy in the sight of God! Though he labors to conceal the spots, the self-righteous man is a leper and will forever remain so unless Jesus cleanses Him. It is a thrice-blessed fact that Christ came to save the lost, for such are we all—and had He not made lost ones the object of His searching and saving, there would have been no hope for us!

What is meant by "*the lost*"? Well, "lost" is a dreadful fall! Lost by inheriting a depraved nature! Lost by your own acts and deeds! Lost by a thousand omissions of duty and lost by countless deeds of overt transgressions! Lost by habits of sin! Lost by tendencies and inclinations which have gathered strength and dragged you downward into deeper and yet deeper darkness and iniquity! Lost by inclinations which never turn of themselves to that which is right, but which resolutely refuse divine mercy and infinite love! We are lost willfully and willingly—lost perversely and utterly! But still lost of our own accord which is the worst kind of being lost that can possibly be! We are lost to God, who has lost our heart's love, lost our confidence, and lost our obedience! We are lost to the church, which we cannot serve; lost to the truth of God which we will not see; lost to right, whose cause we do not uphold; lost to heaven, into whose sacred precincts we can never come! Lost—so lost that unless almighty mercy shall intervene, we shall be cast into the pit that is bottomless to sink forever! "LOST! LOST! LOST!" The very word seems to me to be the knell of an impenitent soul. *"Lost! Lost! Lost!"* I hear the dismal tolling! A soul's funeral is being celebrated! Endless death has befallen an immortal being! It comes up as a dreadful wail from far beyond the boundaries of life and hope, forth from those dreary regions of death and darkness where spirits dwell who would not have Christ to reign over them. *"Lost! Lost! Lost!"* Ah me, that ever these ears should hear that doleful sound! Better a whole world on fire than a lost soul! Better every star quenched and yon skies a wreck than a single soul to be lost!

Now, it is for souls that soon will be in that worst of all conditions and are already preparing for it, that Jesus came here seeking and saving. What joy is this! In proportion as the grief was heavy, the joy is great. If souls can be delivered from going down into such a state, it is a feat worthy of God, Himself. Glory be to His holy name!

Now note the purpose—He "came *to seek and to save* that which was lost." Ah, this is a truth of God worth preaching—this doctrine that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save sinners. Some people tell me that He comes "to make men salvable"—to put all men into such a condition that it is possible that they may be saved. I believe that men *may* be saved, but I see no very great wonder in the fact. It does not stir my blood, or incite me to dance for joy. I do not know that it makes even the slightest impression upon me! I can go to sleep and I am sure I shall not wake up

in the night and long to get up at once to preach such poor news as that Jesus came to make men salvable! I would not have become a minister to preach so meager a gospel! But that our Lord came to *save* men—that is substantial and satisfying news, far exceeding the other! To make men salvable is a skeleton, bones and skin—but to save them is a living blessing! To make men salvable is a farthing blessing, but to save them is untold wealth!

They say also that Jesus came into the world to let men be saved if they will. I am glad of that. It is true and good. I believe that every truly willing soul may be saved, yes, such an one is, in a measure, saved already! If there is a sincere will towards salvation—understand, towards *true salvation*—that very will indicates that a great change has commenced within the man and I rejoice that it is written, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But now just read our text as if it ran thus—"The Son of man is come that whoever wills to be saved may be saved." The sense is good, but very feeble! How the wine is mixed with water! But, oh, what flavor, what essence, what marrow, what fatness there is in this, "The Son of man is come *to seek and to save that which was lost*"! This is the gospel! And the other is but a part of the Good News. Again, read the text another way, "The Son of man is come to help men to save themselves." This will not do at all. It is something like helping men to march who have no legs, or helping blind men to judge colors, or helping dead men to make themselves alive. Help to those who can do nothing at all is a miserable mockery. No, we cannot have our Bibles altered that way! We will let the text stand as it is—in all its fullness of divine grace!

Nor is it even possible for us to cut down our text to this, "The Son of man is come to save those who seek Him." If it ran so, I would bless God forever for it, for it would be a glorious gospel text even then. There are Scriptures which teach that doctrine and it is a blessed truth for which to be supremely grateful. But my text goes very much further, for it says, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." I met with a question and answer the other day, "Where did the Samaritan woman find the Savior? She found Him at the well." I do not quibble at that mode of expression, but mark you, that is not how I would ask the question! I should rather inquire, "Where did the Savior find the woman?" For, surely, she was not seeking Him—I see no indication that she had any such idea in her mind! She was looking after water from the well—and if she had found that—she would have gone home satisfied. No, those are the finders, surely, who are the seekers! And so it must be that Christ found the woman, for He was looking after her. While I bless my Lord that He will save you if you seek Him, I am still more thankful that there are men and women whom He will seek as well as save! No, that there never was a soul saved yet but Christ sought it first! He is the author as well as the finisher of faith. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending of the work of grace! Let His name be

praised for it! The text must stand as it is and we will adore the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love which has made it true! Successful seeking and complete saving belong to the Son of man—some of us have experienced both. Oh, that all of us might yet do so!

III. Now we pass on, thirdly, to notice A DOUBLE DIFFICULTY.

We see Christ's errand and we at once perceive that He has come to deal with people who are lost in two senses and in each sense a miracle of grace is needed for their deliverance. They are so lost that they need *saving*, but they are also so lost that they need *seeking*. Persons may be so lost on land or on sea as to need saving and not seeking—but we were spiritually lost so as to need both saving and seeking too.

I heard, a little while ago, of a party of friends who went to the lakes of Cumberland and endeavored to climb the Langdale Pikes. One of the many found the labor of the ascent too wearisome and so resolved that he would go back to the little inn from which they started. Being a wiser man than some, in his own esteem, he did not take the winding path by which they had ascended. He thought he would go straight down, for he could see the house just below, and fancied he should pitch upon it all of a sudden and show the mountaineers that a straight line is the nearest road! Well, after descending and descending, leaping many a rugged place, he found himself, at last, on a ledge from which he could go neither up nor down. After many vain attempts, he saw that he was a prisoner. In a state of wild terror, he took off his garments and tore them into shreds to make a line and, tying the pieces together, he let them down, but he found that they reached nowhere at all in the great and apparently unfathomable abyss which yawned below him. So he began to call aloud, but no answer came from the surrounding hills except the echo of his own voice! He shouted by the half-hour together, but there was no answer, neither was there anyone within sight. His horror nearly drove him out of his wits. At last, to his intense joy, he saw a figure move in the plain below and he began to shout again. Happily it was a woman, who, hearing his voice, stopped. And as he called again, she came nearer and called out, "Stay where you are. Do not stir an inch. Stay where you are!" He was lost, but he no longer needed seeking, for some friendly shepherds soon saw where he was. All he needed was saving—and so the mountaineers descended with a rope, as they were known to do when rescuing lost sheep—and soon brought him out of danger. He was lost, but he did not need seeking—they could see where he was.

A month or two ago, you must have noticed in the papers a notice about a gentleman who had left Wastwater some days before to go over the hills, and had not been heard of since. His friends had to *seek* him so that, if still alive, he might be saved. And there were those who traversed hill and moor to find him, but they were unable to save him because they could not find him. If they could have found out where he was, I do not doubt that had he been in the most imminent peril, the bold hill-men

would have risked their lives to rescue him. But, alas, he was never found or saved—his lifeless corpse was the only discovery which was ultimately made. This last is the true image of our deplorable condition—we are by nature, lost—so that nothing but seeking and saving together will be of a service to us.

Let us see how our Lord accomplished *the saving*. That has been done, completely done. My dear friends, you and I were lost in the sense of having broken the law of God and having incurred His anger. But Jesus came and took the sin of men upon Himself and, as their surety and their substitute, He bore the wrath of God so that God can henceforth be just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I would like to die talking of this blessed doctrine of substitution and I intend, by divine grace, to live proclaiming it, for it is the keystone of the gospel! Jesus Christ did literally take upon Himself the transgression and iniquity of His people and was made a curse for them, seeing that they had fallen under the wrath of God! And now every soul that believes in Jesus is saved because Jesus has taken away the penalty and the curse due to sin. In this let us rejoice!

Christ has also saved us from the power of Satan. The seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head so that Satan's power is broken. Jesus has, by His almighty power, set us free from hell's horrible yoke by vanquishing the prince of darkness and has, moreover, saved us from the power of death, so that to believers it shall not be death to die! Christ has saved us from sin and all its consequence by His most precious death and resurrection—

"See God descending in the human frame,
The offended suffering in the offender's name!
All your deeds to Him imputed see,
And all His righteousness devolved on thee."

Our Lord's saving work is, in this sense, finished, but there is always going on in the world His *seeking* work—and I want you to think of it.

He can save us, blessed be His name! He has nothing more to do in order to save any soul that trusts Him. But we have wandered very far away, and are hidden in the wilds of the far country. We are very hungry and though there is bread enough and to spare, what is the use of it while we are lost to the home in which it is so freely distributed? We are very ragged—there is the best robe and it is ready to be put on us—but what is the good of it while we are so far away? There are the music and the dancing to make us glad and to cheer us, but what is the use of them while we still tarry among the swine? Here, then, is the great difficulty. Our Lord must find us, follow our wanderings and, treating us like lost sheep, He must bear us back upon His shoulders rejoicing!

Many need seeking because they are lost in bad company. Evil companions gather around men and keep them away from hearing the gospel by which men are saved. There is no place to be lost in like a great city. When a man wants to escape the police, he does not run to a little

village—he hides away in a thickly populated town. So this London has many hiding places where sinners get out of the gospel's way! They lose themselves in the great crowd and are held captives by the slavish customs of the evil society into which they are absorbed. If they do but relent for a moment, some worldling plucks them by the sleeve and says, "Let us be merry while we may! Why are you so melancholy?" Satan carefully sets a watch upon his younger servants to prevent their escaping from his hands. These pickets labor earnestly to prevent the man from hearing the good news of salvation lest he should be converted. Sinners therefore need seeking out from among the society in which they are imbedded—they need as much seeking after as the pearls of the Arabian Gulf!

The Lord Jesus Christ, in seeking men, has to deal with deep-seated prejudices. Many refuse to hear the gospel—they would travel many miles to escape its warning message! Some are too wise, or too rich to have the gospel preached to them. Pity the poor rich! The poor man has many missionaries and evangelists seeking him out, but who goes after the great ones? Some come from the East to worship, but who comes from the West? Many more will find their way to heaven out of the back slums than ever will come out of the great mansions and palaces! Jesus must seek His elect among the rich under great disadvantages, but blessed be His name, He does seek them!

See how vices and depraved habits hold the mass of the poor classes! What a seeking out is needed among working men, for many of them are besotted with drunkenness! Look at the large part of London on the Lord's Day—what have the working population been doing? They have been reading the Sunday newspaper and loafing about the house in their shirtsleeves and waiting at the posts of the doors—not of wisdom, but of the drink shop! These have been thirsting, but not after righteousness. Bacchus still remains the god of this city and multitudes are lost among the beer barrels and the spirit casks! In such pursuits men waste the blessed Sabbath hours. How shall they be sought out? The Lord Jesus is doing it by His Holy Spirit!

Alas, through their ill ways, men's ears are stopped, their eyes are blinded and their hearts hardened so that the messengers of mercy have need of great patience! It would be easy work to save men if they could but be made willing to receive the gospel, but they will not even *hear* it. When you do get them for a Sabbath day beneath the sound of a faithful ministry, how they struggle against it! They need seeking out 50 times over! You bring them right up to the light of God and flash it upon their eyes, but they willfully and deliberately close their eyelids to it! You set before them life and death, and plead with them even unto tears that they would lay hold on eternal life—but they choose their own delusions. So long and so patiently must they be sought that this seeking work as

much reveals the gracious heart of Jesus as did the saving work which He fulfilled upon the bloody tree!

Notice how He is daily accomplishing His search of love. Every day, beloved, Jesus Christ is seeking men's *ears*. Would you believe it? He has to go about with wondrous wisdom even to get a hearing. They do not want to know the love message of their God. "God so loved the world"—they know all about that and do not want to hear any more. There is an infinite sacrifice for sin—they turn on their heels at such stale news. They would rather read an article in an infidel review or a paragraph in the *Police News*. They want to know no more of spiritual matters! The Lord Jesus, in order to get at their ears, cries aloud by many earnest voices. Thank God He has ministers yet alive who mean to be heard and will not be put off with denials! Even the din of this noisy world cannot drown their testimony. Cry aloud, my brother! Cry aloud and spare not, for cry as you may, you will not cry too loudly, for man will not hear if he can help it. Our Lord, to win men's ears, must use a variety of voices—musical or rough—as His wisdom judges best. Sometimes He gains an audience by an odd voice whose quaintness wins attention—He will reach men when He means to save them!

That was an odd voice—surely the oddest I ever heard of—which came a little time ago in an Italian town to one of God's elect ones there. He was so depraved that he actually fell to worshiping the devil rather than God! It chanced, one day that a rumor went through the city that a Protestant was coming there to preach. The priest, alarmed for his religion, told the people from the altar that Protestants worshiped the devil and he charged them not to go near the meeting room. The news, as you may judge, excited no horror in the devil-worshipper's mind. "Yes," he thought, "then I shall meet with brethren!" And so he went to hear our beloved missionary who is now laboring in Rome. Nothing else would have drawn the poor wretch to hear the good word—but this lie of the priest's was overruled to that end! He went and heard, not of the devil, but of the devil's conqueror—and before long was found at Jesus' feet—a sinner saved!

I have known my Lord, when His ministers have failed, take out an arrow from His quiver and fix upon it a message, put it to His bow and shoot it right into a man's bosom till it wounded him. And as it wounded him and he lay moaning upon his bed, the message has been and accepted. I mean, that many a man in sickness has been brought to hear the message of salvation. Often, losses and crosses have brought men to Jesus' feet. Jesus seeks them so. When Absalom could not get an interview with Joab, he said, "Go and set his barley field on fire." Then Joab came down to Absalom and said, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" The Lord sometimes sends losses of property to men who will not otherwise hear Him—and at last their ears are gained! Whom He seeks, He in due time finds!

Well, after my Lord has sought men's ears, He next seeks their *desires*. He will have them long for a Savior—and this is not an easy thing to accomplish! But He has a way of showing men their sins—and then they wish for mercy. He shows them at other times the great joy of the Christian life—and then they wish to enter into the same delight. I pray that at this hour He may lead some of you to consider the danger you are in while you are yet unconverted, that so you may begin to desire Christ and in this way may be sought and found by Him!

Then He seeks their *faith*. He seeks that they may come and trust Him—and He has ways of bringing them to this, for He shows them the suitability of His salvation and the fullness and the freeness of it! And when He has exhibited Himself as the sinners' Savior, and such a Savior as they need, then do they come and put their trust in Him. Then has He found them and saved them!

He seeks their *hearts*, for it is their hearts that He has lost. And oh, how sweetly does Christ, by the Holy Spirit, win men's affection and hold them fast! I shall never forget how He won mine—how first He gained my ear and then my desires, so that I wished to have Him for my Lord! And then He taught me to trust Him. And when I had trusted Him and found that I was saved, then I loved Him and I love Him still! So, dear hearer, if Jesus Christ finds you, you will become His loving follower forever! I have been praying that He would bring this message under the notice of those whom He means to bless. I have asked Him to let me sow in good soil. I hope that among those who read these pages, there will be many whom the Lord Jesus has specially redeemed with His most precious blood—and I trust that He will appear at once to them and say to each one of them, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." May the eternal Spirit open your ears to hear the still small voice of love! By omnipotent grace may you be made to yield to the Lord with the cheerful consent of your conquered will and accept that glorious grace which will bring you to praise the seeking and saving Savior in heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:29-37.
(Concluded from Sermon #3308).

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.* God was going to deal with the Israelites individually, personally—and that is how He will deal with us.

31. *Behold.* Here is something worth beholding—read this great promise with tears in your eyes—

31-33. *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 you, 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. [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.] It is all wills and shalls—it is all covenant life! No longer the law engraved upon the tablets of stone, but the law written on the heart—no more the Lord's command without man's power and will to obey it, but God will renew our nature and change our disposition so that we shall love to do what once we loathed—and shall loathe the sins that we once loved! What a wonderful mass of mercies is included in the covenant of grace!

34. *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*—"All your children shall be taught of the Lord." All believers, whatever else they may not know, do know their Lord—"they shall all know Me"—

34. *From the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD.* How will they learn to know the Lord? Well, it will be in a very wonderful way—

34. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* [See Sermon #2006, Volume 34—KNOWING THE LORD THROUGH PARDONED SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Let me read that again, and may some poor wandering children of God hear the promise and be glad that it applies to them—"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

35-37. *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 these 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 foundation 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.*

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PROMPT OBEDIENCE
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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 11H, 1912,
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"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me."
Psalm 18:44.

THERE is no doubt that we have David speaking to us in this Psalm, but it is equally certain that we must not limit it to David. Paul quoted verses 2 and 49 as applying to David's Lord, and we shall not be wrong in following his example with regard to our text.

I. I am going to make several observations upon the text, and the first is that IT TELLS US THE SAVIOR'S CLAIMS UPON THE HEARTS OF MEN. He claims that they should obey Him and submit themselves unto Him. The great practical end of the gospel is to bring the human heart into obedience to Christ and to make the stubborn will acknowledge allegiance to His sway.

Now, in this matter many great mistakes are made by men. *Some think it is sufficient to go to a place of worship and to hear or repeat solemn words*. This is a good thing to do, of course, but if all ends there, the purpose of the gospel is not served. Such people will find, to their cost, that it is not the mere hearers of the word, but the *doers* of it who are blessed. We still need the message that the Apostle James wrote long ago, "If any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself and goes his way, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was." It is the wayside hearers who simply hear the word, but neither understanding nor receiving it, they derive no benefit from it. Let none of us be numbered among them, nor among those who merely repeat certain forms of words without feeling the force and power of them in their hearts.

Others think it is enough if they carefully attend to the gospel. If they do that, they seem to imagine that this is all that can be expected of them. This also is good as far as it goes—we have not a word to say against it, but much to say in its favor. But, my dear hearer, if you pay ever so much outward attention to the word of God, unless you submit your soul and spirit to its dominion, you cannot possibly expect to receive benefit from it. You are in the position of one who pays much attention to his physician's prescription who spells out the Latin words, notes the

quantities of the various drugs that are to be compounded, but who never gets a chemist to make up the prescription, or if he does go as far as that—never tastes the medicine! Such a man will never be cured of his malady in that way, nor will you be cured of your soul-sickness unless you actually take the remedy which the great physician has so graciously prescribed. You may carefully note all the bakers' shops that you pass on your way home tonight. You may correctly calculate the quantity of bread that would be required for your family—and you may accurately estimate what it would cost—yet your household will not be fed unless you actually purchase the bread and give to each one a portion in due season. And your soul will not be fed unless you really partake of the bread of life.

What Christ requires of you who hear His word is that *you should obey Him and submit yourselves unto Him*. How are you to do this? The Apostle John writes, "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." This is Christ's claim upon us, that we should trust Him—trust Him as our Savior, trust Him as our Lord and Master—trust Him so as to obey Him in all that He has commanded us. If we do this, we shall find that His commandments are not grievous and that obedience to them will yield to us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. He says to you, sinner, "Give up all other confidences and come and trust in Me. If you would be saved, do not merely hear Me say to you, 'Look unto Me,' but really look unto Me, believe in Me, trust Me, forsake all your false refuges, leave those Babel buildings of your own devices and come to the sure rock whereon a soul may safely build for time and for eternity." When you hear this command of Christ, give heed to it—obey Him and submit yourself to Him!

Then, if obedience to that command is truly rendered, there will follow obedience to all the Savior's commands. No man is really saved unless he is, in his heart, obedient to Christ. I do not say that you will be perfect, but you will desire to be so. I do not say that you will not be tempted to sin until you die, but there will be no sin that you will love, there will be no sin from which you will not long to be delivered. Your spirit will cheerfully bend down its neck to wear the collar of sacred service and as far as your inner and spiritual man is concerned, you will cry mightily unto God against the very thought of sin—and pray that you may walk in holiness and in the fear of the Lord all the days of your life.

If any of you have thought that trusting Christ does not involve obeying Him, you have made a great mistake. They do very wrong who cry up believing in Christ and yet depreciate obedience to Him, for obeying is believing in another form and springs out of believing. Neither may anyone say, "I will obey one command of Christ, but I will not obey another." The very principle of trustful obedience lies in your not making any choice as to which commands you will obey. A soldier asks no

question and makes no objection when he receives his orders—his captain bids him go and he goes—or he bids him come and he comes. He never says, "I will go thus far in obedience, but no further." So must it be with you if you enlist under the banner of the captain of our salvation—your obedience must be wholehearted and complete. If tonight you are the Lord's, you must say to Him out of the very depths of your soul, "Show me, my Master, what You would have me do. You have bidden me trust You, and I do trust You. And out of that trust springs a reverent desire to submit absolutely to Your holy will. Help me, by Your gracious Spirit, to obey You in everything. And from this time forth, O blessed Savior, reign as the undisputed Lord of my whole life!"

We see, then, what the claim on Christ upon the hearts of men really is. And we who preach the gospel must never rest satisfied until our hearers really submit themselves unto Him. It brings tears to our eyes as we recall how earnestly they often listen to our message—and how they even compliment us upon our faithfulness in delivering it—yet how they will be obedient to a part of it and yet be disobedient to the rest, for they will not obey Christ and submit themselves unto Him. Oh, that they had more submissive hearts, but neither you nor I can give them such hearts. We can proclaim the truth of God in their hearing and we can weep before the Lord if they do not receive it—but the power to save them lies not in human hands—we must look up to the almighty Savior and trust that He will bless the message which we have delivered in His name!

II. The second inference which we draw from the text is that IN ORDER TO RENDER OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST, THERE IS NO NEED OF A LONG PROBATION—"As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me."

It seems that some, as soon as they heard of Christ, yielded themselves up to Him. It used to be a very common notion, and the idea still prevails in some churches, that in order to have faith in Christ there must be long preparatory exercises. Many of the Puritans, excellent as they were, made a mistake in this matter. They felt afraid to say to a sinner, when they found him just as a sinner, "Believe on Christ"—they thought it was necessary that he should first undergo a certain amount of law-working and conviction plowing—and then they might come in with the preaching of the gospel. I owe much to Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, and I used to recommend it to others, but I do not do so now. That book does show the way of salvation, but it is done in a roundabout fashion—very different from the simple gospel plan, "Believe and live," "Look and be saved." It is true that many do have the experiences which Doddridge describes, but that is no proof that they *need* have them! It is probable that most Christians do go through that Slough of Despond which Bunyan so graphically describes, but it is not

absolutely necessary that any one of them should go through it! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," whether he has been in the Slough of Despond or not!

If it were necessary, I could pick out scores of members of this church whose conversion is beyond question, and who have been faithful followers of Christ for years, yet their faith in Christ came all of a sudden. The gospel just knocked at the door of their hearts and entered at once—no, in many cases, it seemed to enter without knocking! Think of Saul of Tarsus, "breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," yet suddenly arrested near Damascus, and crying out to that very Jesus whom he was persecuting, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Think of the jailer at Philippi—a rough heathen who was about to commit suicide, almost immediately crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" And very soon afterwards baptized, "believing in God with all his house." Think of the thief on the cross, joining with his fellow malefactor in reviling at Christ, yet presently praying, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," and receiving the cheering answer from Christ, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise"! These were sudden conversions which were worked without that long and painful preparation which has been so cried up in some of our churches that it has become a great hindrance to many! We must put nothing before the cross of Christ—His great atoning sacrifice is the one object to which we must direct the sinner's gaze! Genuine evangelical *repentance* runs in double harness with *faith* and they should never be separated. To suppose that we are to go through a sort of quarantine before we can be admitted into the harbor of salvation is a very serious mistake. Our text flatly contradicts this idea, for it says, "As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me."—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

There is life for a *look*—even though the heart should be as hard as the nether millstone! There is life for a *look*—even though as yet the character has undergone no change! There is life for a *look*—even though you cannot see any signs of grace—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

Jesus Christ does not look for anything in you except sin and need, but finds in Himself both the source of mercy and the means by which that mercy may come to the very chief of sinners. May the Holy Spirit make it very clear to you that there is no necessity for you to wait a long while before the blessing of salvation may be given to you, but that you may have it this very moment! The pool at Bethesda was only efficacious for the healing of the first one who stepped into the water after it had been troubled by the angel, so that the afflicted might wait there for years and still remain unhealed. But the pool which Christ filled with His precious blood always has efficacy in it, so that whoever steps in, though he may not have been waiting by the pool for even a minute, though it

may be the first time he ever heard of the precious blood of Christ—if he trusts in the finished work of God's dear Son, he shall be immediately saved!

III. A third remark which I think may be fairly based upon the text is this—IN SOME CASES, THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION WINS A VERY SPEEDY VICTORY.

It was very remarkable that three thousand persons should have believed on Christ after Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. We scarcely seem to expect, nowadays, to see three thousand souls converted, baptized and added to the church in a single day, but when the gospel was first proclaimed, converts were gathered very rapidly. It seemed as though a great pile of dry wood had been accumulated and it only needed a torch to set it aflame at once! In the time of the Reformation, so rapidly was the gospel spread that men said that the writings of Luther were borne on the wings of angels—and so many of all classes believed the truth of God that hallelujahs arose from the plowman in the field and the servants in the kitchen as well as from the lords and ladies of the land! "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it," and still greater the multitude of those that received it! When Whitefield preached to great crowds of people who had never heard the gospel before, it was like plowing virgin soil—the truth appealed to them with all the force of novelty—and also with the conviction that it was exactly suited to their case so that they received it with sudden joy and thousands were converted!

Many persons who have never previously listened to the gospel come to this Tabernacle—and it often happens that the very first sermon they hear is blessed to them! Last Tuesday, when I saw some 33 candidates for baptism, one or two of them said that they had never been to any place of worship until they came here. Curiosity had prompted them to come and they were surprised to find that the preacher seemed to know all about them, for his message exactly suited their case. They received the word suddenly, but so mightily did it affect them that they would not give it up, for it had come to them "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." There is no place where I feel so happy or so much at home in preaching as on this familiar spot—with your eyes fixed upon me and your heart drinking in the truth of God—but for the winning of souls in great numbers, give me a congregation that has never heard the gospel! If I were a fisherman and were asked where I would prefer to fish, I would answer, "Where nobody else has ever fished." So, if a preacher of the gospel might pick his place, he might well say, "Let me preach where the people have never yet heard the gospel." If we can get among certain classes of society, high or low, to whom the gospel is a novelty, I feel persuaded that the grand prophecy of the text shall be gloriously fulfilled in their midst—"As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me: the

strangers shall submit themselves unto Me." Let us *expect* this blessed result of our labors and be constantly in earnest breaking up fresh soil and casting the gospel net into waters that have never yet been fished. Oh, that some who are here for the first time tonight may obey Christ as soon as they hear of Him! He came into the world to save sinners! He took upon Himself our flesh and took upon Himself our sins—and suffered in our place for our sins—"the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." If we trust in Him who bore our sins in His own body on the cross, that trust brings us salvation! And it works in us peace and joy, gratitude and love—and helps us to serve the Lord with reverence and holy fear!

IV. Now we advance to a fourth point which is that STRANGERS WILL ALSO YIELD THEMSELVES TO CHRIST.

The point to which I want now to call your very special attention is not so much the suddenness of the conversion as the condition of the people who, according to our text, shall submit themselves to Christ. There are some who, in the fullest sense of the term, are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of praise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Some of you who regularly attend a place of worship, are "aliens" in the sense in which Paul used the word—you are like the mixed multitude that came up with the children of Israel out of Egypt. Though you are not part of "the commonwealth of Israel" spiritually, you are at present eternally mingled with the true Israelites, the believing children of Abraham. But there are many others who are in a very definite way, "strangers." The Sabbath bell brings no Sabbath music to them. They may rest on Sunday, but their rest consists in simply lolling about in their shirtsleeves and reading the Sunday newspaper. They never think of going into a place of worship unless it is for a wedding, or a funeral, or what they call "a christening." There are thousands in this so-called Christian land who have never looked inside a Bible and know absolutely nothing of its contents! I have no doubt that there are to be found in London thousands of persons who, if they were asked what is meant by the atonement, would reply that they had never heard of such a thing! And as to the simple doctrine of trusting for salvation to the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, there could not be a greater piece of news to many of our fellow citizens than this!

Well now, these people whom I have been describing are, indeed, strangers to Christ, yet He says in our text, "the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me." They do not know Him. But "the Lord knows them that are His" and I trust that among the strangers there are many whom the Lord has foreknown from all eternity who shall, in due time, hear His voice and follow Him, rejoicing in that eternal life which is the portion of His sheep! In the very heart of the apostate church of Rome, God may have some of His elect—and I have no doubt that He has! I pray that His

Spirit may soon bring them forth into the light. Among those who are besotted with superstition and among those who have given themselves up to work with both hands in the way of carnal confidence, God may have His chosen ones. And if He has, He will surely fetch them out. Never despair concerning the church of God! The greatest blasphemer may yet become the boldest preacher of the gospel! He who hates Christ most today may love Him most tomorrow—and he will do so if the Spirit of God takes possession of him! It is not merely in the house of prayer that God has His elect—they may be tonight in the alehouse, or in the theatre, or in still worse places—but the Spirit of God can find them wherever they are! Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, not only takes care of the 99 that are safely sheltered in the fold, but He goes out to seek and to find the one sheep that is lost! Even though all hell's hosts may have surrounded the poor wanderer, the prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall to delivered.

Are you a stranger, dear friend? Are you a stranger to the gospel, a stranger to grace, a stranger to your God? Are you a stranger to the bended knee and the throne of grace? Are you a stranger to this blessed Bible and to the hope of heaven which it clearly reveals? "Oh, yes!" you say, "I am indeed a stranger and there is no hope for me!" But listen to the text, friend—"the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me." Give good heed to other gracious messages in this most precious book. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The heart of everlasting love is moved with pity towards you and God, Himself, speaks through a man's voice as He cries to you from heaven, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die?" Surely, if there are any of these strangers here tonight, they ought to be compelled to yield to Christ by the prophecy of the text, "the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me."

V. Now I come to my fifth remark which is that OUR TEXT BEING TRUE, IT SHOULD GREATLY ENCOURAGE THOSE OF US WHO ARE WORKING FOR CHRIST.

Dear brothers and sisters, I am devoutly thankful to God that so many of you are watching for souls, and not only so, but that you are winners of souls! It was but little that you could do, dear friend, but you saw a stranger here and you spoke kindly to him. Perhaps you gave him a tract, certainly you prayed for him! And God blessed your efforts and the stranger yielded himself to Christ. You have sometimes visited a neighbor in time of sickness and have dropped a word in season for Christ, and you did well, for that kindly action was the means of winning a soul for

the Savior! So let the past cheer you and let the text encourage you to persevere in such holy service. Possibly you know some persons who never go to a place of worship and who are quite ignorant of the gospel. Do not think of them as unlikely to be blessed! On the contrary, believe that they are the very persons who are the most likely to be influenced for good when once they are brought under the sound of the gospel! There are, alas, many who have so long heard the word preached that they have become gospel-hardened—the truth of God has become to them a savor of death unto death instead of a savor of life unto life. But it is not so with these people of whom I am speaking—they are not gospel-hardened, so be hopeful about them—go and seek them out, bring them to hear the gospel and then pray that they may be among the strangers who shall submit themselves to Christ!

If I had bread to give away, I should not be in a hurry to take it to those who had refused it again and again. But if I knew where there was a colony of hungry folk who had not tasted food for days, I think it would be among them that I should be made welcome! The place to take the gospel is not where the light of God has long been shining and men have closed their eyes to it—but down the dark court and alley where they have not before had the light and, consequently, have not had the opportunity of rejecting it. Take the gospel there and it may be that the very first time you do so, souls will be converted! If not, go again and again! Keep on sowing the good seed of the kingdom, believing that ancient promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

If one should spend one's whole life for God and win only one soul by the most earnest and devoted effort, it would be a rich reward to see that one star shining forever in the firmament of heaven, to see that one gem glistening forever in the diadem of Christ, to see that one sheep feeding forever in the pastures of eternal life! It strikes me that it will help to make heaven even more heavenly to us when God has blessed us to the bringing of other souls to share our bliss in glory. Some of us will not be among strangers when we have passed through the gates of pearl! We have spiritual children already there for whom we have travailed in birth until Christ was formed in them! And whatever may be the fate of all earthly relationships, our spiritual relationships will abide forever. How blessed it will be to be welcomed there by those whom we have begotten through the gospel and with what joy we shall present them to our God as we humbly yet gratefully say, "Here am I, Father, and the children whom You have given me"!

VI. My last remark is a sad one. It has been uppermost in my mind all the while I have been speaking upon the other points. It is this, that albeit there are some who obey as soon as they hear the gospel and others who once were strangers who willingly yield themselves unto

Christ, yet it is painfully evident that THERE ARE SOME WHO DO JUST THE OPPOSITE.

As for hearing the word, there are some of you who are always hearing it! You scarcely ever miss an opportunity of hearing it! Thickly as the leaves in autumn fall from the trees will the remembrances of gospel ministrations come back to you, but they are all as faded and as worthless to you, now, as are those dead leaves themselves! Some of you will never be lost for lack of hearing the gospel—what would others give if they could only hear what you have heard? Some of you have heard the story of the cross from your early childhood. The softest and sweetest of all lips, your mother's, told it to you as long ago as you can remember. Then you heard it again and again from the lips of the earnest Sunday school teacher in whose class you sat so long. Some of you heard it from a loving wife or from a fond husband. You heard the gospel preached by a godly minister now in glory. And last of all, you have heard it from me, also, and I can add that you have heard it preached very plainly, for whatever my faults may be, clouding the gospel or hiding its meaning is not one of them. Yes, you have heard the gospel all these years—and while others have believed it and have been saved— you appear to be no nearer doing so than when first you heard it! And I tremble lest those solemn words of the Lord Jesus Christ should be true concerning you, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Remember how the Savior upbraided the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because "they repented not"—and beware lest their doom should also be yours!

Our text says, "The strangers shall submit themselves unto Me," but you have not submitted yourselves to Christ. The great sinners, the very chief of sinners, have yielded themselves up to the sway of Christ, but you have not done so. This is not because you do not understand the way of salvation, for you know clearly what the gospel is and what it requires. With some of you it is not because of lack of feeling, for you have felt a great deal—you have been the subjects of all sorts of impressions. Your thoughts have often been like a case of knives cutting into your inmost spirit, or like a nest of adders stinging your soul. Friend, it has come to this pass with you—mere hearing of the word is of no service to you, even the bare remembrance of it is of no use—you must either yield to Christ or you must perish! There must be no more tarrying, delaying, dilly-dallying. You are lingering on the very brink of the precipice and you must either fall over or be saved by clutching at the garments of the Savior who stands close beside you. O soul, is it not a mercy that you are pushed to this extremity? Is it not a blessing that you are brought to this emergency—that you must either yield yourself to Christ or die as His enemy? Oh, submit yourself to Him! Your hand trembles, but stretch it out and touch the hem of His garment. You

cannot save yourself, but He can save you! Look unto Him, for again I remind you that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

When the bronze serpent was lifted up in the wilderness there was no need for the serpent-bitten Israelites to come up close to the pole on which it was suspended—all they had to do was to look—and as many as looked, lived! That is what you have to do! Look to Jesus! Look and live! Give the faith-look at Him who died upon the cross as the sinner's Substitute and Surety—and as soon as you look, you shall live—and live forever! There is no need for you to uncover your wounds to show where the serpent has bitten you. There is no need for you to wait until the venom of the serpent reveals its deadly character more than it has already done. But look at once, lest you should tarry until you are unable to look!

Let me ask you a most solemn question—Does the Son of God, Himself, bleed and die for sinners and is not that all that is required to put away your guilt? Is Jehovah, Himself, satisfied with the sufferings of His beloved Son? And are you *not* satisfied? Has Christ woven the spotless and perfect robe of righteousness in which sinners may stand forgiven before the great white throne, and are you seeking to add to it some of the filthy rags of your own righteousness? O soul, think not that you can share the work and the glory of salvation with the almighty Savior! Yoke a gnat with an archangel if you will, but never think of linking yourself with Christ in order to complete the great work of salvation. Oh, no! In that matter it must be none but Jesus, for—

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

I wish I could put the truth of God so plainly that you could not help seeing it, yet I know that the Holy Spirit must open your eyes or you will never see it, however clearly it is set before you. I pray Him to do it and to do it now—and so to fulfill those two glorious "shalls" in my text—"As soon as they hear of Me, they *shall* obey Me: the strangers *shall* submit themselves unto Me." This is my comfort—He who gave this promise and prophecy in its fullest and deepest meaning will certainly fulfill it! Blessed Master, make these potent "shalls" true in our midst tonight! Many have heard of You—give them the grace to obey You! There are strangers here—may they submit themselves unto You and so be no longer strangers, "but fellow citizens with the saints; and of the household of God"! So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:1-17.

Verses 1, 2. *And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the*

palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. [See Sermons #2337, Volume 39—THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT and #3016, Volume 52—GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Our Lord dealt first with the greater evil, for sin is worse than even such a dreadful disease as the palsy. Forgiveness of sin is an even greater mercy than the healing of sickness.

3-7. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemes. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, why think you evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house.* Jesus first proved His divinity by reading the secret thoughts of the caviling scribes—and then gave a further evidence of it by working this very notable miracle!

8-9. *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. And as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of customs: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.* [See Sermon #2493, Volume 42—"A MAN NAMED MATTHEW"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This was another notable miracle, and equally set forth the power of divine grace.

10-11. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eats your Master with publicans and sinners?* He was more at home with publicans and sinners than with scribes and Pharisees! And they were more likely to welcome Him as their Lord and Savior.

12-13. *But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* If He had come to call the righteous, where would He have found them? His call was not likely to be heeded by the self-righteous, but sinners heard it with joy—and so were made righteous by Him.

14. *Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples fast not?* We must not suppose that because a thing is proper for ourselves, it must, therefore, be binding upon everybody else. It might be fit and right that the disciples of John should often fast—their circumstances might require it—but it might be quite wrong for the disciples of Christ to fast, as they might be in very different circumstances.

15. *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, so long as the bridegroom is with them?* Could Christ's disciples

fast while Christ fed them with heavenly foods? While His presence was to them like heaven begun below, it would have been inconsistent for them to be mourning and fasting.

15. *But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then shall they fast.* And nobody would say that they were turncoats if, when their circumstances had so greatly altered, they acted in harmony with their changed circumstances. The disciples could not mourn while Christ was with them! Can you, Believer, fast while Christ is with you? It cannot be. But when He has gone from you, then you will sorrow fast enough. So we must neither judge others by ourselves, nor judge ourselves at one time by what we were at some other time.

16. *No man puts a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment*—When it shrinks—

16. *And the tear is made worse.* There must be a fitness about things. Do not impose fasting upon a joyful heart, or the singing of joyful hymns upon a sad spirit.

17. *Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.* Do not expect from a young beginner that which would be unsuitable to him, even though it should be most comely and seemly in an aged Christian. And do not expect to see in an aged Christian all the vigor and alertness of spirit that you look for in ardent souls in all the fervor of their first love to Christ. Let us mind the relations of things.

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THE WATER AND THE BLOOD
NO. 3311

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 18, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."
John 19:34.

IT is with much fear and trembling that I usually stand upon this platform—not that I shrink before the face of the multitude however large, but the weight of the subject which I have continually to bring before your minds fills my own soul with awe. And yet it is with more than usual anxiety I approach my subject this evening, because although it is full of tender interest and touching pathos, I feel that without the unction of the Holy Spirit, it would be insipid and unprofitable. And yet, on the other hand, with that divine anointing, it is one of the richest topics that can possibly engage our meditation!

Readers of old theology will have remarked how constantly the fathers were accustomed to dwell upon the wounds of Jesus slain. And this fifth wound which penetrated His heart was peculiarly attractive to them. They said a great many things about it. Some, indeed that were fanciful, but other remarks that were truly excellent and well deserve to be treasured up. I would it were more the practice of believers nowadays than it is to study the very person of Christ, as well as the doctrines of the gospel, and to learn the divine lessons which are discoverable in the wounds of Jesus as well as the sacred admonitions bequeathed to us by the words of His mouth.

One of these old divines says that Jesus Christ was typified by our first father, Adam. As Adam fell asleep, and out of his side Eve was taken, so Jesus slept upon the cross, the sleep of death, and from His side, where the spear was thrust, His church was taken. He who redeemed us unto God by His blood, formed us as a peculiar people for Himself. The church is one with Him—she came out of His side, and as He looks upon her, He can say—"You are bone of My bone, and flesh of My flesh. With My blood have I redeemed you." Others have been pleased to compare Christ to the rock in the wilderness, which was smitten, and this spear-thrust is the great cleft in the rock. You may remember how Toplady puts it—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me!
Let me hide myself in Thee."

And he clearly has this in view, for the next lines are—

"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."

I do not consider this allusion fanciful, nor can I think it distorts the type. Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock, that he might see God's glory, had not a standing place one-half so glorious as you and I have when, sheltered in the wounds of the Savior slain, we see the glorious justice and the infinite love of God reconciled in the person of the dying Lamb.

In the course of reading, I have met with some remarkable expressions in regard to this great wound of Christ. Some have called it, "a gate of heaven." Why should I object to the title? Do we not enter into heaven through the wounds of Jesus? It is, of course, a metaphorical expression, yet quite allowable. If the teaching is that there is no other way of access to God except through the torn veil of Christ's body—and that veil was torn in two, indeed, when the soldier with the spear pierced His side—we may, without straining the thought, call that wound one of the gates of heaven. Another calls it "a celestial window, a window of paradise," and we have versified that idea in one of our own familiar sonnets—

"Look through Jesus' wounds on me;
Him, and then the sinner see."

Another writer, carried away by the consideration of this spear-thrust, calls it "a palace of refuge." A palace! Surely, never kings had such an one! Solomon's palace of ivory was nothing like it! And what a refuge it is! When the poor heart, like the dove hunted by the hawk, needs a shelter, if it can fly to Jesus' wounds, it is sheltered from all its sins. Well does our song put it—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds!
This is the welcome gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

I forget the name of the writer, who, in speaking upon his Master's wounds, seems to get so exalted and carried away by the subject that He calls this wound "the sacred wellhead of the rivers of golden sand which cover all the earth"—two rivers, one of water and the other of blood. Two quickening rivers that carry life through the realms of death. Two purifying rivers cleansing the Augean stable of this filthy world. Two mighty rivers which bear the elect vessels onwards towards the sea of everlasting bliss, not one of them suffering shipwreck on the voyage, for this mighty river is too deep to have quicksands, too broad for the mariner to be cast away upon a rock-bound shore! I like the thought, and so let it be—the sacred wellhead of that river of more than golden sand—the streams whereof make glad the multitudes of God's chosen throughout the earth!

In this wound of Christ, caused by the soldier, I discern four obvious meanings. It has many more, but these four will be enough to occupy our attention this evening.

I. It was THE MARK OF PROPHECY. In order that it might be fully known that Jesus Christ was the Messiah that was to come, the prophets had given many marks, all of which must be found in the person of the man who should be the great deliverer. Among the rest was this one that John quotes, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." This description concerned the paschal lamb, of which it was expressly said by the Lord, through Moses, that they were never to break a single bone of it. Its joints were to be separated after it had been roasted with fire, but not a bone was to be snapped. Now, if Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God's Passover, it is necessary that He should never have a broken bone. And yet it looked as if His bones would be broken. The rough soldier brought up a great iron crowbar and, with an awful blow, smashed the legs of the poor thief who hung on one side of our Lord, but half-dead, in order to hasten his dissolution. It was a strange thing that he passed by Christ, who was in the middle. I know not what it was that made him do so—whether some flash of majesty beamed from that dead face, or whether some singular instinct checked his arm. But he went and administered the dreadful blow to the thief on the other side. And now he came to Christ and perhaps raised the iron rod—when he saw that He was already dead! His head was hanging down upon His bosom and the man saw clearly that there was no need to administer the deathblow to Him. It was a strange thing that his hands should be so restrained. The soldiers of that day were wanton enough. They were just as likely as not to have broken the bones even though the man were dead—but divine prophecy must have it so and, therefore, not a bone of Jesus can be broken!

And then the prophet Zechariah had said concerning the Messiah, "They shall look upon Him whom they have *pierced*, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son." Now up till that moment our Lord had not been pierced, except as to His hands and feet, and this would scarcely have been a carrying out of the word, "pierced." Somebody would have said, "Well, but He never was pierced so as to cause His death—there was no such piercing as the text indicates." But now that the soldier, moved by the mysterious impulse, lifts his lance and thrusts it deep into the side of Christ—now did prophecy set its mark upon Christ—now did history identify Him—the man without broken bones yet the man whose side was pierced! Him for whom Israel should one day mourn! Him whom His enemies should one day confess to be their King!

My dear brothers and sisters, has it ever struck you with admiring wonder that Jesus Christ should answer to prophecies so complicated and types so manifold—should answer even with coincidences the most minute to them all? It would be almost impossible to count the types of Christ which are given in the Old Testament. It would, perhaps, be easy to count the prophecies, but very difficult for anybody to form a

character in which all these should be blended and fulfilled! It has been said that if you were to give all these types and all these prophecies to the wisest of men of all ages, and say to them, "You are required to compile a biography of a man who shall answer to all these," they must certainly give up in despair! You can find men who will make a key to fit any lock—by diligence of labor, no matter how complicated the mechanism may be, the thing may at last be done. But I will defy all the wisdom that ever was in humanity to form a key that will fit the exceedingly complex words of all the types of the Old Testament and all its prophecies! How palpable then the evidence is. Our Lord Jesus Christ answers to them all. Just as the stamp in the wax answers to the seal that stamped it, the providence that transpired corresponds with the predictions that forestalled His course! He went as it was written of Him! There He is and He fulfils types that look the most opposite and prophecies which seem to run counter to one another!

If anybody thinks that the stories told by the four evangelists are spurious, I would suggest to him to go and write a fifth—to try to write another that would as much correspond with the Old Testament—and with the other four, as those four do with the Old Testament and with each other! And when that task was done, I would then give him another problem to solve before he could have reasonable ground for suspicion that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah. Account for the incredulity of the Jews in the presence of those evidences that have produced conviction among the Gentiles upon any other hypotheses than that which ratifies their own Scripture! If the Old Testament is the Word of God, it seems marvelous to us that men do not receive Jesus as being the Shiloh that was to come, the promised Messiah, the Prince of the kings of the earth! Jewish unbelief amazes us! Yet I suppose if we judged aright, our own lack of faith in Jesus, notwithstanding the rational credit we give to His mission as a popular creed, is still more amazing! If that is gross unbelief which rejects Christ, while acknowledging the Old Testament, what shall I say of you who refuse allegiance to Him and yet profess to believe both the Old and the New? If they that receive the first yet stumble at the second, what shall I say of those who receive both and yet, over the head of this double belief professed, give not their hearts to the crucified son of God, and put not their trust in the merit of His precious blood, but still continue afar off from Him by wicked works?

Some time ago, when in Italy, at a town on the Italian side of the Alps, I saw one Sunday afternoon, in a quiet walk alone, a sight which struck me very much and which remains fixed upon my memory. There was outside the town a mountain and the way up the sides of which were different representations of the progress of our Lord, from the garden where Judas betrayed Him to the place of His resurrection. The figures were as large as life, carved in either stone or wood, and painted to imitate nature. When I got to the very summit of the hill, there was a church. There was no one in it and I pushed open the door and went in.

All was still. It was a large building and all around it were images of the prophets and the apostles. There stood Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and all the rest—one knew the usual portraits of them. And up in the dome, at the very top of the church, was a large and striking image of the Savior. Now, what struck me about the church was this—that the images of those prophets and apostles who stood there had their fingers all pointed upwards, so that, when I went in, I could not help looking up to the top to see what they were pointing at! All round the church there were the words, in Latin, "Moses and the prophets spoke concerning Him." And there stood Moses and the prophets, carved in stone, and all pointing to Him! Isaiah had a little scroll in his hand on which was written, "The Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." Jeremiah had a scroll in his hand, on which was written, "Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me." I think the church just represented the truth in that case. It is even so. All the prophets stand as a complete circle of distinct testifiers and, with uplifted fingers, they all concur with John the Baptist when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." They all point to Christ. If you read the life of Christ and then read what they said of Him, you will be persuaded that this is He which was to come!

II. But to pass on, we may look upon the spear-thrust in the side of Christ as THE ESCUTCHEON OF SHAME.

While our Lord lived, He was the subject of every form of scorn. He was scourged as none but a felon might be according to the Roman law. He was spat upon and mocked, as even a felon ought not to have been. That crown of thorns, that reed scepter and that old scarlet cloak—who could have invented a more shameful insignia for one who was greater than all the kings on the earth but who was brought exceedingly low? And our Lord's death, itself, was a great portion of His shame. It was a shame for Him to die—and ignominy for Him to die the death of hanging on the cross. Heraldry has so emblazoned the symbol that we do not ordinarily apprehend the real shame to which Christ was exposed. If I preach to you tonight that a certain man who was hanged was very God, people would begin to say, "Why do you preach of one who died on the gallows as a felon?" Literally and truly, that is just how Jesus Christ died, according to the customs of His times. Crucifixion was to the Romans what hanging is to us, only it was worse. It was more shameful, for crucifixion was reserved for the very worst of crimes. Not all murderers were so punished, but only the worst and vilest crimes with murder to aggravate them received this opprobrious doom. People hang crosses round their necks and wear them as ornaments—I wonder whether they would make ornaments of gallows? Yet it means that. It is just the same thing and this is the shame of Christ. This is the very shame in which Paul rejoiced and gloried, that Jesus Christ was not ashamed to be ashamed! That He was willing to be made ashamed and a

curse for us! That He was content to be treated with all the scorn that human malignity and inhuman cruelty could heap upon Him!

But, beloved, when Christ was dead, they might certainly have ceased from their scorn. But no, the brutal Roman soldiers were not very nice as to what they did with living bodies. They would not, therefore, be particular as to what they did with dead bodies! Therefore this soldier, in a mere freak of wanton brutality, thrust his lance into the Savior's heart. It was the last kick of the old enemy. It was, as it were, the last of the spit from the foul mouth of human slander and hatred. It was the last thrust that human malice could give to the Lord of life and glory! I see in this the mark, the crowning emblem of the shame which He endured.

Well, and what then? Why, it should teach us, dear friends, what a shameful thing sin must be! For, though Christ was no sinner, yet when our sins were laid upon Him, look how God treated Him and permitted Him to be treated as an outcast—to be covered with the utmost shame! Ah sin, what a shameful thing you must be! Blush, Christian, that you should be guilty of it. Blush again, that you do not blush more often! Be ashamed that you are not ashamed of sin, and be offended that your heart should be so unemotional over a thing so detestable.

Another thought springs up, namely, that if Christ was put to so much shame for us, how glad we ought to be if we are sometimes allowed to be put to shame for Him! Oh, there are some people who cannot bear shame—they can endure anything else but ridicule and laughter! As John Bunyan says, "of all villains, shame is the most shameless for he will go and make sport and fun of the Christian's virtues and mock at that which he ought to admire." Well, child of God, supposing today you have your face spat upon for Christ? It would be scarcely worthwhile to wipe it off! Ah, if you had to live a dying life, to be thrown in a dungeon, or to live upon the rack—as long as it was done for Him who bore all this for you—the thought might sweeten the wormwood and turn the gall into honey, that you were thus honored to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings! I leave that view of this wound of Christ with you, praying that it may nerve your hearts with a glorious courage as you see Jesus thus shamefully wounded for you.

III. This lance wound was THE SEAL OF DEATH UPON OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. His enemies were so determined to put Him to death that they dragged His life out of its principal organ and then they pierced it, namely, the heart. It was not possible that Jesus Christ could have lived another moment longer, even had He been alive at that time—but when the heart was touched, death must come. Those who understand anatomy tell us that the pericardium around the heart was pierced and they say that from that there flowed the blood and the water. But I am extremely doubtful whether the pericardium in any state whatever could have yielded a sufficient quantity of lymph, for though there is water there, there is only a small quantity. In the state in which our Savior was, blood and water might have been found naturally in His heart, but

only in a very small and infinitesimal quantity. The fountain that flowed from there was miraculous, not natural but *supernatural*—or if natural, yet so exalted and so increased in quantity as to become in itself supernatural.

Certainly, however, the piercing of His heart was the indication to all mankind that "He was dead already." Now, little as that may seem in the eyes of those of you who do not love Him, it is a most important thing to those who trust Him, for remember, if Jesus Christ had not died, you and I would have perished! It was of no use for our expiation that He sweat great drops of blood unless He had perfected the sacrifice. The law required if— if Christ had not laid down His life, the law would have required ours. In due time, our souls would have been cast into the second death on account of sin if Jesus had not died, actually and truly died. But we are quite sure about it now, for His heart was pierced. Indeed, I may say that this is the one keystone of the whole gospel system, for if Jesus did not die then, we have no resurrection. If He died not then, He did not rise—and if we have no evidence of resurrection, the whole of our religion becomes a lie! But, brothers and sisters, He did die. His soul left His body. That corpse that was taken by Joseph of Arimathaea was as lifeless as any that was ever committed to the sepulcher! And He did rise again, in proof to us that we who die and those we have parted with on the confines of this mortal life who are, alas, all truly dead, shall certainly rise again and in their flesh shall see God! This is a simple truth of God for you to hear, perhaps, but never did angel have such weighty news to tell as I have told you tonight—that God was made flesh—the very God that made heaven and earth took upon Himself our nature and as such He died, literally died for us! The God man, the mediator, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, died, was crucified and had His heart pierced for us! And if we depend upon this, we may rest secure. If He died, then we need not die! If He died for us, then we cannot die the second death. If Jesus was punished in our place, the sting of death is taken away, the law is satisfied and every soul that believes in Him shall have eternal life!

IV. But I cannot tarry longer upon that and, therefore, I come to the fourth point. This heart wound of Christ is also to be called THE SOURCE OF PURITY. The text tells us that there issued from it a double flood of blood and water. We are not at a loss to explain this because the Apostle John, in his epistle, has told us that our Lord "came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood," and he explains it by the connection that Christ came into the world by blood to take away the guilt of sin, and by water to take away the power of sin—by blood to remove the punishment, by water to remove the filth. [See Sermon #3252, Volume 57—"BY WATER AND BLOOD"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Now, dear friends, let us say that *there is no blood and no water that can wash away sin anywhere but in Christ*. All the blood of bulls could

not take away sin, though offered by Aaron, himself, the father of the Levitical priesthood! And all the water in the world, though consecrated by bishops, cardinals and popes, cannot take away a single spot of iniquity! The only blood that can cleanse us from God's wrath is the blood of Jesus Christ, Himself, and the only water that can wash out of us the damning stain of sin is the water which came from Jesus Christ's heart! If you want to be thus doubly washed, go to the Son of God for the washing! Go nowhere else, I pray you, for every other trust is but a delusion and a lie. Jesus Christ can put away the guilt of every sin. Though you have been a drunk, an adulterer, a whoremonger, a thief, a murderer, yet the blood of Jesus Christ can wash you from the accumulated filth of years—and the water from Christ's side can take away your propensities to sin, change your nature and make you holy instead of filthy—can make you pure in heart instead of polluted in spirit! Nothing else can do it. No lie was ever more extraordinary than the lie that baptismal water can regenerate the soul! I marvel more and more that I should find myself living in an age of such idiots and have almost come to think that Carlyle was right when he spoke of our nation as "consisting of twenty million people, mostly fools." So it seems to be, or else such a dogma as this would have been kicked out of the universe years since—and banished once and forever to the limbo of lunacy as an outrage on common sense! Is God the Holy Spirit confined to water, as that the priest's dropping it on the child's brow can work regeneration in the child's soul? Believe it not, it is a foul lie! But hold you to this—that which alone can work regeneration is the water from the side of Christ—and when faith can get that, and trust that, the matter is done! Faith relies upon the sacred double flood! Then the heart is renewed, the man is changed, the soul is saved by Jesus Christ!

Remember, too, that *the water and the blood flowed from the same place and flowed together.* And, therefore, if a man would be saved, He must have the two. Tens of thousands would like to escape from hell, but they have no wish to escape from sin. Are there not multitudes who are very anxious to get rid of the punishment, but are not at all concerned to be delivered from the habit of iniquity? Oh, yes, the drunk would gladly be forgiven, but he would like to keep to his tippling. Yes, the lecherous man would gladly have his constitution restored and his iniquity blotted out, but he must go to his dens of infamy again! Such is *not the religion of Christ.* The religion of Christ demands of us that if we take Christ, we should take Him for the double purpose—pardon for past sins and to deliver from sins to come. I think it was Celsus, the ancient philosopher, who jeered at the great Christian advocates, saying, "Your Master, Christ, receives all the filth of the universe into His church! He tells you to go about to find out thieves, drunks, harlots and such like, and to tell them to come to Him! Your religion is nothing better than a hospital into which you thrust lepers." "Yes," said he who argued with him, "you have spoken well. We do receive them as into a hospital, but we heal them, sir,

we heal them! And while into the one door the spiritually and morally blind, cripples, and maimed come in as they are, the great physician touches them with His grace and cleanses them with the water and the blood—and they are not what they were any longer."

Now, am I addressing one man who feels that he is saved by faith, and yet he is sinning as he used to do? Give up that belief, sir, or it will ruin you! I pray you do not indulge in it, for it is a delusion of Satan! Do I address one man who has a hope that perhaps he can so trust Christ as to be saved, and yet continue to live in his own wicked way? If anyone has told you that, he has told you a lie! Rest assured that you are mistaken! Christ never came to be the minister of sin. He came to save us, not *in* our sins, but *from* our sins. He will forgive us all manner of iniquities, but not if we love the iniquity and continue in it! If you hug sin to your bosom, the viper will sting you—and no power, either human or divine—can extract the poison unless the viper, itself, is taken away. You must have both the water and the blood—and I pray that you may have both.

Now, Christians, I have done when I have put to you one question. Answer it and answer it truthfully. It is this—beloved friends, have you got such a hold of Christ as you should have in His double capacity as your pardoner and your sanctifier? I know you plead the blood for your remission. I know that is all your hope. I know that the blood of Christ is your comfort and your hope, but have you got the water quite as fully? You have a bad temper, perhaps. Well, it is a pitiable circumstance, but surely, if Christ can forgive a bad temper, He can remove a bad temper, too! Did you ever bring your bad temper to Christ to have it washed away with the water? You should have done so, for He can do it. Perhaps you have got an envious spirit—a murmuring spirit? Naturally so, you are generally depressed and downhearted. Did you ever believe in the power of Christ to kill envy and to lift you up above murmuring? You should do so. You believe that Christ can forgive this sin. Well, that is through the power of the blood—but do you think that the water is less potent than the blood—that Christ can forgive what He cannot subdue? Oh, think not so! Think as well of the Spirit and His sanctifying power as of Christ and His justifying righteousness!

"Well," says one, "I have a besetting sin which I do not think I shall ever quite overcome," My dear brother, why not? It strikes me that the Christian ought to get his greatest victories from his weakest points—and if you have a besetting sin, I think you ought to be distinguished by its opposite virtue! I do not know that it was so, but I always have a notion that Moses was, by his natural constitution, a thoroughly quick-tempered man. I think so from the fact that when he saw the Egyptian smiting the Israelite, he did not stop a minute, but he slew him at once and hid him in the sand. That looks to me to be the breaking out of the real Moses. But what did he become by the grace of God? Why, after his

spirit was subdued, he became the meekest of men and often was quiet where you and I would have spoken! Now, why should it not be so with us? It strikes me that the worst-tempered man who becomes a Christian ought to make this a strong point and to strive to become the best-tempered. There are some Christians who naturally have a little weakness in their hand and cannot open it well. If they get a little money in it, they are very apt to get their joints tied together very tightly! But, when divine grace comes in, I think they should try to defeat the devil by being more than ordinarily generous—so that, whereas other Christians might be content to give less, they say to Satan—"O my enemy, you have held me in bondage in this way, but in wherever else you may get the upper hand of me, you never shall in this, for I will take care that whenever you tell me not to give a shilling, I will give two in order to let you see that you are no master of mine and that I have got rid of the foul sin of stinginess!" Do let us, each one, act upon this great truth of God, that as Christ has the power to forgive us our sin, so He also has the power to cleanse it away!

And, my dear brothers and sisters let us get closer to Christ! Let us be bedewed more often than we have been before with the water and with the blood! Let us live in the spirit of this double purification and be it ours to find this blessed stream lead us right up to the heart of Christ, from which it flowed, that we may understand the everlasting love which dwells there deep in its eternal fountains—and may rejoice and be glad in it all our days!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 19:23-37.

Verse 23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments.* They had already stripped Him, no element of shame was lacking in His substitution for us. He stooped as low as our sins could have thrust us that He might bring us up from the very depths of degradation and shame!

23, 24. *And made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. 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.* Quite unaware of the ancient prophecy, yet in complete accord with divine predestination, these soldiers did exactly according to the eternal purposes of God! It is very amazing how, in practice, the free agency of man tallies exactly with the predestination of God. We need not enquire how it is, but we may admire that it is so. "These things therefore the soldiers did," yet the motive which swayed them was not the fulfillment of the divine will, but simply the common sense thought that it would be a pity to spoil such a garment by tearing it and partly, also, by that innate love of gambling which is found

everywhere, in every age, so that often men would sooner run the hazard of winning all than take the safe one fourth which might fall to their lot! Let us reverently adore the whole scheme of providence by which God's determinate purpose is carried out in every jot and tittle, while the free agency of man is left unfettered.

25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.* These gracious women stood by the cross. We call them the feebler sex, but we must grant that they are the stronger of the two in anything which has to do with pure disinterested love. Yield the first place to them.

26. *When Jesus therefore saw His mother.* Here was another pang for Him—He could not be spared anywhere. He must recollect in His death everything that would cause Him grief—"When Jesus therefore saw His mother"—

26, 27. *And the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* There was no specific direction given to John to entertain Mary. It was quite enough for the Lord to call his attention to her by saying "Behold your mother." How I wish we were always in such a state of heart that we did not need specific precepts, but a hint would suffice. Dear friends, do not need pressing or driving to holy duty! Be not as bulls that must be goaded, but rather have within you such a spring of love that it shall be a delight to do anything that may give joy to the heart of the well-Beloved! When you see Him on the cross, is there anything you can deny Him? Will you not think spontaneously of what you can do to please Him?

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.* There was yet a little more to be done—all the great things were accomplished, but He would keep even the least particles of prophecy, so He cried, "I thirst."

29, 30. *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. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar*—He did receive that. He had refused the drugged draught which they had first offered to Him to lull His pain, but He accepted this, which was simply weak wine, no doubt a little sour, possibly bitter. When He "had received the vinegar"—

30. *He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.* [See Sermon #421, Volume 7—IT IS FINISHED and #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Incarnate love has fulfilled its self-imposed task! Jesus, as the substitute for sinners, was condemned to die and He died that He might finish the work of our redemption—

"'It is finished.'
Hear the dying Savior cry."

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon 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. To prevent a ceremonial error, they are willing to commit brutal cruelty! Indeed, they had already committed the more brutal cruelty of putting Christ to death. How particular some men are about some merely human rubric—yet the divine precepts of the law they violate with impunity! God save us from a conscience which will stick at some minute point which is of no consequence, but will allow us to commit great sin! We have heard of a Spanish bandit who confessed to his priest, after having murdered a great many persons, not his robberies and his murders, but the fact that a drop of blood had spurted on his lips on a Friday, and thus he had defiled the feast day by taking animal food! Ah me, conscience is a strange thing, yet some call it "the vicegerent of God." I believe it is no such thing, but that it very soon becomes as depraved as any other power of the human mind! We have need of far more than conscience to keep us right.

32. *Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him.* With a huge iron bar smashing the great bones of their legs.

33, 34. *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 and forthwith there came out blood and water.* See how, even after death, His heart its tribute poured out for us. We have not only the love of Christ's heart blessing us while He lives, but after He died there was the stream of blood and water to cleanse us from sin's guilt and power!

35-37. *And he that saw it bares record, and his record is true: and he knows that he is telling 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.* [See Sermon #1956, Volume 33—ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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THE CARPENTER'S SON AND HIS RELATIONS
NO. 3312

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"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where, then, has this man all these things?"
Matthew 13:55, 56.

WHEN our Savior was upon this earth, there were some persons who, having had their eyes divinely opened, could see His true beauty and who admired His every action and said, "He has done all things well." But there were others whose eyes were blinded by sin, malice and prejudice who could see nothing good in Him at all. Because He ate and drank as other men did, they said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber." They said that His zeal was only pretense or else madness—and when He cast out evil spirits by His almighty power, they said, "He casts out devils through the chief of the devils." There were some who wondered at His wisdom and His mighty works and who did not know whether to consider Him a prophet of God or a divine being. But there were others who could only see the carpenter's human son, whose mother's name was Mary and whose brothers and sisters were all well-known, ordinary people. The language of the text is the language of many who are living today—for while others see in Christ everything to admire—these quibblers see no beauty in Him and put Him on a level with others with whom they are acquainted.

It seems to me that we have here *two views of Christ's person*—the estimation of prejudice and the estimation of piety. And *two views of Christ's relations*, in which we also have the estimation of prejudice and the estimation of piety.

I. First, we will consider THE TWO VIEWS OF CHRIST'S PERSON—the view of prejudice and the view of piety.

Prejudice could not dispute the fact of Christ's wisdom and mighty works, so it sought to disparage Him by saying, "After all, He is only a carpenter's son, just the son of an ordinary artisan. Shall a prophet rise up from among the chips in the carpenter's shop? Shall we sit at the feet of the man who is simply a toiler at the carpenter's bench?" Prejudice may seem very wise in its own esteem, but *it is really very foolish.* To be prejudiced against a truth because of the lowly origin of Him who

proclaims it is most manifest folly! Is a pearl to be rejected because it was found in a shell that is itself of no value? Would not a wise man pick up a diamond from a dunghill if he saw one flashing there? Even if the occupation of a carpenter had been a degrading one, which it certainly was not, yet, if his son has something to say that is worth hearing, is he not a fool who will not listen to it because it is uttered by the carpenter's son? If from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth a stream of divine wisdom was poured forth, is it not most flagrant folly to refuse to receive it because He was reputed to be the son of Joseph the carpenter? If He speaks as no other man ever spoke; if His doctrine is more sublime than that of any other teacher; if the morality which He inculcates is more pure and more heavenly than that of any other leader of men, what matters it that He is the carpenter's son?—

"He whom man with scorn refuses,
Whom the favored nation hates,
He it is Jehovah chooses,
Him the highest place awaits!
Kings and princes
Shall do homage at His gates."

But while prejudice is thus very foolish, *it is also very frequent*. There are many persons who put an extinguisher on the candle and then try to light it. For instance, in listening to a certain preacher, they make up their mind that he cannot say anything that can be beneficial to them—and then they wonder that they are not edified! It would be a wonder if they were! Those who hear the word only to cavil at it will probably be left to cavil to their life's end, for while the Spirit of God explains difficulties to the sincere seeker after the truth of God, those difficulties which men, themselves, make often lead them to make more and more so that they continually plunge deeper and yet deeper in the mire. But what a dreadful thing it is that prejudice makes men even object to the gospel of Christ! They say that it is so simple, so commonplace that it will not do for them. I have heard some who ought to know better say, when they have heard the simple gospel preached, "Oh, yes! 'Believe and live' is a very proper message to the multitude, but something more profound than that is needed for thinking men!" Meaning them, as if they were the only thoughtful people in the world; well, sirs, if you are prejudiced against the gospel because of its simplicity, may God disarm that prejudice and bring you to see that it is its simplicity which is its glory and which makes it that means of rescuing sinners from the ruin into which their guilt has sunk them!

Prejudice against Christ is also exceedingly sinful. If it really is true that He is the Son of God, it is very shameful that He should not have a hearing because He stooped as low as to become "the carpenter's son." If the magnificence of His benevolence led Him to empty Himself and to be despised and rejected of men, shall the splendor of His love close my ears to the message of salvation that He sends to me? That He who was one with His Father in glory should condescend to lie as a baby in

Bethlehem's manger and to go about among men as the reputed son of the carpenter of Nazareth is cause for reverence, for admiration, for love, for gratitude! Yet some for this very reason are prejudiced against Him! If the gospel had been suitable only to philosophers and men of learning, what a vast majority of mankind would have been left without any hope of salvation! Shall that almighty grace which has made it a gospel suitable to all classes and conditions of men become a reason why prejudice shall turn its back upon it? Surely it is better to be saved by "the carpenter's son" than to be lost—better to enter heaven through Him who was "despised and rejected of men" than to be shut up in hell through not believing in Him! Better to receive a crown of life from the hand of Him who was crucified on Calvary than to receive the sentence of condemnation from the mouth of the judge when He sits upon the great white throne in all the glory of His Father and of His holy angels!

If any of you, dear friends, have a prejudice against any form of scriptural truth, I pray you to shake it off. We are all apt to be prejudiced in one way or another, and it needs great grace to keep us clear of the evil, so let us be on our guard against it. Give the gospel a fair consideration and very especially and impartially weigh in the scales of sound judgment the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Sit down at the foot of the cross and study the wounds of Jesus—and do not pour contempt and scorn upon Him until you have found good reason to do so—and that I am sure you never will do. Shake off all prejudice, again I entreat you, for it is a deadly disease which may prove eternally fatal to you.

Now let us turn away from prejudice and see what piety thinks concerning Christ. As piety asks, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" *she admires His condescension*. Piety is not ashamed of Jesus of Nazareth even though she supposes that He worked in the carpenter's shop. On the contrary, she is full of admiration for the Son of God who stooped so low as to be known as the son of Joseph and who, in that capacity, was obedient to His earthly parents and assisted in the manual labor in which the carpenter engaged. Piety does not think any the less of the Savior because He wore the garb of a workingman, but she considers it to be to His honor that He laid aside His honor! And she regards Him as having more glory when He laid aside His glory than when He wore it! I long to see my Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, but I think I would almost as gladly have seen Him in the carpenter's shop. I delight in the thought that I shall see Him on the throne of God, but I sometimes wish that I could have seen Him on the cross, for it was there that His love reached its climax as He bore our sins in His own body on the tree!

Piety is all the more pleased with Christ because when He condescended to be a man, *He joined the working classes*. There are and always will be, and very properly so, different social grades among men, but the difference between a carpenter and a gentleman is, to my mind,

so slight that I cannot perceive it. We are all very much alike when we are sitting in the house of God, and when we are lying upon the bed of sickness—and especially when we are sleeping in the silent tomb. Yet, if our Savior had come to this earth as one of the upper classes of society, I can fancy my lords and ladies saying, "Oh, yes! We have much fellowship with the King of the Jews as we think how He rode through Jerusalem in His gorgeous chariot of state attended by such a brilliant retinue!" But I can imagine how working men might then have said, "He has little or nothing in common with us. He does not know what it is to earn His daily bread by hard manual labor." But "the carpenter's son" says, "Oh, yes! I do know that and I understand your ways, and I am more familiar with poverty than many of you are! Most, if not all of you, have a home to go to when your day's work is done, but I had not where to lay My head, so you are better off than I was." Jesus of Nazareth can fully sympathize with the poorest of the poor, yet at the same time He is higher than the highest in the land, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords! Those who have the greatest intellectual power may well sit at His feet, for He is incarnate wisdom; and the feeblest and poorest may draw near to Him even as they did when He was upon the earth. We who toil mentally and you who toil physically may rejoice that Christ also was a toiler. When I see a notice about sermons to working men, I think to myself, "Well, whoever else is or is not a workingman, I know that I am one and that I work very hard." It is quite a mistake to suppose that those of us who do not carry burdens on our backs, or follow the plow, or wield an axe do not, therefore, work! The most wearing kind of work is that which has to do with the brain and the mind, so I claim the Savior as having fellowship with me! And you workers, who have His name, have Him all the better because He also was a worker! He was no lazy late riser, He was not one who slept and dawdled away His time. He toiled at the carpenter's bench and afterwards He said of His life's service, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

Piety is grateful to Christ for being "the carpenter's son" because she recollects that *He is the type of the kingdom which He governs*. When the carnal eye looks at Christ, it sees only a carpenter—but the spiritual eye can see "the King in His beauty" in the garb of a workingman. He who saws the wood and guides the plane and drives the nails is the great Creator, without whom, was not anything made that was made! What was true of Christ is in a measure true of His church and of His gospel, too. The church of Christ often appears to be merely a company of obscure and insignificant folk, yet that church is "the bride, the Lamb's wife," and that gospel which is often despised because of its simplicity is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." The outward show of the spiritual kingdom is very little even as it was when Christ was known as the son of a carpenter, yet all the while He was the Son of God from heaven. I do not know if I can get this truth of God into the

mind of every Christian here, but I should like to do so. The outward form of the Christian church and the mere letter of gospel doctrine may appear to be poor and mean—just so—it is the carpenter's church and the carpenter's gospel, but "the carpenter's son" was the Son of God, and as He is in His church we may say of it, "Jehovah-Shammah," "The Lord is there," and the preaching of the gospel is no mere repetition of the dull, dead letter, but it is God marching forth in majesty proclaiming mercy to every sinner who believes in His Son, Jesus Christ! Be you content to remain unknown Christian—this is the carpenter's kingdom—the kingdom of the King in His glory is yet to be revealed—

"It does not yet appear
How great we must be made!
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" Yes, it is, but there is a divine splendor concealed beneath that lowly form! Some of the early fathers and old writers used to delight in expressing strange ideas concerning "the carpenter's son." Julian the apostate, as he is called, once asked a certain Christian, "What do you think the carpenter's son is doing now?" "Making coffins for you and for all His enemies," was the prompt reply. If that is not literally what He is doing, we may depend upon it that it will go ill with those who say of Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us," for we remember the solemn conclusion of the parable of the pounds, "Those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me." One old writer says, "Christ was a carpenter and a rare carpenter, too, for He made a ladder that reaches all the way from earth to heaven—and up that ladder souls are continually ascending to the palace which He has gone to prepare for them!" That is a quaint way of describing how Christ has bridged the gulf between guilty sinners and their offended God by His atoning sacrifice! Happy are they who not only admire the ladder, but who trust themselves upon it and so are brought safely home to God in glory!

II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE TWO VIEWS OF CHRIST'S RELATIONS. And again we shall speak of the view of prejudice and the view of piety.

These men were not content with asking questions about Christ, Himself, but they also made inquiries concerning His relations. They said, "Is not His mother called Mary?" She was a very excellent woman, who was highly honored in being the mother of Jesus, but there seems to be something of disdain or contempt in the question "Is not His mother called Mary?" Then there were His brothers—very commonplace sort of folk, the questioner seemed to imply. "Why!" said one, "I know all of them! James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, but who are they?" "Well," said another, "I know His sisters, and there is nothing remarkable about them, so there probably is nothing special about Him. Look at His relations, what are they but just a carpenter's wife and family? It is true

that they belong to the tribe of Judah and that they are of the house and lineage of David, but they are not the kind of people to be invited into the upper circles of society! So there is no reason why we should take any notice of the carpenter's son."

Now, that type of prejudice still exists in the world. We do not hear much said nowadays against Christ's natural relations, but it is His *spiritual* relations who now come under the ban of prejudice. "Yes," men, say, "this evangelical doctrine certainly has a very singular power to attract the multitude. In the hands of Luther it worked a very remarkable Reformation. It is true that the preaching and writings of Calvin carried this gospel into the hearts of vast numbers of hearers and readers—and we see the power it had over great masses of men as it was presented to them by Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield and other popular preachers—yet, after all, what is the type of people that is attracted by such preaching as this?" Prejudice does not stop to answer its own question—it hardly likes to say what it thinks, but what it thinks is something like this.

It thinks, in the first place, that *they are a set of very poor people* and prejudice considers that to be one of the worst things you can say of them. In the estimation of those who are prejudiced in this fashion, poverty is regarded as almost worse than crime! A man may be guilty of nearly every form of iniquity, but as long as he is rich, nothing is said against him. Yet, if another possesses every virtue, but in addition to that is poor, prejudice has not a word to say in his favor! We need not be greatly concerned at this, for we remember that our blessed Master said concerning His own ministry, "the poor have the gospel preached to them." If He was glad to have them in His congregation, we also may rejoice if the poor are found among our hearers and among those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus!

Prejudice further says, "Well, if these relations of Christ are not all poor, *some of them have had very little education*." This is a remark which I often hear or read, but I certainly have failed to discover any wonderfully superior education in many of the gentlemen who seem to take delight in denying many of the truths of the faith. I often think that if they had been better educated, they would not talk as foolishly as they sometimes do when they sneeringly ask, "What do those uneducated preachers know?" Well, we might seem to be fools in glorying if we replied that if we did not know more than they do of the vital truths of Christianity, we would go to school again and begin to learn the A B C of theology! As for the great thinkers of whom they so continually prate, we remember that Paul wrote, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God has chosen the foolish, things of the world to confound the wise. . .that no flesh should glory in His presence."

When these prejudiced people have had our answer upon this point, they say that these relations of Christ, meaning thereby those who profess to be His followers, *are very much like other people who make no*

profession of religion. One says, "I know a member of a certain church who has a very bad temper." Someone else adds, "I know another who does not pay his bills." Well, even if this is true, is it surprising that there are hypocrites in the church when there was a Judas even among the apostles? "But," says another, "they are all alike, and they are all a set of hypocrites." Yet the most prejudiced slanderer knows that he is telling a lie when he talks thus. If he would but speak the truth, he would be compelled to admit that the gospel we preach has made harlots chaste, drunks sober and thieves honest—and that it is our great aim to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." He knows all this, but it suits his purpose to shut his eyes to it and only to see, here and there, the imperfection that is incidental to manhood, or the hypocrisy which no foresight can prevent and which only shows that hypocrites will thrust themselves into any place, however holy, except heaven, itself—and they would enter even there if they could!

This will suffice as to the view of prejudice concerning Christ's relations. So now let us turn to the view of piety concerning them. Piety says, in the first place, "*Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that He should have a mother, and brothers, and sisters here below*." That ever the Son of God should have condescended to have brothers and sisters among the sons of men—and that there now sits upon the throne of God one of a human mother, born, is a subject for unceasing joy! My soul seems to expand as I think of it! How wondrously our poor humanity is exalted! Angels were never so closely linked with deity as manhood is now. Christ has no mother among the seraphim, no brother among the seraphim, and no sister in all the shining ranks of holy angels! But looking round upon those whom He has redeemed with His precious blood, He says, "Behold, My mother and My brothers and sisters! For whomever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother."

In the next place, instead of finding fault with Christ because of the imperfections of His relations, *piety sees in their imperfections a further reason for blessing Christ*. She says, "What? O gracious Savior, are Your relations *sinners*? Have they imperfections and do they make mistakes? Then all hail, blessed Savior, that You are not only related to humanity, but to *sinful* humanity! And though You are Yourself sinless, yet You call sinners Your friends and You are called the Friend of sinners because you receive them and eat with them!" Yes, in the sense in which Christ Himself spoke of them, His mother and brothers and sisters are still with us—and though they are not all that they ought to be, we love Him all the more because He condescends to permit such people to be in close relationship to Himself!

Piety also says that *she wishes she was quite sure that her own relationship to Christ was as close as this*. "Oh," says the humble and sincere soul, "if I might be but the meanest among those whom Christ

calls His brothers and sisters, I would sooner have that honor than be the wearer of an earthly coronet or crown or possess the greatest wealth of gold or diamonds!" When piety is assured of her own personal relationship to Christ, instead of being ashamed of Him because of His poor brothers and sisters, she counts it a priceless privilege to be numbered among them! Have you ever read the inscriptions that have been found in the catacombs of Rome? If you have done so, you must have noticed that many of them were evidently the productions of persons who were quite illiterate. Probably many of them were not able to write at all, so they obtained the services of others who were little more educated than they were themselves, to write their epitaphs. Many of these first followers of Christ were certainly very ignorant so far as human learning was concerned, but do you now feel ashamed to belong to the same sect to which they belonged? Oh, no! If you really love the Lord whom they loved, you feel that it is an honor to be a member of that blessed Christian brotherhood in which many of the members cheerfully laid down their lives rather than give up their connection with Christ their Savior!

Some people seem never to tire of railing at our particular denomination. "Oh, Baptists," they say, "Who are they?" But shall I be ashamed to be called a Baptist because some who ought to know better try to pour contempt and scorn upon the name? Oh, no! But the more they are despised, the more closely will I cling to them! When our Lord Jesus Christ asked John the Baptist to baptize Him, He said, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." And with such an eminent example before me, I cannot be wrong if I seek very literally to "follow His steps" whatever disgrace that may involve. A man is not worthy to be connected with a Christian denomination if he is not prepared to take upon himself the reproach of the body to which he belongs—so let none of us be ashamed of being Baptists! And let none of us be ashamed of Jesus, and though His brothers and sisters may be poor and ignorant, let us love and esteem them because of their relationship to Him!

Piety also rejoices that Christ's brothers and sisters are here on earth and that they are poor, for she says, "*I can minister to Christ by helping them.*" Piety feels, concerning the brothers and sisters of Christ, as David felt when he said, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" He was kind to Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake—let us be kind to Christ's brothers and sisters for His sake. Let us ask, "Where can we find any of the household of Jesus that we may show them kindness for His sake!" Christian charity delights to find the poor believer and to minister to him for Christ's sake. If our names are found enrolled among the brothers and sisters of Christ, we shall surely count it an honor and privilege to do all that we can for the rest of the family, especially for those who are in the greatest need!

Now I close with just two questions. First, dear friends, *what is your view of Christ*? Is it the view of prejudice or the view of piety? Do you say that however lightly Christ may be esteemed by the world, He is precious to you? Then I trust that you also are among the brothers and sisters of "the carpenter's son" whom He will acknowledge when He comes in His glory. Those who follow the despised Christ will not be rejected by the reigning Christ!

The other question is *what is your view of Christ's people?* Is it the view of prejudice or the view of piety? Are you willing to cast in your lot with them? Will you join the sect that is everywhere spoken against? Are you ready to be hooted and jeered at for Christ's sake? If you are, I trust that you are among His brothers and sisters who suffer with Him here and who shall reign with Him, by-and-by. "Who is on the Lord's side?" Let that question ring in your ears as you go your way, "Who is on the Lord's side?" If God is your God, serve Him. If Christ is your King, follow Him. Unite yourself with His people and let all men see that you are not ashamed to acknowledge your Lord or those who are His brothers and sisters today. Let not your view of Christ and His relations be the view of prejudice, but let it be the view of piety! And may God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:24-58.

Verse 24. *Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.* Jesus never sowed any other kind of seed. The truth which He taught is pure and unadulterated. It is good seed—good and only good, the very best of seed!

25. *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.* Wherever Christ is active, the enemy is sure to be active, too. If you have a sleeping church, you may have a sleeping devil—but as soon as ever Christ is in the congregation, sowing the good seed, the devil wakes up and by night, when men are off their guard, the bad seed—the mock wheat—here translated, "tares"—is sown among the true wheat.

26. *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.* The false wheat came up with the true. Perhaps the seed in the one case may have looked like the other even as there is "another gospel which is not another" with which some still trouble us. The only true test is, "By their fruits you shall know them." So, when the seeds had sprung up, there was the blade of true wheat, and "then appeared the tares also."

27. *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? Why, then, has it tares?* How often we have asked that question! We have seen children trained by the most

godly parents, yet they have developed a sad propensity to sin, and we have said, "From where, then, have these tares come?" We have seen a ministry which has been sound and faithful—and yet in the congregation there have sprung up divers errors which have done a world of mischief—and we have had to sorrowfully ask, "From where, then, have these tares come?"

28, 29. *He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Will you, then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, No; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them.* We are so fallible; we make so many mistakes, that we cannot be trusted to do this uprooting, for we might pull up wheat as well as tares. If there had been briars or thorns growing in that field, those servants might have pulled them up without damage to the corn, just as an openly evil person who breaks the laws of God openly, may be cut off from the church without damage. But these tares must be left for the present.

30. *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* There will be an end of this mixture in due time! The hypocrite shall not always stand in the congregation of the righteous. The wheat and the tares shall be separated "in the time of harvest."

31, 32. *Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.* The kingdom of heaven is just like that in this world! Wherever it comes, it comes to grow. And it is just like that in our hearts. Oh, how small is the first sign of grace in the soul! Perhaps it is only a single thought. The divine life may begin with but a wish, or with one painful conviction of error—but if it is the true and living seed of God, it will grow. And there is no telling how great will be its growth till, in that soul where all was darkness, many graces, like sweet songbirds, shall come and sing and make joy and gladness there! Oh, that you and I might experimentally know the meaning of the parable of the mustard seed!

33. *Another parable spoke He unto them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* And although leaven is usually the symbol of evil, yet it may be here a fair representation of the kingdom of heaven, itself, for it operates mysteriously and secretly, yet powerfully, till it permeates the whole of man's nature. And the gospel will keep on winning its way till the whole world shall yet be leavened by it—

"More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail."

34-36. *All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which*

was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. I again remind you that wherever there is anything that you do not understand, the best way is to consult the Master concerning it. If I read a book in which there is an obscure passage—and I can write to the author and ask him what he means by it—I shall most probably get to understand it. So, the best expositor of the Word of God is the Spirit of God; therefore appeal to Him whenever you are puzzled with anything that is taught in the Scriptures and say to Him, "Blessed Spirit, will You graciously expound to me this parable, this doctrine, this experience?" And He will do it and so you shall become wise unto salvation.

37-43. *He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seeds are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth; then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.* May God give us such ears as can hear His voice, and may we take to heart the solemn teachings of our Lord!

44-46. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; which when a man has found, he hides it and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.* It would be a good bargain for anyone to part with all he has in exchange for the kingdom of heaven! Yet that great "treasure" is to be had for nothing by everyone who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ!

47-50. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* We are to cast the great net of the gospel into the sea of humanity, but we must not expect that all we catch will prove to be good. There is time of separation coming when "the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just."

51. *Jesus said unto them, Have you understood all these things?* [See Sermon #3305, Volume 58—A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is a question which constantly needs to be put to all hearers and readers of the word. "Have you understood all these things?" To be hearers, only, or readers, only, will avail nothing—the word must be understood, accepted, assimilated—and so shall it make us wise unto salvation.

51. *They said unto Him, Yes, Lord.* They answered very glibly, yet probably not one of them fully understood the seven parables in this chapter. If anyone did so, he would be like the instructed scribe described in the next verse—

52. *Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.* He who has learned anything concerning the kingdom of heaven should teach it to others, bringing forth the truths of God in pleasing variety, "new and old," to edify all his hearers.

53, 54. *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue insomuch that they were astonished, and said, How has this man this wisdom and these mighty works?* They were highly privileged in having Jesus back in their midst, yet they failed to appreciate His teaching! They were astonished at His wisdom, but were unable to perceive the divine source from which it sprang.

55-58. *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers , James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? How, then, has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.* This was a notable illustration of John's words concerning Christ, "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not." Let us beware of unbelief lest it should tie the hands of Christ as it did there in His own country!

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A PRACTICAL DISCOURSE
NO. 3313

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY AUGUST 1, 1912.
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"A month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home."
1 Kings 5:14.

IT was right that when a temple was to be built for the lord God of Israel, the Israelites should take their fair share in the building of it. Therefor a levy was made, and a certain number of men were chosen to work in Lebanon. It was, however, most fitting that work for a gracious God should be joyful work; not the bondage of slaves, but the delight of sons. Solomon did not demand that any Israelite should toil in the mountains and queries for years together and leave his own fields to lie waste, but he decreed that the workers should have one month in Lebanon at work on the temple and two months at home for their own affairs. Our God is not a taskmaster—and sacred service should not sour into forced labor! Self-sacrifice is the soul of true religion, but we must not demand of others that which would turn religion into slavery. Solomon knew that the common people would grow weary of working even for Jehovah, Himself, if they were taken away from their own families and inheritance altogether and, therefore, in his wisdom he put it so—"One month in Lebanon, and two months at home."

I am about to draw from this text two lessons. They are these—first, that *you and I ought to be rendering service to the Lord our God* and assisting to build up His spiritual temple. But secondly, that while we labor abroad, *we must be doubly careful to watch over our own households and our own souls*. Marthas must also be Marys. We are bound to serve, but we must not be cumbered with much serving. We must work with Martha and yet sit with Mary at the Master's feet—there must be one month in Lebanon and two months at home!

I. First, then, WE ARE BOUND TO DO SERVICE FOR OUR KING—service for the living temple of our God.

It is not enough for us to say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, I am saved." That is *not* the end of it all, otherwise religion were a grand piece of selfishness! Our souls may not be hooped in within our own ribs. Absorption in our own safety and neglect of others would betray a spirit directly opposite to that of Jesus and His true disciples. No, brothers and sisters, as the Father sent His Son into the world, even so has He sent *us* into the world—that we may be made a blessing to our fellows! Our lifework is to prepare living stones which may be built upon

the one foundation to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. We are to be hewers of timber and squares of stones for the house of our God!

Lay home to your hearts your *obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ*. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price." Therefore no man lives unto himself. Your own salvation is of the utmost importance to you, but an essential part of it is salvation from selfishness. If you begin and end with your own interests, you are the servants of *self* and not of the Lord Jesus! We owe our all to the blessed Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, His business is our business—and what is His business but to seek and to save that which was lost? We are now the lifelong servants of Him "who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." Shall we grudge our month in Lebanon? No, rather we will now see to it that the whole 12 months of the year are dedicated to temple service since He has called us to be priests and, therefore, we always dwell in His house!

Remember also our *obligations to others*. How were we converted? Was it not through the instrumentality of some Christian man or women? Directly or indirectly, it was so in every case, for those who have gone to glory long ago have left us debtors for the knowledge of the gospel which they handed down to us. Most of us were blessed by direct agency—a good book was quietly placed in our way, a kind word was gently spoken, an earnest sermon was aimed at us—a holy example was set before us. By such things as these we were drawn to Christ. By the tears and prayers of others we were brought to the Savior's feet. Some owe their conversion to their parents, others to Sabbath school teachers, others to preachers of the word. The bulk of us were brought to Jesus by someone instrumentality or another. Pay your debt, then. You also are to bring another to Jesus as recompense to His servants. A certain generous man used to give liberally to the poor, but he did it in this fashion—he said to each one, "I only lend this money to you, and you are to pay it back to me when you are able to do so, by giving as much as this to another poor person." That is the method of our Lord Jesus Christ—He grants us a knowledge of His gospel under bond that we tell it to others. Brothers and sisters, we are debtors! If we are built up a spiritual house, let us gladly give our month in Lebanon that other stones may be built into the heavenly temple!

Besides, there is *a life within every Christian* which is the best prompter to holy service. My brother, if you are born-again, you cannot be idle, for the life of God is never sluggish! Did not Jesus say, "My Father works hitherto, and I work"? If you are not diligent in sacred service, you will soon be afflicted with doubts and fears, for this disease attends on spiritual sloth! The month on breezy Lebanon is for your soul's health. To be idle is to sicken, but to serve God is health and delight! It is like swimming to a strong swimmer—he delights to breast the waves. It is like flight to the condor of the Andes who joyfully spreads his wings towards the sun! Tell the eagle that it is a toil to mount into the ether, and his joyful flight replies, "Toil to me to fly? I was made on

purpose to dart among lightning and to be at home amid tempests! My eyes can even dare to gaze upon the sun." O brothers and sisters, it is not slavery to serve Christ! Even when it involves stern effort, the labor brings its own refreshment. The more we can do for Christ, the more are we indulging those sacred instincts which regeneration has implanted within us! Let us shoulder the axe and spend our month in Lebanon! Felling trees is fit work even for premiers, and preparing stones for the spiritual temple would be an honorable occupation for angels!

This work is *most beneficial to ourselves*. Those Christians people who do nothing are usually troublesome, for they are at leisure to find fault with those who are doing their best. Many can see exactly how it ought to be done, and yet do nothing! They discover where the worker fails. They detect the little crotchets and peculiarities which reveal themselves in his service. The minister would preach so much better if he did it in the patent way which his critics have invented. Why do not these fellows attempt the work themselves? No, they are too fine for that—their high vocation is to review the defects of their brothers! I am sick of them! Is not their Lord weary of them, too?

Working for the Lord necessitates prayer and this is a great blessing to us. If a man gives himself wholly to soul-winning, he must be much in prayer, for he will be all at sea without help from heaven! If he tries to comfort the downcast penitent, how readily will he be baffled! How soon will he cry to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to do the work effectually! Every grace which a Christian possesses is bettered by its use in heavenly service. The practical value of the gospel will soon strike you if you labor among the fallen, the ignorant, the infidel. Does anybody know how precious the gospel is till he has seen it light up the eyes that were dim with despondency? Does any man know how the joyful sound of the name of Jesus can charm a heart till he has seen the smile of newborn faith? I do not see how our coming memories can minister to our eternal happiness unless we earnestly labor to bring sinners to the Savior! Let us be up in earnest and win jewels for Jesus and happy memories for ourselves! Will it not enlarge our heaven to see those in glory who were saved by our word? Was Rutherford wrong when he said, "Oh, to see the people of Anwoth in heaven shall be seven heavens to me"? I can truly say of my hearers that the heaven of each one shall be another heaven to me! For this joy let us each one gladly take his month in Lebanon! Let those who have begun to loiter awaken themselves. It ill becomes any of us to be hearers of the word for ourselves and never publishers of it to others!.

II. It remains that I now remind you that if we take our month in Lebanon in active service for the Lord's House, WE MUST TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO SPEND OUR TWO MONTHS AT HOME.

Our own households must have special attention. The first duty of a Christian man is within his own heart. The second is within his own

house. Teach children? Yes, by all means, but begin with your own! Convert sinners? Yes, but labor first to win those who are round about you. Religion must begin at home! The apostles were to begin at Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was their home. If we care not for our own households, we shall be worse than heathen men and publicans. I am afraid that many professing Christians will have the doom of Eli pronounced upon them. Eli's sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. He said a gentle word to them, "Do not do so, my sons," but he did not put his foot down and tell them plainly, "This shall not be done in my house. You shall not profane the sanctuary of God by open sin if I can prevent it. I am resolved upon that." The end of his indulgence was their destructions and you know how sorrowfully the old man ended his days and what a curse fell upon his household in later generations. God grant that it may never be so with one of us! If anybody should ask me whether I know an Eli, I fear I could put my finger on several. I do not say that I can see one here—I will not look that way, but let each one ask, "Lord, is it I?"

Rest assured that all our talk about religion and all our public labors will go for very little if our own families run wild. It is a horrible thing in Israel when the children of godly men are the sons of Belial! Such cases do occur and then some say to me, "It is written, 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' How do you make that out when so-and-so's son is such an open rebel?" I answer, "Whenever I have been able to lift the veil, I have invariably found a reason for the children's non-conversion in the mismanagement of the household, or in the inconsistent conduct of the parents." I suspect that we may generally say, "Is there not a cause?" I will not say "*always*," because singular things do happen, but yet if God gives His people grace to walk uprightly before Him and they pray for their children, and instruct them, and set them a godly example, the children usually follow in their father's footsteps.

Take heed, then, that you spend your two months at home! Do not offer to God the sacrifice of public service smeared with the blood of your home duties. Do not diminish your care in your own house, for the neglect of domestic piety will prevent the acceptance of your public service. God forbid that when you talk to outsiders, they should reply, "Look at your own children." Our own offspring must be prayed for and we must do more than that—we must correct them for sin, instruct them in the Scriptures and pray with them personally till we weep over them! Family prayer must be maintained in a devout and interesting manner—and our young people must go with us to the sanctuary and be trained to treasure up what they hear. I know the Spirit of God alone can renew their hearts, but He is not backward to bless the means.

If the Lord helps us to be earnest with our children, what a blessed reward awaits us! "I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth of God." Every Christian parent may say this of his offspring.

Oh, the delight it is to look upon sons and daughters all in Christ!—to hear and know that they are as earnest for the Redeemer's kingdom as we are! All the honor must be given to the sovereign grace of God—but the comfort is ours. I am sure that when my mother pleaded with me, she was doing better than if she had addressed large assemblies. I am equally sure that when my father knelt down with me, alone, and pleaded with God for me, and besought me to pray for myself, he was doing a better day's work then when he was preaching, though in that he has had great blessing! Who knows what your son may be? Who knows what usefulness God may give to your daughter? Surely, if Dr. Busby used to take off his hat when he went into the schoolroom because he did not know who the boys might be, for they might turn out to be great statesmen or judges, you might take off your hat to your children—for you cannot tell what God may make of them! Pray for grace to look well to the ways of your household, that they may bring no discredit upon the cause of Christ. Use well those two months at home.

Lastly, I change the run of thought to reach another point. There is a home that is nearer home than our own homes—and that is the state of things within our own breasts. If we give a certain care to the service of God, publicly, *there must be double attention to the work of grace within.* We must not neglect the cultivation of our own heart! We must watch our own growth in grace, our own communion with Christ, our own faith, our own hope, our own love—for if we do not, we shall be in great danger! I fear that many Christians are busy here and there and their own spiritual life is withering. They accomplish little because their spiritual money is put into a bag which is full of holes! They work hard, but take no fish because they never mend their nets. If we neglect our private prayers, we shall not "so run that we may obtain." In some cases the neglect will prove to be fatal. I do not mean in the case of the genuine child of God, but I do mean in the case of many whom we take to be such. They keep the vineyards of others, but their own vineyard they have not kept. They urge repentance, but they have not themselves repented! They teach faith, but they have not themselves believed. They forget the work of the Holy Spirit within them in their zeal for their own fussy endeavors to outdo others. If you neglect your own souls and hope that you will get right by performing Christian duties, you are grievously mistaken! If you try to shine and have no oil in your vessels with your lamps, your lamps will go out and you will die in the dark. If you try to tell others what you do not know and speak to them of a Savior in whom you have never trusted, your life will be a dreadful failure! You will preach and teach your own condemnation! What else can come of it? Do see to it that if you go up to Lebanon, the axe is first laid to the root of your own sins.

Supposing the professor to be a real and true Christian, yet, if he is always active and never contemplative; if he spends much time in

working and none in prayer and Bible reading, it will be very weakening to himself and damaging to his work. A weak hand may wield a good tool, but it cannot do much with it. When you are sickly, ailing, out of sorts as to body, you cannot do your work well. It would be a foolish thing to put a poor consumptive man to labor like a strong laborer on the railway—he would weary himself and do little with great pain. Fussy work that is done for Christ without communion with Christ comes to nothing, because it is not worked in the strength of God. O my brothers and sisters, nothing can come out of us if it is not first worked in us by the Holy Spirit! It is essential that a Christian worker should himself be the workmanship of God. If we would heal, we must be healthy. If we get out of fellowship with Jesus, it will lead to innumerable evils! And the more we try to do, the more those evils will show themselves. We shall grow proud of our doings and we shall censure others till we grow unbearable. We shall become self-confident—and the more we attempt, the more self-confident we shall become! Or else we shall take to murmuring and grow displeased because God does not prosper our work—and we will feel like Cain when the Lord had no respect to his offering. You must walk in the light as God is in the light if you are to enlighten a dark world and glorify your Lord!

Finally let me say to you, dear friends, there must be the two months at home as to *prayer*. Do not forsake the mercy seat. Be in the frequent practice of prayer and—what is better—be always in the spirit of prayer! May the Holy Spirit lead you to baptize every duty into the pure stream of grace and to do the same in every lesson in the school, every sermon you deliver, and every tract you give away! Pray over the whole business! Prepare for the one month in Lebanon by the two months at home spent in pleading with God for a blessing!

Be much in *Bible reading*. We do not read the Bible half as much as we should. Look how the Puritans searched it from end to end. How familiar they were with every book! What blessed family prayer there must have been in the household of Philip Henry since it led Matthew Henry to write that famous Commentary! Oh, that we had more Bible searching and Bible preaching! Talking about the Bible is well enough, but searching the Scriptures is better! Feed on the word yourselves, or else your teaching will be thin and watery.

So, too, as to *self-examination*—a duty much neglected! Let us not fail in it. How few there are who look over the actions of the day before they fall asleep at night! But how well it would be to revive the practice!

Repentance, too, that sweet grace with the diamonds in her eyes—sweet tears of holy grief for all that has been amiss—is not this pushed aside? This must not be!

And *faith*, also, the constant trusting the Savior, should we not exercise it more continuously? Oh, to have times of quiet for the exercise of faith and the growth of love!

As for *communion with God*, oh, that we lived in it always! But we do not get time enough. We do not *take* time enough to get near our God. We are like men who eat their meals in a hurry, for business calls them away. If a man has no regular meals, but gets a snack here and a snack there, he soon gets out of sorts. He needs time for regular food and its mastication and digestion. We need the same for our holy feasts upon the heavenly food! And to this end I would urge Solomon's rule—one month in Lebanon, but two months at home. A word to the wise is enough and, therefore, I say no more.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 KINGS 5; PSALMS 48; 95.

1 Kings 5:1-5. *And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the place of his father: for Hiram had always loved David. And Solomon sent to Hiram saying, You know how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke unto David my father, saying, Your son, whom I will set upon your throne in your place, he shall build an house unto My name.* When God intends a man to do any special work for Him, He will find him all the helpers he needs. Sometimes those helpers may seem to be very unlikely persons, but—

"Remember that omnipotence
Has servants everywhere."

See, dear friends, when the Lord had given rest to Solomon, he proceeded with the building of the temple which David had planned. Whenever God blesses you, show your gratitude to Him by undertaking some special service for Him. Now that you are out of your recent trouble, bring your sacrifice of thanksgiving and do all that you can for your Lord—your time of rest may not last as long as you could wish, therefore use it while you have it to God's glory.

6. *Now therefore command you that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with your servants: and unto you will I give him for your servants according to all that you shall appoint: for you know that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like the Sidonians.* It is not every man who has every gift. Hiram and his Sidonians could hew timber more skillfully than Solomon and his Israelites. God can always find the right sort of men to do His work. Do not be dispirited because you cannot do everything—why should you? Should not somebody else have a share and be also permitted to have the honor of serving his God? It is well that you cannot do all that has to be done, and that somebody else can do something better than you can!

7, 8. *And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which has given unto David a wise son over this great people. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which you sent to me for*—It is always a good thing, before you agree to do anything, to consider it, to look at it from all points of view. I wish that in giving money to the service of God, there was more consideration as to the objective for which it is given. Some give simply because others do. Some because they are asked. But he gives best who considers the matter and looks all round, and then says, "Yes, this is a just claim upon me as a servant of God and, therefore I will respond to it." So, "Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which you sent to me for"—

8-11. *And I will do all your desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that you shall appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and you shall receive them: and you shall accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.* Is it not a very pleasing thought that both Jews and Gentiles built the temple of Solomon? They put the big stones together and cut the cedar and fir trees into the proper shape, yet they were Hiram's fir trees and Hiram's cedar trees, and he floated them by sea to the place where they were landed, and then they were dragged to Jerusalem. And God will let His people of every race and nation have a share in the building of His great *spiritual* house!

12-14. *And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and they two made a league together. And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy.* That was a capital rule—"a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home." You who work for God must have your month at work, but you also need two months at home to attend to your own business. There are some people who always stay at Lebanon, always at work, but there is spiritual work to be done at home as well! Getting your heart ready for service, sharpening your tools, looking after your own flocks and herds and so on there was hard work to be done, and if it was to be done well, the workers needed to have their sinews and muscles in good order, so "a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home." One prayer in the class and two prayers at home! One hour of teaching the lesson, twice as much time taken in getting it up and preparing it.

15. *And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bore burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains.* What were their

names? I cannot tell you, but probably there was a book in which they were all recorded. And Christ has many humble workers, hewers of wood and bearers of burdens whose names are not known among men. Well, what is in a name? Let us be content to serve under our greater Solomon, and let all the whole glory of building His spiritual temple be His! Never mind who bears the burdens or who hews the stones—the temple is for God, so let God be glorified, and not man!

16. *Besides the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, there were three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that worked in the work.* There must be various degrees among the workers in the service of God. He is a sovereign and He divides unto every man according as He wills. How this ought to hush all envy and rebellion against the officers in the work of God whom He has called to be overseers of others!

17. *And the king commanded.* That is at the bottom of all service for our King—let us but get a command from the King, and we obey at once.

17, 18. *And they brought great stones, costly stones and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone squares.* I am glad they are mentioned here, for there are still some brothers and sisters who are not hewers, but they are stone squares. Perhaps they do not see many conversions through their efforts, but they do a great deal of the work of instructing the converts. They polish what other people have excavated—they are stone squares—and just as the temple at Jerusalem needed the work of the stone squares, so does God's great *spiritual* temple need those who square as well as those who hew the stones that are to be built into it.

18. *So they prepared timber and stones to build the house.* Nothing is too good or too costly to be given to God, and let us reckon no labor too hard or too heavy that will bring glory to His holy name!

Psalm 48: A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah. It is not every Psalm that is a song, for some Psalms are full of sorrow and it is not every song that is a Psalm, for, alas, there are many songs that are mere foolish rhymes or something worse, but here is a happy combination, "A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah."

Verse 1. *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised*—Surely a great God should have great praise—"greatly to be praised"—

1. *In the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.* If there is any place where He ought to be praised, surely it is there! Even if all the rest of the world is silent, let God be praised "in the mountain of His holiness." Holy people must praise the holy God. It is natural that they should do so. It needs holy people to see God and when they do see Him, their eyes will glisten with delight and their voices will ring with His praise!

2. *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* Thus the Jew praises Jerusalem and thus the Christian praises the church. The church of Christ is, to His eyes, the most precious thing in the whole world—there is nothing upon the face of the earth that is so lovely in the sight of God as His own chosen church!

3. *God is known in her palace for a refuge.* Are not all her people kings? Therefore they live in palaces and they, none of them, trust in themselves—God is known to them as a refuge.

4, 5. *For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled.* They came up with their confederate bands of kings to attack Jerusalem! And they looked at it and wondered at its strength and beauty.

5. *They were troubled, and hastened away.* If they came quickly, they went away still more quickly, hurrying off like a band of frightened children.

6, 7. *Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. You break the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.* God broke up the confederacies of kings that were leagued against His people. Even the great galleons of Tarshish were dashed to pieces when the Lord blew with His wind and scattered them as, many centuries later, He did with the "invincible" Armada on our own coasts!

8. *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah.* [See Sermon #2014, Volume 34—AS WE HAVE HEARD, SO WE HAVE SEEN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Well might there be a pause here for solemn consideration, for putting the harp strings right and lifting up the heart to the Lord in praise.

9. *We have thought of Your loving-kindness , O God, in the midst of Your temple.* [See Sermon #2783, Volume 48—A WORTHY THEME FOR THOUGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Here is a blessed subject, "Your loving-kindness, O God"—a blessed people, we who have enjoyed it—a blessed occupation, "we have thought of Your loving-kindness"—and a blessed place in which to do it, "in the midst of Your temple." When we are in the midst of the Lord's people, in the midst of His church, then is the time for sweet and blessed thoughts concerning our gracious God!

10. *According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise unto the ends of the earth.* As is God's name, so is His fame—unto the very ends of the earth shall men hear the praises of the Lord, especially when He delivers His people.

10. *Your right hand is full of righteousness.* God's right hand is never empty—"Your right hand is full." And when He comes to sinners, He deals with them in righteousness. And when He comes to His saints in mercy, it is still in righteousness. "Mercy and truth are met together;

righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"

11. *Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Your judgment.* That is, the smaller cities of Judah, let them sing, as well as Jerusalem, the high praises of their delivering God. Perhaps it refers to the women who, in times of war, have to suffer most and worst of all—let them be loudest in their joyous music—as Miriam took her timbrel and led the song of the women on the shore of the Red Sea, so let the daughters of Judah be glad because of the Lord's righteous judgments upon the enemies of His people.

12, 13. *Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generations following.* Sunday school teachers, note the security of the church of God! Mark the eternal truth on which she is founded, the everlasting promises by which she is guarded, the forts and bastions of *omnipotence* that preserve her from the assaults of her enemies! And then tell all this "to the generation following."

14. *For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.* But the Hebrew is better still—"He will be our guide even over death." We shall trample down death, or, as one puts it, we shall stand by the grave of death! What a glorious place for us to stand in when death, itself, is dead through the ever-living Christ, and the Resurrection power that comes through His death! "He will be our guide even over death."

Psalm 95:1. *O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.* The worship of God should always be joyful, hence there is to be much singing in it. God is not like Baal who can be worshiped with crying and lamentation, and the cutting of the flesh with knives. We who believe in Him regard Him not as the destroyer or the avenger, but as "the rock of our salvation." You who have hidden in that rock can truly praise Him!

2. *Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving.* Let us not be afraid to stand in the immediate presence of God. On the other hand, let us not worship Him with lightness and frivolity, but let us come before His presence with due reverence and solemnity. And when we come, let it be "with thanksgiving." I need not remind you what innumerable reasons we have for thanksgiving. Let us render to God thanks according to what we have received from Him.

2, 3. *And make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* There are no other gods that are worthy to bear that name, but Jehovah is the great King above all that are called gods.

4. *In His hand are the deep places of the earth.* The innermost caverns, the deepest mines of earth, and the far-down places in the depths of the ocean—these are all in God's hand.

4. *The strength of the hills is His also.* He is the God of the hills as well as the God of the valleys. Let us read this verse again. "In His hand are the deep places of the earth." Are any of you there today? Then praise Him out of the deep places. "The strength of the hills is His also." Are you on the tops of the mountains today? Then give Him the praise who placed you there lest through pride your feet should slip.

5. *The sea is His, for He made it.* Men cannot parcel it out into estates, or cut it up into allotments as they do with the solid earth. But "the sea is His." There God reigns alone and surveys the broad acres of the wild waste of waters as His own.

6. *And his hands formed the dry land.* As though it were so much plastic clay out of which He had molded this great globe and fashioned the various countries in which the nations of mankind dwell.

6, 7. *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hands.* Blessed are we if we can say this in very truth! We are highly privileged to have this God to be our God, and to be, ourselves, His purchased inheritance, the objects of His daily care—"the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hands."

7, 8. *Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.* It is a tender heart that hears God's voice—and the heart that hears His voice is sure to be made tender. These two things act and re-act the one upon the other.

8-11. *As in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your father tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways: unto whom I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.* They had seen God's work, but they did not know His eyes. They had not the sense to perceive the hand of God even in His miracles, or when they did perceive it, they oft rebelled against Him. Oh, that we may not be like that unbelieving generation that grieved the Lord for forty years in the wilderness!

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"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."
Psalm 19:7-9.

[Another Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the first clause of verse 7 is #2870, Volume 50—REVELATION AND CONVERSION—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WHAT I have to say this evening will really be an exposition of the whole Psalm. I have only selected these three verses for the convenience of having a short text. The Psalm begins upon a high note—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." Only let the film of unbelief be taken from our eyes and we shall see that everything in the great temple of nature proclaims the greatness and the glory of God. Only let the naturally deaf ear be unstopped and there will be heard voices—mysterious yet clearly intelligible—revealing that God is still here working in providence, as of old He worked in creation. It seems to me that those persons who think that Christians are not to be delighted with the wonders and beauties of the natural world, differ very widely from the Psalmist whose words we are considering. One truly excellent man, whom we all very highly esteem, declared that when traveling up the Rhine, he did not look at the landscape because he desired to have his thoughts completely taken up with spiritual things. I cannot condemn the good man, yet I think that as I am dwelling in my Father's house, I ought to take delight in my Father's works—and I must be a strange sort of child if I think it is a token of my affection for my Father not to care to look at the garden which He has laid out or the house which He has built! While earnestly exhorting you to be spiritually-minded, I would remind you that it is just as easy to be spiritually minded with your eyes open as with your eyes shut to all the beauties of nature by which you are surrounded!

There are two things in the Psalm about which I am going to speak. The first is *a parallel intended*. And the second *praise expressed*.

I. First, there is A PARALLEL INTENDED.

This parallel was suggested to my mind while reading Bishop Horne's commentary upon this Psalm. He confesses his acknowledgment to some older author for the idea. The parallel is this—David first extols the revelation of God in nature, and then extols the revelation of God in His word. And he seems to imply that there is a likeness between the two revelations—that they are, in fact, two books of the same revelation or two parts of one great poem!

In reading David's remarks concerning the heavens, we may truthfully apply them to the Scriptures. *Like the heavens, the Scriptures declare the glory of God, and like the firmament, they show His handiwork*. Only that while the firmament shows God's handiwork in creation, the Word of God shows that same handiwork in redemption, in that *new* creation by Him who says, "Behold, I make all things new." Consider first the vast expanse of the heavens. Who can measure the great curtain which God has stretched out as a tent to dwell in? Who knows the height thereof or the breadth thereof? Where are the compasses that can describe this wondrous circle? And the Scriptures are just as expansive as are the heavens—no man has yet compassed all the truth of divine revelation. As we look up to the great doctrines that tower above us like the high mountains, we may well say, "They are high, we cannot attain unto them." The length and breadth and depth and height of Scripture all surpass the comprehension of mortal men! And though we do unfeignedly believe and devoutly rejoice in them, it is not within the range of our powers to fully comprehend them. There are some persons who talk as if they know the whole circle of divine truth. They think they have put the great ocean of revelation into the small measure of their mortal capacity, but you know, dear friends, that it is not so. No man will ever be able to hold the heavens in his hand or to compass the firmament with a span. But even if he could do this, he would still find that the Word of God in all its wondrous immensity was too vast for him to grasp! We must hold firmly whatever we have learned of the truth of God, but we must always be prepared to learn more. To say of my Bible that I have attained to every height that it reveals, is as foolish as to say that I have reached the highest degree of spiritual life that is possible. Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And when I have strived my utmost to know the Word of God, I still feel that I have need to pray, "Teach me Your statutes, O Lord, and enlarge my understanding that I may know more and more of Your truth!" For expanse, for loftiness, for brightness, for glory, the Scriptures are comparable to the heavens which declare the glory of God—and to the firmament which shows His handiwork.

Then the Psalmist goes on to say, "Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge," and so, *the revelation of God in the Scriptures is always speaking to men*. Let them turn to it whenever they may—it has a message for them at all seasons. When we are happy and

rejoicing, it has a voice for our brightest day! And when we are mourning and sorrowing, it is the comfort of our darkest night. During this long night of the church's history—the long night of her Lord's absence—His true ministers are enabled to shine as stars in His right hand and many a sorrowful spirit is cheered, and many a mariner upon the sea of life is guided by their light. By-and-by, the blessed Sun of righteousness shall again arise with healing in His wings—and then throughout the long and bright millennia day, and afterwards throughout that everlasting day to which there shall be no night—we shall continue to learn more and more of the wonders of that revelation which He has given us in His word.

One great glory of the heavens is that they have a voice to all lands—"There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world." In a language understood by all the sons of men—not in the language of only the Jew or of the Gentile, not in the language of the barbarian or the Greek, alone, but in the language of all alike—ancient and modern, bond and free—the voice of the heavens has gone forth the wide world over declaring the glory of God! So is it with the gospel! No matter where you introduce it, its message is adapted to all the sons of men. Paul proved the power of the gospel among the idolaters of Lycaonia and among the sages of Greece. It has a voice for men of all temperaments. It speaks with equal authority to the sturdy Anglo-Saxon and to the more volatile Frenchman. It has a peculiar facility for adapting itself to all nationalities—it is neither the gospel of the Englishman, alone, nor of the American, nor of the African, but it speaks to—

"All people that on earth do dwell!"

Wherever the Bible goes, it appears not as an exotic, but as a homegrown flower! And whenever the gospel is preached, it comes, not as a revelation from the East, or the West, or the North, or the South, but as God's message to all mankind in the whole world!

The glory of the Scriptures is like the glory of the heavens—"in them has He set a tabernacle for the sun"—and *in the Word of God there is a tabernacle for the Sun of righteousness*. It is within the truths of divine revelation that Jesus Christ abides as the sun does in its proper sphere. What would the heavens be without the sun? And what would the Scriptures be without the Sun of righteousness? I may truly say of the Bible—

"Here I behold my Savior's face
Almost on every page."

The glory of the gospel is that in it, God is revealed as manifest in human flesh—all the divine attributes are displayed in the person of Emmanuel, God with ss. Take Jesus Christ away from the gospel and its power is gone—and take Jesus Christ away from the Christian ministry and it becomes utterly powerless. I am grieved to have to say it, but I believe that it is because there has been so little preaching of Christ in many of our pulpits that the hearers have been driven off to Romanism and to all

sorts of errors. The human heart needs some supreme object of affection—and it can never be satisfied with philosophical essays, or discussions about morality, or similar themes which have wasted hundreds of Sundays and made the services of the sanctuary a weariness to God's people. Oh, that there were more preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified! If He is lifted up, He will draw all men unto Him—and He must be lifted up, or else the preaching is a mere sham, a joy to devils, but to no one else!

David next very expressively says of the sun, "which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber," and is not this a true picture of Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures? He compared Himself to a bridegroom during His earthly ministry and this is His relationship to His church, which is "the bride, the Lamb's wife." He is here said to be "coming out of His chamber," as He came out of the council chamber of the divine decree, saying, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your law is within My heart"—coming out of the chamber of the divine and invisible, and dressing Himself in the humble robes of our humanity! Coming to a life of sorrow and suffering, yet coming to it with joyous steps because He delighted to do the will of God and was charmed to redeem His spouse from death and hell! Then later, coming out of the chamber in which He had concealed the glories of His deity during the 33 years of His sojourn among men. And now, coming out of His chamber continually as His gospel is faithfully proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit! Verily, this is a true picture of Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures, "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber."

It is also a picture of Him as a champion—"and rejoices as a strong man to run a race"—"as a strong man"—not as a weakling, panting and struggling to stay on the track, but as a strong man rejoicing because he knows that he shall victoriously reach the goal! Coming forth in the gospel, Sunday by Sunday, and week by week, our Lord Jesus Christ does not come forth to be defeated! He does not come forth, as some of my brothers seen to imagine, needing their proofs of His existence and deity! Or their apologies for His gospel, but He comes forth to achieve His everlasting purposes, that He may be able to say to His Father at the last even as He said when here upon the earth, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Like a strong man rejoicing to run a race, He is confident that He shall reach the goal and win the prize. It is a long race, a toilsome race, a race in which there are many competitors—but as Jesus looks at them, He knows that He will beat them all—and that the crown of victory shall surely be His!

I hope some poor troubled soul will be comforted by the next verse of the Psalm—"His goings forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the end of it." The light of the sun reaches even the ice-caves

of the frozen North and it pours down it shining rays most lavishly upon—

"India's coral strand"—

and—

"Where Africa's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand."

So is it in the going forth of Christ in His gospel—"His going forth is from the end of heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it." The light of His gospel shines upon all ranks, all classes and all characters—the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate! And the time shall come when it will shine over the whole world, for—

"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does his successive journeys run—
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall grow and wane no more."

Then the psalmist adds, "And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." The heat of the sun finds out the little flower in the darkest glade of the forest and no doubt it exerts a mysterious influence even in the depths of the sea and at the bottom of the deepest mines! "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof," even though much is hid from the light thereof. So is it with the gospel and with the love of Christ. Where some of you are tonight, you may imagine that you are hidden from the heat of the Savior's love, but is it so? You hear the gospel, do you not? That is something, but you say that you want to find the Christ who has His tabernacle in the gospel. But that very *desire* of yours proves that you are not hidden from the heat of the Savior's love, for that desire is one of the gifts of His grace! If you have any brokenness of heart, any consciousness of guilt, any inclination towards repentance, this is the work of Christ! Trust His ever blessed Spirit! The flower does not know that it could not bloom without the sun, but it is true. Perhaps it thinks that the sun has too much to do in watching over the wide expanse of sea and land, and in seeing its beams reflected from the glittering palace roof to notice one poor little poppy in a glen or one primrose hidden away in a mossy bank! But it is not so. The sun sheds its beams upon all and is none the poorer for doing so! And so is it with the love of Christ. If you feel even a *longing* after Him that is a proof that you are not hidden from the heat of His love! Breathe this prayer again and again, "Jesus, You glorious Sun of righteousness, shine on me and fill me with Your divine grace!" As the sunflower is said to turn its face to the sun, so turn your face to Christ! I have noticed that flowers which grow in that part of the garden which is much in the shade always try to twist themselves into the sunlight if they can—and you have probably noticed that when you have flowers at your windows at home, they always try to grow towards the glass. Do seek, especially if you are a believer, to grow towards the light, and most of all to grow towards Christ who is *the* light, the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness! Try to catch as many of His

heavenly beams as you can. Remember that the sun is none the less glorious because he gives so many of his beams to the flowers—and Jesus Christ will be no loser by the gift of His grace to you! The Sun of righteousness will be just as bright and just as glorious as before! No, He will be all the more glorious as His glory is displayed in you!

I want you, then, to look upon the Word of God with great reverence and affection because therein is set a tabernacle for Jesus Christ. If you would learn all that you can concerning Jesus Christ, you must diligently study the word which reveals Him to us.

II. Having spoken upon the parallel intended, I now turn to our second subject which is PRAISE EXPRESSED. I remind you again that I am giving an exposition rather than preaching a sermon—and I very much question whether it would not be better if we more often expounded Scripture rather than gave utterance to so many of our own words and thoughts.

In speaking in this Psalm concerning the Word of God, David uses six different expression to describe it. And to each one he attaches a special tribute to commend it to us. As a rule, the ungodly know the Bible only by one name or, perhaps, two. They call it the Bible or the Scriptures—and that is about all that most of those know concerning it. But a man who is well acquainted with its contents has many names for it. The most notable instance of this is the 119th Psalm, which contains 176 verses, almost every one of which has a mention of the word of the Lord. It would be a profitable exercise to read that long Psalm through carefully—and to note all the variations of expression that the psalmist uses concerning the Scriptures as far as they were known to him. But for our present purpose it will suffice if we confine our thoughts to the six descriptions and tributes that we find in this 19th Psalm.

First, David says, "*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.*" In the margin, we have the word, "doctrine," as another rendering of the word, law, and we know that the term, "the law of the LORD" is not restricted to the Decalogue, so we shall not do wrong if we apply this expression to the gospel which is God's special means of converting souls—and to the whole revelation of God's plan and method of salvation which we find in the Scriptures. If I want to know how I am to be saved, I come to this blessed book and I read here, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which Paul said had made him free from the law of sin and death. I read here Christ's own words, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I read here the matchless story of Him on who I am to believe. I read about His person, His character, His doctrine, His mission—and this "law of the LORD" begins to operate upon my heart as I read it! It not only changes my outward actions, but it renews my mind, it alters the whole bent and purpose of my life—in David's phrase—it converts my soul! The springs of my being, which once were poisoned by sin, become purified by grace. I know that you have found this to be true, beloved, and that, therefore, you love this "law of the LORD." McCheyne

says that it is God's word, and not our comments upon it, that saves souls. And I have frequently noticed, in conversions, that it has not been so much the word of the preacher that has been blessed as the Word of God, itself—though this, of course, is a rule to which there are exceptions, for our Lord Jesus, Himself, said in His great intercessory prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word"—not only through Christ's own word, but through the truthful and faithful testimony off His servants—and still is the word of earnest, believing preachers and teachers blessed to their hearers and scholars! Yet the great converting agency is the Word of God, for this "law of the LORD is perfect"—there is nothing in it in excess and there is nothing omitted from it. It is perfect in all its operations upon my nature, perfect to inspire my whole life and to kindle enthusiasm in my soul, perfect to enlighten my understanding and to subdue my will, perfect for everything which is needed for the conversion of my soul!

David next says, "*The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*" I take this word, "testimony," to mean the revelation of Himself which God has given us in His word. He gives testimony to His own Fatherhood and to His adoption into His family of all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. He gives testimony to all His attributes as they are revealed in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives testimony to His own everlasting love and to His faithfulness to every promise which He has made to His elect. He gives testimony to many things which we could never have discovered from nature and all His testimony makes the simple wise. Over the porch of one of the academies in Athens was written, "He that is ignorant of arithmetic may not enter here." But over the porch of God's word is inscribed, "He that is ignorant is welcome here." "The testimony of the LORD" is full of divine wisdom, yet it is put into such plain language that even children can understand it—so the simple come to it that they may be made wise and, often that which is hidden from the wise and prudent is revealed unto babes—for so it seems good in God's sight!

I take the Word of God, then, as first of all teaching me how my soul may be converted. And then, being converted, I come to this blessed book with quite another objective—not to find out how I am to be saved, but that I may learn more concerning the God who has saved me! And as I read His testimony with regard to Himself, it makes my simple soul wise.

When I have got as far as that, I need something more, and David next says, "*The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.*" By this word, "statutes," I understand the Lord's ordinances of decree, the King's royal edicts and mandates—and also His promises which are a transcript of His decrees. David says that these "statutes of the LORD are right." Of course they are, because they are His statutes—and that they cause the heart to rejoice—a statement we can confirm from our own experience! I

have often confessed that when my spirit gets depressed, nothing will sustain it but the good, old-fashioned, Calvinistic doctrine. You may be content with the fare set before you by the modern school of preachers when you are not hungry. You may enjoy it when there is fine weather. But when storms of tribulation are howling around you, when you are conscious of a great need of soul-satisfying food, then I believe that the old Augustinian doctrine—which is the doctrine of the Apostle Paul and of His Lord and Master, Jesus Christ—is the only fare upon which your heart can feast with rejoicing! How sweet it is, at such a time, to fall back upon the eternal purposes of God in Christ Jesus! To know one's calling and election sure, to know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"—this is, indeed, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." King Lemuel's mother said, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts." And in a spiritual sense, it is the strong drink and the nourishing wine of the doctrines of grace that can alone sustain those who are spiritually ready to perish and heavy of heart!

There are some who would agree with David as far as we have gone, but they are not so eager to listen to his next sentence—"*The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.*" Being converted, a man learns all he can of the testimony of the Lord, then his heart rejoices in the statutes of the Lord and he goes on to get further enlightenment from the commandment of the Lord. Some persons never seem to have their eyes enlightened because they neglect to obey the Lord's precepts. Disobedience is sure to bring its own punishment and there are some who cannot clearly read their own interest in Christ because their neglect to keep His commandments has closed their eyes just as a cloud of dust might have done. There is a great reward for those who obey His precepts and although we are saved by grace, and not by our works, yet in the economy of grace there are certain rewards which are only given to them who diligently keep the King's commandments! Happy are they who, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully. Surely they shall be among the virgin souls that, in the heavenly Mount Zion, "follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

David next mentions a very practical matter—"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever." Some kinds of fear are anything *but* clean! "The fear of man" has been a foul snare in which many have been captured for the devil. Compromise is very popular, today, but the Bible is a most uncompromising book—and "the fear of the LORD" is a most uncompromising principle! Once let this gracious fear thoroughly permeate our soul and we shall never lose it, for David truly says that it endures *forever*. If ever a man is really dead, buried and risen with Christ, there is no fear of his ever undergoing such a backward process as being dead with Christ and then alive again to the world! There are some principles which are only powerful for a time, but the principle of

grace, which produces the fear of the LORD, exerts a permanent influence upon everyone in whom the Holy Spirit works it—and there is no possibility of the love of the world or the fear of man casting it out! May that gracious Spirit work this holy fear in each one of us!

Then, lastly, David says, "*The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*" Whenever I think of the judgments of the Lord in the olden times, I always regard them as righteous judgments. Just were You, O Lord, when You did pour down the fiery hail upon Sodom and Gomorrah! When You did smite Pharaoh and overthrow his hosts in the Red Sea, and when Your angel slew the army of Sennacherib! Just have You been, O God, in overturning ancient monarchs which had become hoary in iniquity! And these are "the judgments of the LORD" which are yet to be executed, concerning which we have the repeated declarations of revelation that they will all be "true and righteous." These are the very words that are used concerning the Lord's judgments upon that great harlot which has corrupted the earth with her fornications! With this blessed book in our hands—and especially if its truths are enshrined in our hearts—we may confidently face the future and not be alarmed by any of the errors and heresies that may spring up around us! The teachers of falsehood are only imitating the folly of the builders of Babel—and all their inventions will but end in their own confusion.

The sun has gone down and in an hour or two the world will appear in a more somber dress than it now wears. If you come out at midnight, you will see nothing but the twinkling stars and a few glimmering lamps. Yet the sun is not put out—his light is not quenched. Wait till the appointed time and the great light of day shall again be "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race." Darkness may be covering your mind tonight. Darkness may cover your circumstances. Darkness may, for a while, cover even the church of God on earth—but that old promise is still true—"Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteous arise with healing in His wings." Only be sure that you are on the Lord's side! Put your trust in the precious blood of Jesus and wait for Him more than they that watch for the morning. And then, when He comes, it will be to you a day of light and not of darkness, and the days of your mourning will have ended forever! So may the Lord comfort your hearts, sustain you under every trial, keep you in His love and enable you patiently to wait for His coming, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:9-32.

Verse 9. *How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your word.* "How shall a young man cleanse his way?" A vital and solemn question. His way is full of temptations and he,

himself, has strong passions. How shall he make his way clean and keep it so? "By taking heed thereto according to Your word." Without heed he will soon be in the mire, but carefully walking with God's word as his rule, by the blessing of God's grace it will keep him out of sin.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought You: O let me not wander from Your commandments.* There might be thought in this confession to be some commendation of himself and, therefore, he salts it with this prayer—"I have sought You, Lord, sincerely, but still, notwithstanding that, I am very apt to stray away. And I shall sadly wander unless You keep me. O let me not wander from Your commandments."

11. *Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.* The best thing put into the best place for the best of all purposes! There is no antidote against sin like the possession of the Word of God in the soul.

12. *Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes.* You are blessed, make me blessed. You are the happy God, instruct me in the way of happiness.

13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth.* I am a learner, but I have tried to be a teacher, too. I have not kept the Word of God to myself as though it were only a personal treasure for me, but what I have heard in the secret chamber of fellowship, that have I spoken on the housetops. Have you published abroad what you know? Then you are the person to learn more. When men drop their money into a money box, they have to break it to get it out again, and if they have not need of it they will not do so. God does not care to drop His treasure into a heart that never uses it and imparts it. Let your lips speak what your heart learns!

14. *I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.* If all sorts of riches were put together, I have found them all, and more than them all in Your testimonies! I am rich in all respects when I have You.

15. *I will meditate on Your precepts, and have respect unto Your way.* Meditation treads the wine press and gets the juice out of the grapes. A man may read too much if he reads without meditation. "I will meditate." It is the harvesting by reaping of what we have sown by reading.

16. *I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your word.* I will take a deep pleasure in them and I will find an intense joy in every pondering of them. "I will not forget Your word." I will never let it go out of the precincts of my memory. I will recall again and again. I will always have a text of Your precious book ready to my tongue.

17. *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your word.* Give me much of Your comfort, royally of Yourself! Deal bountifully with me. I have great necessities. I am a mass of needs, therefore, "Deal bountifully with me that I may live." And I have great tendencies to wander. Great risks and perils. Give me abundance of grace that I may keep Your word.

18. *Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.* The wonders are there—cause me to behold them! A man may have a fair landscape before him, rich in all beauties of form and color, but if his eyes are closed, is he better for it?

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.* "I am a stranger in the earth." I do not now belong to it. I am born and bound for Heaven. I am a pilgrim here—men do not understand me, neither have I any settled business here. "I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me." Oh, remember that I am Your alien, Your banished one! Send me love messages from the old home and loved country.

20. *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times.* Broken souls are many. But not on this account! Oh, how few are in danger of breaking through such a longing as this! Would God there were many more that did sigh and cry after the Word of God—for longings such as these are sure to lead to an earnest search—and the earnest search will increase knowledge and increase grace.

21. *You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments.* A proud man is surely a sinful man. He may think himself a righteous man, but he cannot be so. He has gone far astray from the very essence of God's law, which is that he should walk humbly with his God.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Your testimonies.* A man that does that is pretty sure to be reproached and to be condemned by man, for they think that one who follows God faithfully "is very old-fashioned, he has not much spirit, he has not drunk in the philosophy of the age, he is a fossilized Christian," and so on. Well, we can bear all such reproach—still we are truly glad when we escape it.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but Your servant did meditate on Your statutes.* And a great man's word goes a long way with some people. They think a prince a great authority. "But Your servant did meditate on Your statutes." He did not burst out in angry reply. He did not give fierce railing for railing, but he sat himself down as quietly as he could—the more abundantly to meditate on God's statutes. What calmness there is here and what wisdom! For if princes should speak against us, and the great ones of the earth should rail, what does it matter? If they drive us away from our faith, it would matter—but if they drive us *to our Bibles*, it is a benefit!

24, 25. *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors. My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your word.* Here He prays for *quickening*. He felt the spiritual death that was so natural to him, the heaviness of his heart, the tendency to sink, the attractions of the world.

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.* Open confession is good for the soul and I have made this confession. You have heard me. Now "teach me Your statutes."

27. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts, so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* Lord ground me and found me in Your knowledge. Give me to know fully, firmly, what I do know. I would not be as a man that eats, but thinks not from where the bread came, but I would wish to understand the way of Your precepts. "So shall I talk of Your wondrous works."

28. *My soul melts for heaviness. Strengthen You me according unto Your word.* Will not this prayer suit some that are in this house this evening who are very dull and depressed? Oh, if your soul sinks, still pray and say, "Strengthen You me." You need strength, dear friends. If you had more strength, your troubles would not crush you. Your soul would not melt if you had more strength and confidence.

29, 30. *Remove from me the way of lying: and graciously grant me Your law. I have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me.* As a captain lays out his chart so as to keep his course correctly and safely, so I try to sail by it. I have chosen Your law and precepts and commands as my course, and I would gladly keep to them.

31. *I have stuck unto Your testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.* I am glued to them—there is no separating me, no tearing me apart from them! "O Lord, put me not to shame."

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments when You shall enlarge my heart.* I will go quicker and faster, I will have more energy, more flaming zeal in Your service**—"**When You shall enlarge my heart." O Lord, it is very narrow and very contracted. I cannot think great thoughts, nor do great things, nor believe great promises unless You shall enlarge my heart! Lord, give me a larger heart, stronger to obey, more tender to love for Your name's sake!

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

"They joy before You according to the joy in harvest."
Isaiah 9:3.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon harvest subjects are as follows—#2896, Volume 50—HARVEST TIME **(the first of his Sermons that was ever published)**; #2265, Volume 39—HARVEST JOY **(a Sermon upon the whole of Isaiah 9:3)**; #1127, Volume 19—HARVEST MEN NEEDED; #1562, Volume 26—HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED AND MEN UNSAVED; #706, Volume 12—FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST; #880, Volume 15—THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN and #3058, Volume 53—THE JOY OF HARVEST—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE other day I was one of a glad company who kept the feast with great rejoicing, and together we shouted, "Harvest Home." It was a deep delight to see the rich and poor rejoicing together—and when the cheerful meal was ended, I was greatly glad to turn one of the tables into a temporary pulpit—and in the fine large barn be privileged to preach to an earnest, eager audience, the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God!

My heart was truly merry, in harmony with the happy occasion, and I shall now try to keep in the same key and talk to you a little upon the joy in harvest.

Londoners and other city dwellers are apt to forget that it is harvest time, or to forget to render special praise to God for it. Living in these great deserts of dingy bricks we scarcely know what an ear of corn is like, except as we see it dried and white in the window of a corn-dealer's shop. Yet let us all remember that there is such a season as harvest, when by God's goodness, the fruits of the earth are gathered in for the food of man.

We begin to study our theme by seeing**—I.** WHAT THE JOY OF HARVEST IS which is here taken as the simile of the joy of the saints before God. I am afraid that to the more selfish order of spirits, the joy of harvest is simply, or chiefly, that of personal gratification at the increase of wealth. Sometimes the farmer only rejoices *because he sees the reward of his toils* and is so much the richer man. I hope that with many there mingles the second cause of joy, namely, sincere gratitude to God that an abundant harvest will give bread to the poor and remove complaining from our streets. There is a lawful joy in harvest, no doubt, to the man who is enriched by it, for any man who works hard has a right to rejoice when, at last, he gains his desire and reward. It would be well, too, if men would always recollect that their last and greatest harvest will be to them according to their labor. He that sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption—and only the man that sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life. Many a young man commences life by sowing

what he calls his wild oats, which he had better never have sown, for they will bring him a terrible harvest! He expects that from these wild oats he will gather a harvest of true pleasure, but it cannot be—the truest pleasures of life spring from the good seed of righteousness—not from the hemlock of sin! As a man who sows thistles in his furrows must not expect to reap the golden sheaves of wheat, so he who follows the ways of vice must not expect happiness. On the contrary, if he sows the wind of evil-doing, he will reap the whirlwind of remorse and everlasting despair! When a sinner feels the pangs of conscience, he may well say, "This is what I sowed." When at last he shall receive the full retribution for his sin, he will be able to blame no one but himself! Seeing he sowed tares, there was nothing to be reaped but tares. But, on the other hand, the Christian, though his salvation is not of works, but of grace, will have a gracious and glorious reward given to him by his Master. Even though sowing in tears, he shall reap in joy. Having put his talents entrusted to him to use, out to good trading, or at least to interest, he shall share his Master's joy and hear with delight his Master welcome and repay with His, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The joy in harvest rightly consists in part in the reward of earnest labor—may such be the joy we find in serving our Lord!

The joy in harvest has another element in it, namely, that of *gratitude to God for favors bestowed*.

We are singularly dependent on God—far more so than most of us imagine or remember. When the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they went forth every morning and gathered the manna. This taught them that God gave them their daily bread. Now, our manna does not come to us every morning, but it comes once a year and is preparing all the time. Behind the baker's cart with its daily call is the miller. Behind the miller is the farmer and behind the farmer is God who makes the earth to yield her fruits and to multiply them for the sustaining of the whole race of men! Our supply is as much a divine gift as if it lay like a hoar-frost around the camp. If we went out into the field and gathered food which dropped down directly from the skies, we would think it a great miracle to admire and wonder at—but is it not quite as great a marvel that our bread should come up from the earth as that it should come down from the sky? The one God who bade the heavens let fall the angels' food in the wilderness bids the dull earth, in its due season, yield the corn for the millions of mankind! Therefore, whenever that harvest comes, let us be grateful to God and let us not allow the season to pass without Psalms and songs of thanksgiving! I believe it is correct to say that there is never in the world, as a rule, more than sixteen months' supply of food—that is to say, when the harvest has been gathered in, there may be sixteen months' future supply—but at the time of harvest beginning there is not usually enough wheat in the whole world to last the population more than four or five months, so that if the harvest did not come, we would be on the verge of famine. We still live from hand to mouth. Let us pause and bless our God and let the joy of harvest be the joy of gratitude!

To the Christian it should be great joy, by means of the harvest, *to receive an assurance of God's faithfulness*. The Lord has promised that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease. And when you see the loaded wagon carrying in the crop you may say to yourself, "God is true to His promise. Despite the dreary winter and the damp spring, autumn has come with its golden grain." What a strong comfort is this! Depend upon it, that as the Lord keeps this promise, He will keep all the rest! All His promises are, "yes and amen in Christ Jesus." If He keeps His covenant with the earth, much more will He keep His covenant with His own people whom He has loved with an everlasting love! Go, Christian, to the mercy seat with the promise on your lips and plead it! Be assured it is not—it cannot be—a dead letter! Let not unbelief cause you to stammer when you mention the praise before the throne of God, but say it boldly**—"**Fulfill this word unto Your servant on which You have caused me to hope." Shame upon us that we so little believe our God! The world is full of proofs of His goodness. Every rising sun, every falling shower, every revolving season certifies His faithfulness. Why do we doubt Him? If we never doubt Him till we have cause for it, we shall never know distrust again! Encouraged by the return of harvest, let us resolve in the strength of the Spirit of God that we will not waver, but will believe in the divine word and rejoice in it!

Once more, to the Christian, in the joy in harvest there must always be the *joy of expectation*.

As to the farmer there is an assured harvest for which he waits patiently and persistently, so there is a glorious spiritual harvest for all who wait and faithfully long and look for the coming and the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The mature Christian, like the ripe ear of corn, hangs down his head with holy humility. When he was but green and immature in the things of God, he stood boldly erect and was somewhat boastful. But now that he has mellowed and ripened and become full of the blessing of the Lord, he is humbled, thereby, and bows himself down. He is waiting for the sickle and he dreads it not, for no common reaper shall come to gather Christ's people to Him but He, Himself, shall reap the harvest of the world! The Lord leaves the destroying angel to reap the vintage and cast it into the wine-vat to be trodden with vengeance! But as for the grain which He, Himself, has sown, He will gather it Himself with His own golden sickle! We are looking for this. We are growing among the tares and sometimes we are half-afraid lest the tares should be stronger than ourselves and choke the wheat—but the separation will come, by-and-by, and when the corn is well winnowed and stored in the garner, we shall be gathered there. It is this expectation which even now makes our hearts throb with joy! We have in the past, too, gone to the grave with precious sheaves that belonged to our Master and when we were there, we thought we could almost say, "Lord, if they sleep they shall do well. Let us die with them." Our joy in harvest is the hope of being at rest with all the saints and forever with the Lord! A view even of the shadowy

harvests upon earth should make us exceedingly glad because they are the image and foreshadowing of the eternal harvest above! But enough about the joy in harvest. I hasten onward.

II. Let us continue our theme by looking now at WHAT JOYS THEY ARE WHICH TO THE BELIEVER ARE AS THE JOY IN HARVEST. It is the *joy* in harvest. It is a common notion, a popular delusion, that Christians are an unhappy people. It is true that we are tried, but it is false that we are miserable! With all their trials, believers have such a compensation in the love of Christ that they are still a blessed generation and it may be said of them, "Happy are you, O Israel."

One of the first seasons; one of the blessed occasions in which we knew a joy equal to the joy in harvest—a season which has continued with us ever since it commenced—was *when we found the Savior* and so obtained salvation. Brothers and sisters, each of you can recollect for yourselves the time of the plowing of your souls. I give my witness. My heart was fallow and covered with weeds, but on a certain day the great farmer came and began to plow my soul. Ten black horses were His team and it was a sharp plow that He used—and the plow made deep furrows. The Ten Commandments were these black horses and the justice of God, like a plow, tore my spirit. I was condemned, undone, destroyed, lost, helpless, hopeless—I thought hell was before me! Then there came a cross-plowing which added to my distress, for when I went to hear the gospel, it did not comfort me—it made me wish I had a part in it—but I feared that such a gift was out of the question! The choicest promise of God seemed to frown at me and His threats seemed to thunder at me! I prayed, but found no answer of peace. It was long with me thus. But after the plowing, came the sowing. God who plowed the heart in mercy, made it conscious that it needed the gospel—and then the gospel seed was joyfully received! Do you not remember that auspicious day when at last you began to have some hope? It was very little—like a green blade that peeps up from the soil—you scarcely knew whether it was grass or corn, whether it was presumption or true faith. It was a little hope, but it grew very pleasantly. Alas, a frost of doubt came—some snow of fears fell! Cold winds of despondency blew on you and you said, "There can be no hope for me." But what a glorious day was that when at last the wheat which God had sown ripened and you could say, "I have looked unto Him and have been lightened! I have laid my sins on Jesus, where God laid them of old, and they are taken away and I am saved!" I remember well that day, and so, no doubt, do many of you. O sirs, no farmer ever shouted for joy as our hearts shouted when a precious Christ was ours and we could grasp Him with full assurance of salvation in Him! Many days have passed since then, but the joy of it is still fresh with us. And, blessed be God, it is not only the joy of the first day that we look back upon—it is the joy of every day since then, more or less, for our joy no man takes from us—we are still walking in Christ even as we received Him!

Even now all our hope on Him is stayed, all our help from Him we bring and our joy and peace continue with us because they are based

upon an immovable foundation! We rejoice in the Lord! Yes, and we will rejoice! The joy in harvest generally shows itself by the farmer giving a feast for his friends and neighbors. And usually those who find Christ express their joy by telling their friends and their neighbors what great things the Lord has done for them. The grace of God is communicative! A man cannot be saved and *always* hold His tongue about it—as well look for dumb choirs in heaven, as for a silent church on earth! If a man has been thirsty and has come to the living water, the river of this water of life—his first, best impulse will be to cry, "Ho! Everyone that thirsts!" Have you felt that joy in harvest? The joy that makes you wish others could share it with you? If so, I entreat you, do not repress the gracious impulse to proclaim your happiness! Speak of Christ to brothers and sisters, to friends and kinsfolk! And if the language is stammering, the message in itself is so important that the words in which you utter it will be quite a secondary matter. Tell it; tell it out far and wide that there is a Savior! That you have found Him and that His blood can wash away transgression! Tell it everywhere and so the joy in harvest shall spread over land and sea and the name of our God shall be glorified!

We have yet another joy which is like the joy in harvest. It is *the joy of answered prayer*.

I hope we all know what it is to pray in faith. Some prayers are not worth the words used in offering them because there is no faith mixed with them. "With all your sacrifice you shall offer salt," and the salt of faith is necessary if we would have any of our sacrifices accepted. Those who are familiar with the mercy seat know that prayer is a reality and that the doctrine of divine answers to prayer is no fiction! Sometimes God will delay to answer for wise reasons—then His children must cry and cry, and cry again. They are in the condition of the farmers who must wait for the precious fruits of the earth—and when at last the answer to prayer comes, they are then in the farmer's position when he receives the harvest. Remember Hannah's wail and Hannah's prayer? In the bitterness of her soul she cried to God, and when her child was given to her she called it, "Samuel," meaning, "Asked of God" for, she said, "For this child I prayed." He was a very dear child to her because he was a child of prayer. Any mercy that comes to you in answer to prayer will be your Samuel mercy, your darling mercy! You will say of it, "For this mercy I prayed," and it will bring the joy of harvest to your spirit. If the Lord desires to surprise some of His children, He has only to answer their prayers, for they would be astonished if an answer came to their petitions! I know how they speak about answer to prayer. They say, "How remarkable! How wonderful!" as if it were remarkable that God should be honest and that the Most High should keep His promise! May we not so dishonor Him by our doubt! Oh, for more faith to rest upon His word and we would have more of these harvest joys!

We have another joy in harvest in ourselves *when we conquer a temptation*. We know what it is, sometimes, to get under a cloud—sin within us rises with a darkening force, or an external adversity beclouds

us—and we miss the plain path in which we were accustomed to walk. A child of God at such times will cry mightily for help, for he is fearful of himself and of his surroundings. Some of God's people have been together by the week and month; exposed to the double temptation, from outside and from within, and have cried to God in bitter anguish.

It has been a very hard struggle. The sinful action has been painted in very fascinating colors and the siren voice of temptation has almost enchanted them. But when at last, to change the figure, they have come through the valley of the shadow of death without having slipped—when, after all, they have not been destroyed by Apollyon, but have come forth again into the clear morning light—they know an unspeakable joy compared with which the joy in harvest is mere childish merriment! Those know deep joy who have felt bitter sorrows. As the man feels that he is the stronger for the conflict. As he feels that he has gathered experience and stronger faith from having passed through the trial, he lifts up his heart and rejoices, not in himself, but before his God with the joy in harvest! Brothers and sisters, beloved, you know what that means!

Again, there is such a thing as the joy in harvest when *we have been made useful in God's service*. The master-passion of every Christian should be to be useful in the Master's kingdom. There should be a burning zeal within us for the glory of God. When this is so and the Christian desiring to be used has laid his plans and set about his work, he begins to look for the results—but it may be weeks, or years, before he is privileged to see them.

The true worker is not to be blamed that as yet there are no fruits, but he is to be blamed if he is content to always be without fruits. A preacher may preach without seeing conversions flow, and who shall blame him? But if notwithstanding this, he is happy, or even content, who will justify him? It is ours to break our own hearts if we cannot, by God's grace, break other men's hearts! If others will not weep for their sins, it should be our constant habit to weep for them; when the heart becomes earnest, warm, zealous—God usually gives a measure of success—some fifty-fold, some a hundred-fold. When the success comes, it is the joy in harvest, indeed! I cannot help being egotistical enough to mention the joy I felt when first I heard that a soul had found peace through my youthful ministry. I had been preaching in a village some few Sabbaths with an increasing congregation, but I had not heard of a conversion. And I thought, "Perhaps I am not called of God. He does not mean me to preach, for if He did, He would give me spiritual children." One Sabbath my good deacon said, "Don't be discouraged. A poor woman was savingly impressed last Sabbath." How long do you suppose it was before I saw that woman? It was just as long as it took me to reach her cottage! I was eager to hear from her own lips whether it was a work of God's grace or not. I always looked upon her with interest, though only a poor laborer's wife, till she was taken away to heaven, after having lived a holy life. Many since then have I rejoiced over in the Lord, but that first seal to my ministry was peculiarly dear to me; it gave me a sip of the joy of harvest! If somebody had left me a fortune, it would not have caused me one

hundredth part of the delight I had in discovering that a soul had been led to the Savior! I am sure Christian people who have not known this joy have missed one of the choicest delights that a believer can know this side of heaven. In fact, when I see souls saved, I do not envy Gabriel his throne, nor the angels their harps. It will be our heaven here to be out of heaven for a season if we can but thereby bring others to know the Savior and so add fresh jewels to our Redeemer's crown!

I will mention yet another delight which is to us as the joy in harvest, and that is, *fellowship width our Lord Jesus Christ*. This is not so much a subject for speech as for musing—for deep experience and real enjoyment. If we attempt to speak of what communion with Christ is, we cannot but fall short of declaring it. Solomon, the wisest of men, when inspired to write of the fellowship of the church with her Lord, was compelled to write in allegories and emblems. And though to the spiritual mind the Song of Songs is always a source of holy delight, yet to the carnal mind and to the formal Christian, it seems a mere love song. The natural man discerns not the things that are of God, for they are spiritual and can only be spiritually seen and known. But oh, the bliss of knowing that Christ is yours and of entering into nearness of communion with Him! To thrust your hands into His side and your finger into the print of the nails—these are not every day joys! But when such near and dear communing come to us on our high days and holy days, they make our souls like the chariots of Amminadib, or, if you will, they cause us to tread the world beneath our feet—and all that the world calls good or great! Our condition matters little or nothing to us if Christ is with us! He is our God, our comfort, and our All—and we rejoice before Him as with "the joy in harvest." I have no time to enlarge further, for I want to close with one other intensely practical word. It is this—

III. SHALL WE NOT DESIRE MORE AND MORE THIS "JOY IN HARVEST?" Many of God's people anxiously desire a harvest which would bring to us an intense delight. Of late, many persons have communicated to me in many ways the strong emotion they feel of deep pity for the souls of men. Others of us have felt a mysterious impulse to pray more than we ever have and to be more anxious than we ever would be, that Christ would save poor perishing sinners. We shall not be satisfied until there is a thorough awakening in this land! We did not raise the feeling in our own minds, but we do not desire to repress it! We do not believe it can be repressed! And others will feel, too, the same heavenly affection and will sigh and cry to God day and night until the blessing comes! This is the sowing, this is the plowing, this is the harrowing—may it go on to harvesting! I long to hear my brothers and sisters universally saying, "We are full of anguish! We are in agony till souls are saved." The cry of Rachel, "Give me children, or I die," is the cry of your minister this day—and the longing of thousands more besides! As that desire grows in intensity, a revival is surely approaching! We *must* have spiritual children born to Christ, or our hearts will break for the longing that we have for their salvation! Oh, for more of these longings,

yearnings, cravings, and travailing! If we plead till the harvest of revival comes, we shall partake in the joy of it!

Who will have the most joy? Those who have been the most concerned about it! You who do not pray in private, nor come out to prayer meetings will not have the joy when the blessing comes and the church is increased. You had no share in the sowing, therefore you will have little share in the reaping. You who never speak to others about their souls, who take no share in Sunday school or mission work, but simply eat the fat and drink the sweet shall have none of the joy in harvest, for you do not put your hands to the work of the Lord! And who would wish that idlers should be happy? Rather in our zeal and jealousy we feel inclined to say "Curse you, Meroz! Curse you bitterly, the inhabitants thereof, because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

If you come to the help of the Lord by His own divine Spirit, you shall share in the joy in harvest. Perhaps none will have more of that joy than those who shall have the privilege of seeing their own dear ones brought to God. Some of you have children who are a trial to you whenever you think of them—let them be such a trial to you that they drive you to incessant prayer for them! And if the blessing comes, why would it not drop on them?

If a revival comes, why should not your daughter be converted? And that wild boy of yours be brought in? Or even your gray-headed father who has been unbelieving and skeptical—why should not the grace of God come to him? And oh, what a joy in harvest you will have then! What bliss will thrill through your spirit when you see those who are yours by ties of blood united to Christ your Lord!

Pray much for them with earnest faith and you shall yet have the joy in harvest in your own house—a shout of "harvest home" in your own family!

But possibly you, my hearer, have not much to do with such joy, for you are, yourself, unsaved. Yet it is a grand thing for an unconverted person to be under a ministry that God blesses and with a people that constantly pray for conversions.

It is a happy thing for you, young man, to have a Christian mother! It is a great gift for you, O unconverted woman, that you have a godly sister! These make us hopeful for you. While your relations are prayerful, we are hopeful for *you*. May the Lord Jesus be yet yours. But, ah, if you remain unbelieving, however rich a blessing comes to others, it will leave *you* none the better for it! "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." But there are some who may cry in piteous accents, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" It has been remarked that those who pass through a season of revival and remain unconverted are more hardened and unimpressed than before. I believe it to be so and I therefore pray the divine Spirit to come with such energy that none of you may escape His power! May you be led to pray—

"Pass me not, O mighty Spirit!

You can make the blind to see.
Witness of Jesus' merit,
Speak the word of power to me.
Even me!
Have I long in sin been sleeping,
Long been slighting, grieving Thee?
Has the world my heart been keeping?
Oh forgive and rescue me.
Even me!"

Oh, for earnest, importunate prayer from all believers throughout the world! If our churches could be stirred up to incessant vehement crying to God, so as to give Him no rest till He makes Zion a praise in the earth, we might expect to see God's kingdom come and the power of Satan fall! As many of you as love Christ, I charge you by His dear name to be much in prayer! As many of you as love the church of God and desire her prosperity, I beseech you to keep not back in this time of supplication! The Lord grant that you may be led to plead till the harvest joy is granted! Do you remember my saying one Sabbath, "The Lord deal so with you as you deal with His work this month"? With many of you I feel as if it will be so—that the Lord will deal so with you as you shall deal with His church. If you scatter little, you shall have little! If you pray little, you shall have little favor. But if you have zeal and faith and plead much and work much for the Lord—good measure shaken together, pressed down and running over—shall the Lord return into your own hearts and lives! If you water others with trickling drops, you shall receive only drops in return. But if the Spirit helps you to pour out rivers of living water, then floods of heavenly grace shall flood in your spirit! God bring in the unconverted and lead them to a simple trust in Jesus—then shall *they,* also, know the joy in harvest! We ask it for His name's sake. Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 9:1-7.

The last verses of the 8th chapter picture a horrible state of wretchedness and despair—"And they shall pass through it, hard-pressed and hungry: and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth and behold trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish, and they shall be driven to darkness." But see what a change awaits them!

Verse 1. *Nevertheless the gloom shall not be such as was in her vexation when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. And afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nation.* Read the fine translation of the Revised Version—"But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish." What a marvelous light from the midst of a dreadful darkness! It is an astounding change, such as only God with us could work. Many of you know nothing about the miseries described in

those verses, but there are some who have traversed that terrible wilderness—and I am going to speak to them. I know where you are. You are being driven as captives into the land of despair. And for the last few months you have been tramping along a painful road, "hard-pressed and hungry." You are sorely put to it and your soul finds no food of comfort, but is ready to faint and die. You fret yourself. Your heart is wearing away with care, grief and hopelessness. In the bitterness of your soul you are ready to curse the day of your birth! The captive Israelites cursed their king who had led them into their defeat and bondage. In the fury of their agony, they even cursed God and longed to die! It may be that your heart is in such a ferment of grief that you know not what you think, but are like a man at his wit's end.

For such as you there shines this star of the first magnitude—Jesus has appeared to save and He is God and man in one person—Man that He may feel our woes, God that He may help us out of them! No minister can save you, no priest can save you—you know this right well. But here is one who is able to save to the uttermost, for He is God as well as man! The great God is good at a dead lift! When everything else has failed, the lever of *omnipotence* can lift a world of sin! Jesus is almighty to save! That which in itself is impossibility, is possible with God. Sin which nothing else can remove is blotted out by the blood of Immanuel! Immanuel, our Savior, is God with us—and God with us means difficulty removed and a perfect work accomplished!

2. *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.* Jesus came to Galilee of the Gentiles and made that country glorious, which had been brought into contempt. That corner of Palestine had very often borne the brunt of invasion and had felt more than any other region the edge of the keen Assyrian sword. They were at first troubled when the Assyrian was bought off with a thousand talents of silver, but they were more heavily afflicted when Tilgath-Pilneser carried them all away to Assyria, for which see the 15th chapter of the second Book of the Kings. It was a wretched land, with a mixed population, despised by the purer race of Jews—but that very country became glorious with the presence of the Incarnate God! Even so, at this day His gracious presence is the dawn of our joy!

3. *You have multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* The Revised Version reads, "You have increased their joy." If Christ comes to you, my dear hearer, as God with us, then shall your joy be great, for you shall joy as with the joy of harvest, and as those rejoice that divide the spoil! Is it not so? Many of us can bear our witness that there is no joy like that which Jesus brings!

4. *For You have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.* Your enemy shall be defeated, "as in the day of Midian." Gideon was, in his dream, likened to a barley cake which struck the tent of Midian, so that it lay along. He and his few heroes, with their pitchers and their trumpets,

stood and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" and Midian melted away before them. So shall it be with our sins, doubts and fears if we believe in Jesus, the Incarnate God—they shall vanish like the mists of the morning! The Lord Jesus will break the yoke of our burden and the rod of our oppressor, as in the day of Midian! Be of good courage, you that are in bondage to fierce sad cruel adversaries—for in the name of Jesus, who is God with us—you shall destroy them!

5. *For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood will be used for burning and fuel of fire.* When Jesus comes, you shall have eternal peace, for His battle is the end of battles. "All the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire." This is the rendering of the revision and it is good. The Prince of Peace wars against war and destroys it. What a glorious day is that in which the Lord breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire! I think I see it now. My sins, which were the weapons of my foes, the Lord pile in heaps. What mountains of prey! But look! He brings the fire-brand of His love from the altar of His sacrifice and He sets fire to the gigantic pile! Look how they blaze! They are utterly consumed forever!

6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and 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.* Now is it that the Lord Jesus becomes glorious in our eyes! And He whose name is Immanuel is now crowned in our heart with many crowns and honored with many titles. What a list of glories we have here! What a burst of song it makes when we sing of the Messiah—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!" Each work sounds like a salvo of artillery. It is all very well to hear players on instruments and sweet singers rehearse these words—but to *believe* them and realize them in your own soul is far better! When every fear, every hope and every power and every passion of our nature fills the orchestra of our heart—and all unite in one inward song unto the glorious Immanuel—what music it is!

7. *Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.* If Christ is your Savior He must be your King—

"But know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes He comes to reign!
To reign, and with no partial sway—
Lusts must be slain that disobey."

The moment we really believe in Jesus as our salvation, we fall before Him and call Him Master and Lord. We serve when He saves. He has redeemed us unto Himself and we acknowledge that we are His. A generous man once bought a slave girl. She was put upon the brook for auction and he pitied her and purchased her. But when he had bought her, he said to her, "I have bought you to set you free. Here are your

papers, you are a free woman." The grateful creature fell at his feet and cried, "I will never leave you! If you have made me free, I will be your servant as long as you live and serve you better than any slave could do." This is how we feel towards Jesus. He sets us free from the dominion of Satan and then, as we need a ruler, we say, "And the government shall be upon His shoulder." We are glad to be ruled by "Immanuel, God with us." This also is a door of hope to us! That Jesus shall be the monarch of our hearts is our exceeding joy. To us He shall always be "Wonderful." When we think of Him, or speak about Him, it shall be with reverent awe. When we need advice and comfort, we will fly to Him, for He shall be our Counselor. When we need strength, we will look to Him as our mighty God. Born-again by His Spirit, we will be His children and He shall be the everlasting Father! Full of joy and rest, we will call Him Prince of Peace! Are you willing to have Christ to govern you? Will you spend your lives in praising Him? You are willing to have Christ to pardon you, but we cannot divide Him and, therefore, you must also have Him to sanctify you! You must not take the crown from His head, but accept Him as the monarch of your soul! If you would have His hand to help you, you must obey the scepter which it grasps. Blessed Immanuel, we are right glad to obey You! In You our darkness ends, and from the shadow of death we rise to the light of life! It is salvation to be obedient to You. It is the end of gloom to her who was in anguish to bow herself before You!

May God the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and then we shall all cry—

"Go worship at Immanuel's feet!
See in His face what wonders meet!
Earth is too narrow to express
His worth, His grace, His righteousness!"

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THEIR DESIRED HAVEN
NO. 3316

A SERMON
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"So He brings them to their desired haven."
Psalm 107:30.

TAKEN strictly, according to its original context, the text plainly and powerfully reminds us that our providential mercies ought never be forgotten—and more especially those remarkable mercies which concern the safety of our life in times of great peril.

If there are any of you who have been exposed to storms at sea, or who have in any other way been brought near death's door, and have then been strikingly rescued, should you not devote your life to Him who has spared and prolonged it? Do you think it was without a design that God brought you into the peril? And is it without a purpose that He has lengthened out your span of life? Oh, I pray you, if you have hitherto been ungrateful, let this tenderness of His in sparing your useless life—(for remember it has been useless to Him)—excite in you a hundredfold tenderness, and a tenderness of repentance for the past, and of holy desire for the future. In such an assembly as this I have surely some who have either been restored from a bed of sickness when they were almost given over, or who have been preserved from accidents on land, or have had hairbreadth escapes at sea. Oh, praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works toward you! And at the foot of the cross of Calvary dedicate your few remaining days to the service of the preserver of men!

But this evening, while remembering these important truths of God, we intend to use the text with yet another objective. This natural voyage on the sea may be a very excellent type and picture of the spiritual voyage which all men undertake in their soul's life. And we should first interpret the text *as it concerns the seeking sinner on the sea of soul-trouble, brought at length by the gracious pilot to his desired haven of peace through believing.* And then we shall very briefly construe the text with reference *to the saint brought through all the troubles of life to the desired haven of the New Jerusalem, where he shall rest* forever free from all future storms and perils.

First, then, let us look at **I.** THE SEEKING SINNER AS A SOUL-VOYAGER.

Our first thought suggested here is that with regard to the sinner, *there is a haven.* The soul of the man or woman is far out at sea, liable to be wrecked and in such a storm he or she *will* be wrecked, for no craft can live it out unless it makes all speed for the haven. And there is a haven for storm-tossed, ship-wrecked souls! There is a harbor of refuge for tempest-driven sinners! That haven is Christ Jesus, received by faith into the soul. I compare Him to a haven because of *the peace which those enjoy who once shelter in Him.* It is wild, black, and fierce out there, sinner, where you are; but there is peace—"the peace of God that passes all understanding"—where the true believer is. It is not because his ship is different from yours. If he were where you are, as once he was, he would still be in the same peril and suffer the same damage as you. But he is now "in Christ" and you are not. He has changed the hurricane for the haven, the danger for the calm confidence of safety! Oh, if you only knew the peace which faith brings, it would not be long before you cried to God in your trouble and He would bring you to His dear Son and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I also call Jesus a haven because of *the safety that there is to every soul that is in Him.* Ships are wrecked and broken to pieces out there, on the shoals, on the quicksand, or on the iron-bound coasts—but they escape wreck in the haven. There let the storm-king rage his worst and angriest abroad—they are in perfect peace! Sometimes, not a ripple disturbs the vessel that is in the harbor. My hearer, you are in great danger tonight! You may soon be in hell and even now the wrath of God abides on you, for you are "without God" and, consequently, "without hope in the world." But the Christian is in no such danger! Sin, which is the source of all soul-danger, has been fully forgiven him. He will not need even to fear death, for to him death is but the gate of life! He need have no fears of temporal trouble, for he has left his burdens with the great burden bearer and may cast all his care on Him who cares for him. He has a peace which is founded upon the immutable truth of God! It is not a false peace which expects that there will never come a storm, but a true solid peace which knows that though the though the storm will come, he needs not dread it because his vessel is safe in the haven!

I call Christ a haven, again, because *when we get into Him*, we do very much what ships do in the haven—*we begin unloading.* Oh, what a cargo of black sins we had! Oh, what a store of grief, fears, follies and doubts! But when we come to Jesus Christ we unload them all. We cast overboard even what we once thought precious, counting it but dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him. What a blessed riddance to be free of such foul rubbish as once threatened to founder our souls! Says the hymn—

"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God!
He bears them all and frees us,

From the accursed load."

That is what faith is helped to do. It casts all its sins, doubts, fears and cares upon Jesus Christ, the great sin bearer, and so is made free!

I call Him a haven, too, because when a ship gets to the haven, *it begins to load again*. The haven is as frequently the starting place for a new voyage, as the goal to the previous one. And emphatically is that so in our soul's experience.

What fine store does the trustful soul take on board when it comes to Jesus Christ! Of joy, of love, privilege, holiness, delight and fellowship, for we have inexhaustible riches of grace and blessing in Him. When we come to Him, these unbounded treasures are all ours! God all-sufficient is revealed to us in the person of the man, Christ Jesus. Like the haven of Araby, where the ships take on board their gold and their perfume, so the soul receives its most precious and priceless gifts from the all-bountiful Redeemer Lord! Oh, you who are still out on the restless, wild sea of sin and dissatisfaction of storm and dread, will you not long to reach the haven that you may be peaceful and safe, happy and secure because you lose your sins and in their place may receive of His fullness, grace for grace?

Mariner! I think I hear you say, "I would gladly came to the port, but what about it, sir? What are the dues there?" Sinner, *it is a free port*—there is nothing to pay! Of all the keels that ever floated into that haven there was never one that had anything to bring that was worth receiving. There has been much taken out, but nothing has been brought in that was worth the acceptance. Christ will charge you no custom's dues, so run to this port, for it is freely open to every sinner that desires to cast anchor there! *There is room for you, too*. There are many vessels—there is a great fleet, a blessedly peaceful fleet, within, but there is room for you. Do you tell me that there was once a bar before the harbor? Yes, but it has been blasted clean away and is now altogether removed! There is sea room for the heaviest craft! Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool! Though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow! You say that your heavy laden boat will draw many a foot of mercy's water? Ah, but there's many a foot here! There is room even though your ship is burdened up to the bulwarks. There is no fear of your touching the bottom of God's bottomless grace, wisdom and love! There is always room for you to come. Some ports are only open at certain states of the tide, and so when the tide is out and low, the boat that makes for the haven may run upon the rocks, or the Black Middens somewhere—but of this there is no fear for you—

"The blessed gates of gospel grace
Stand open night and day!"

Some souls have run for the haven at the very last and, by His mercy, they have got in—while others have run for it, blessed be God, while yet quite young! Oh, may it be your happy lot at the very commencement of

life's voyage, young men and women, to run for this blessed haven and find yourselves strong and secure and serene!

At any rate, let me say to you, however despairing you may be, if God gives you the will to run for this harbor, you may do so and find without doubt that it will be found open to receive you! Christ Jesus, then, is a true haven for the soul—and they who trust in Him are made perfectly secure!

We must not stay longer on this point, however, fair and attractive as it is, but note that the text speaks of "*a desired haven*." Now I wonder whether to all of us, Christ Jesus is a desired haven. He *is* a haven, but is He a *desired* haven to you? Put your hand now upon your heart and see if you can find a deep desire after Christ there. Oh, I would have hope in preaching to such a congregation, even though none of you knew Christ, if you did but truly desire Him! You would then be like tinder to my spark and be like prepared ground. I should only have to sow the seed and you would be that fruitful soil which receive it—and yield a harvest a hundred-fold! Christ is not desired by some of you and why not? But I think I can easily find out those who desire the haven. They are just these. The sailor desires the haven *when he has an unfavorable breeze*. Do you feel as if providence were blowing in your teeth? And are temptations setting in very strong? And does the recollection of your past sin come blowing a hard gale against you? But a little while ago you sailed and were very comfortable, for 'twas all smooth water with you! The sea was like a millpond! But now the waves roll and break mountains high and the wind is in your teeth. I hope you will come to desire the Savior now. Sick of the world and all its turbulence, may you now be anxious after Him and His peace. The sailor desires to get into harbor, too, *when he finds he is in weather which he is not likely to ride out*. "Would God," says the boatswain, "that we could see the light." "Oh, that we were now in the haven," says the master, "for there are threatening, angry breakers ahead." Do you not see the breakers ahead, sinner? Are you not afraid of dying and more afraid of living? Do not the storms and trials of life drive you to desire something better than the vain world can give you? And does not the prospect of the afterlife alarm you? Then I hope that to your belabored soul Christ is the desired haven!

But even more, the haven is desired *by the sailor whose ship is leaky*. "She will soon go down," he says, "we have kept the pump going, but the water gains upon us." Do you feel your spirit to be such an unseaworthy craft that you are afraid to go out into or stay out in the depths of the sea with her? Do you begin to feel, or fear, she is sinking? If so, then my Lord Jesus Christ will be to you a "desired haven," indeed! Ah, no sinner prizes salvation like the sinner who knows he is lost! May our God give you to know that you are!—

"The sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so."

That is, a really awakened sinner, for his ship he will not take to harbor unless he feels that she must sink unless he does! I pray God that you may get into such a sinking state that you may be compelled to go to Him. *And when the sailor himself is sick*, it is then he needs the haven. When he feels as if he must die, then he says, "I wish I were safe on shore!" Do you feel sick at heart? Does your very soul turn within you till you reel and stagger like a drunken man? Then you will desire the haven and I bless God you will have it! There is many a sailor who has desired the haven who has yet never reached it but gone down into the depths—but there has never been one upon the sea of life who has *desired* Christ with a really intense longing and a loving and anxious heart, but he has found Him before long! Oh, sinner, I have hope for you, for if you desire Christ, Christ even more desires you!

We cannot stop, however, even here, for next we have to talk about the pilot. How do they get into the haven? *He brings them there*. The text is speaking of God. "So *He* brings them to their desired haven." We know nothing of the navigator of the sea of salvation. To get into the harbor is never effected by human skill nor wisdom. "I am a Christian" said a young woman once; asked the minister, "When did you become a Christian?" "I am sure I don't know, sir," was the reply, "but I supposed it was when I was christened." A great many people have the same notion. Ah, but "*so*" He does not bring any to the desired haven, but in quite an altogether different way! It is by the personally coming on board of the soul, of the great pilot, the Holy Spirit, that the heart is steered into the safe haven. But she will rot or wreck outside, or founder to the bottom unless God, Himself, shall bring her into the quiet harbor of His glorious redemption. "So *He* brings them." Dear hearer, do you say, "There is a haven, and I desire to make for the land, but the wind is contrary. I would tack and tack about, but the more I try, the farther off from the haven do I seem to be"? Yes, but He who is the haven is also the pilot to bring you to the haven! You have no repentance, you say. He gives it! Ask Him for it. You have no faith. He gives it—seek it at His hands. Oh, that you had grace to trust Him as much as to bring you to Himself, as to bring you to heaven! You may not get at Him, you toiling boat. You cannot reach Christ who is on the land, but He comes walking on the water to meet you. "It is I," He says, "be not afraid."

Despair not, doubt not, you who desire! Put up the signals of distress—fire the guns of prayer again and again—and He will come! The Pilot who has weathered and rescued you from many a storm, before, will bring you safely to harbor. He is a pilot who knows the sea well—

"He knows what strong temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

He has steered many a vessel into port that was in quite as bad a condition as you are now. He is well-skilled! He has got a divine

certificate from the trinity house. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; He has anointed Me to do this very work of bringing poor shipwrecked mariners to the port of peace." Commit yourself to His hands! Let Him board your vessel and He will make your ship tack about and bring you soon into the still and quiet waters of the desired haven!

But I come now to the point I want specially to drive at, and that is *the passage to the haven*. They are brought to the haven they desire and they are brought there by the pilot, but how are they brought? The text says, "*So* He brings them to their desired haven." The way into the haven is not always a smooth one. Some are brought to Christ as if they had never known a storm. Do not, of course, desire and seek a storm—but as long as you get safely into the haven it matters not how you get there. If you trust Christ, do not trouble yourselves because you never went through the Slough of Despond. Read the life of John Bunyan and you will find him much troubled and tumbled up and down for years. You may have felt little of this, perhaps, yet if your trust in Christ is sincere and real, it matters not! If the ship reaches the haven and is safely sheltered there, whether she had a stormy passage or a smooth one is of little importance. The great thing is to be "Safe home, safe home in port." Still, it often happens that we come into the port of Christ's salvation through a storm. Read the passage and you will see how frequently this occurs. "They mount up to heaven, they go down again into the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. They cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm to be calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quite. *So* He brings them to their desired haven." They are greatly troubled, but it drives them to prayer—prayer gets its answer and so they get Christ! I thank God that I was brought into peace by believing. It was many and many a day before I found Christ. It is a strange thing, but as I was talking this afternoon with a dear friend in Christ about spiritual things, we remarked to one another that the most of the men who had been made useful in winning souls had a hard time of it, when they first came to Christ. For the most part a deep and painful experience seems to be absolutely necessary to enable a minister to get a hold and a grip upon the doctrines of grace. Still, let us never forget that the tossing is not the haven and the storm is not the port. A sense of sin does not save—and terrors of conscience do not justify. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." That is the great message to us all! Trust in Jesus—this it is that brings you into port. May God bring you there! And we will then sing together, and "praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

I hope to meet full many of you in that other port above. Meanwhile, what a blessing and privilege it is that there are so many of us in the port of Christ here and now, on this sin-afflicted earth! Let us hand out the

flags tonight, every one of them as we try to bless and magnify the King who is, Himself, the pilot, who made the haven, who Himself bears the storm upon His own bosom, that we may be saved from it and be hidden from all the rolling billows, and find a secure resting place in Him!

And now for only a few minutes let us apply the text to believers and see**—II.** THE SINCERE SAINT AS A SOUL-VOYAGER. We are accustomed to speak of heaven as our home and I think we would not strain the point, tonight, if we speak of it as our haven. The church in the olden times was often pictured in symbols by a ship and, perhaps, no better type of the church could be found. The ship is out at sea. We are on our journey home. The prow is towards the Promised Land. We hope to reach the isles of the happy in the land of the hereafter where the waters are eternally still and the billows roll no more. In yonder haven of our soul there is a peace transcending even the peace which we have learned upon earth though *it* passes all understanding—a peace that no storm can by any possibility even break—no storm within, no tempest without. There shall be no panics there, no losses of money there, no sickening wife, no dying child, no tortured brain, no anguish in the heart—there we shall be free from all the storms that tossed us on the sea of life.

That port is one from which the ship shall never make another voyage—she is home for good—not to be broken up, but to be re-filled after a better fashion; no longer mortal, for this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruption must put on incorruption. She shall make voyages, but still be in the haven, for the eternal haven is wide as infinity and we may sail on and on forever—and it shall always be upon a sea where not a wave of trouble, a breaker of sin or sorrow shall beat on our serene soul! There shall be no more leakage there, no more complaint that the vessel is out of trim. The sin that has pierced us through and through like some of these sea-worms which eat through the staunchest timbers shall be forever done with! Yes, forever and ever!

I love to think often and deeply of that haven, dear friends! If not to you, I am sure it is to me, a "desired haven." If you ask me why it is desired, I can only answer that when I see the perils of the way—the storms we have had to face and outride and how little our poor vessel is able to overcome them—we may well long to be forever where such trials and, indeed, *all* trials, shall never come! I desire to be in that haven, I think, as much as anything—that I may *meet there my many comrades who have gone before*.

It has been my lot to serve under the great captain now for some few years. There are names that are on the roll of my Master in heaven which I venerate and men whom I long to see. Rowland Hill once took a journey, we are told, from Cambridge, some ten or twelve miles, to see an old dying saint and he said to her, "Now, you will be in heaven before me, but do tell them that poor old Rowland is on the road. And when you get

there give my love to the three Johns—John who leaned on the Savior's bosom, John Calvin and John Bunyan." Well, we may well wish to see them and the many who shall be there, for we shall have near and intimate communion with them! Let us drink tonight the cup of fellowship and toast the friends that are ahead! We have been long enough out from shore, I think, almost to forget those behind and begin to remember those who are ahead. We are homeward bound and we long to be at home for the sake of the friends who have gone before. Some dear to us in ties of flesh are there—those who were to us as father, mother, wife or child. Your little ones are beckoning some of you to the celestial shore! How much a desired haven it should be to you! I have many spiritual children on the other side of life's Jordan. Multitudes are now there who learned the Savior's name from my stammering words—and came to see His transcendent beauties as He was being set forth, lifted up and exhibited here in the midst of this great congregation! I know they will welcome me, their spiritual father, and I long to be with them!

But best of all it is a desired haven, *because He is there*, who though He was of a human mother born, is yet truly divine! He, whom though—

"We have not seen His face,
Unceasing we adore!
The Man of Sorrows at the Father's side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified."

Blow, blow you winds! Let the sails go to ribbons if they must! Let the vessel rush and fly before the gale, if only she does but get safely into "the desired haven!" We may even think the storm is blest that drives her the more quickly there, for it is, indeed, a desired haven!

Are you now desiring it, my dear brothers and sisters? It is not always that we do. We get a trick of loitering along the road or merely cruising on the ocean. What a strange thing that anything here should beguile us!—

"What is there that I should wait,
My hope's alone in Thee!
When will You open glory's gate,
And take me up to Thee?"

Is there anything here that ought to make us stop a moment if there is that prospect beyond of the Savior's face and the vision of His glory? I think we can say, some of us, that at times—

"Our thirsty spirit faints
To reach the land we love—
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above!"

You see I am running over the same heads as we had in the first part—a haven, a desired haven, and *then the pilot*. Shall I ever get to the desired haven? I would despair of it in going through so tortuous a channel so thickly set with difficulties and perils, but my pilot knows the

course! My pilot found the way to heaven, Himself, and if I trust Him absolutely, giving the vessel entirely to His charge, He will find the way for me, too! Besides this, He has this advantage—He is the Master of the winds and waves! And so I may confidently—

"Leave to His sovereign will
To choose and to command."

For He will certainly bring me safely home.

But the passage to the haven needs, too, your thought. My Christian brothers and sisters, you are now being tossed on the sea. You came here tonight wondering what God was doing with you. You old sailors ought not to be astonished or alarmed at a storm. Did you imagine the sea had turned to dry land? Did you expect to reach yonder distant shore without feeling the heave of the waves? Why the youngsters and novices may expect such things if they will! But you who are seasoned mariners and are getting gray ought to know better! Has it been smooth all the way until now? Why expect it to be sunny and serene now? Master John Bunyan's ditty has it—

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

Do you not expect it? If you do not, I would alter my reckoning if I were you! Just turn to the log book of your memory—how many days together have you generally been in smooth water? Not many, I will guarantee you. You ancient mariners who have lived at sea these many years and have got your sea legs now, and can stand where others fall; I ask you whether you have not been more accustomed to rolling billows than you have been to the ocean smooth as a millpond? And do you expect to see it alter for you now? Between you and Canaan there are a few more storms. Between here and the everlasting rest there are turmoils yet to encounter, but, "so He brings them to their desired haven." Perhaps if it were always smooth, they would never get there—the treacherous stream of earthly ease would bear them out to the cataract of everlasting destruction! Perhaps without the wind and without the storm, yes, and without the clouds and the tempest, and the thunder and the lightning, the boat might never reach the haven! The boats upon earth's seas may reach their haven without the aid of storms, but not so with us, for, to again repeat the words of Cowper, here if not in the other case—

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

And now my last word that I would venture to say is this—"So he brings *them* to their desired haven." That does not mean you, young man, for Christ is not on board your heart and life—you do not desire the haven and you will never be brought there against your will! Who are they, then, that are brought there? The text and its context tell us. They are those who "cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distress." Are you a crying soul? Pleading, entreating His rescue

and deliverance? That word, "cry," is a very appropriate and suggestive one. That is the true way to pray. As God inspires, cry to Him! A girl who had been converted was asked what was the difference between her prayers now and before she was converted. She answered, "Sir, first I prayed as my mother taught me, but now I pray as God prompts and teaches me." That is a blessed and vital difference! You have seen and heard your children cry. Well, how is it done? Some of them seem to cry all over. When they want something very badly, they not only cry with their throats, but they cry also with their legs and hands and eyes! And, indeed, they cry with all their nature. And that, too, is the right way to *pray*. You cannot get it out, perhaps—well then, feel it within, for God can see the inward feeling. "*He hears the desires of the humble.*" A man once in great trouble, a poor Hottentot, went to his Dutch master and said he felt a great weight and he needed to pray—would he tell him how? The Dutchman did not know and could not tell him. But when the Hottentot went to the place at Cape Town where he heard the Bible read, he listened to the story of the Pharisee. And as he heard it he said, "Dat man a good man. I can't pray like him. Dat prayer not suit me. I can't pray dat." Presently the preacher went on reading the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The man said, "Dat man a bad man. God not hear dat prayer." But when he came to, "That man went down to his house justified rather than the other," he said, "Den I'll pray dat bad man's prayer. God hear him, God hear me," and not long after he was heard to say, "Rocks, hills, rivers, trees, tell God my soul so happy, for He has heard my prayer and put my sins away!"

Now, you who want to cry to God but do not know how, I recommend to you the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Breathe that out before the throne of God and you shall one day be among the company of whom it is said, "So He brings them to their desired haven," and you shall rest in Jesus—

"Forever with the Lord."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:81-96.

Verse 81. *My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your word.* The ship rocks, but the anchor holds. The singer is ready to faint, but he is not ready to despair. He knows where his restoring will come.

82. *My eyes fail for Your word, saying, When will You comfort me?* What a mercy it is to have our eyes on God's word, full as it is of blessing—to be waiting till the blessing comes out of it! My eyes watch Your word that is so full of the rain of comfort—and I say to myself, "When will it descend and refresh me? When will the clouds let fall their silver drops upon my thirsty soul?"

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statues.* I feel dried up, smeared and smirched as with soot—my very beauty is gone from me and my usefulness, too. I am not fit to hold anything, for I have become like a skin bottle that is parched up. Yet for all that, I have a memory of Your word—the smoke and the heat have not dried out of me the flavor of that good old "wine on the lees well refined" that once filled my heart.

84. *How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?* "How many are the days of Your servant?" Or rather, how few they are—be not long in coming to me, lest I die while You are still on the road.

85. *The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your law.* They might make pits for lions and tigers, but not for sheep. These pits were not after God's Law. There are still cruel enemies who would if they could, entrap the people of God—shall not this make us feel what a great mercy it is we have one to be our guardian and defender who knows where the pitfalls are?

86. *All Your commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully—help me.* There is a fine prayer for us every day in the week—"Help me." Lord, I am helpless if You do not help me. You are the helper of Israel—He that keeps Israel will not slumber nor sleep. "Help me."

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your precepts.* "They had almost consumed me upon earth." They seemed as if they would swallow me up entirely, "but I forsook not Your precepts" and, therefore, they could not consume me. I was invulnerable and invincible because I stuck to rectitude and kept to Your precepts.

88, 89. *Quicken me after Your loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth. Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.* There is not a new divine word, or a new gospel, or a new law—but it is a settled gospel, a settled law, a settled revelation—"settled in heaven," stereotyped, fixed, made permanent! If perfect, then unalterable—if alterable, then would it be imperfect.

90. *Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides.* "Your faithfulness is unto all generations." You who were true to Abraham will be true to David. You who were true to David will be true to me. You are always faithful to Your own nature and Godhead. "You have established the earth, and it abides." It would rot out of its place. It would rush into space like a truant planet if You did not hold it where it is. You, therefore, will hold Your gospel where it is and Your servants where they are.

91. *They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants.* The fixed laws of the universe have their analogy in the fixed rules of revelation. Are not all material things Your servants? And they are kept—You will therefore keep us.

92, 93. *Unless Your law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction. I will never forget Your precepts: for with them You have quickened me.* We may well keep to that which is our life! If God's precepts breed life in us and then quicken us, and so renew that life, let us stand to them, be obedient to them and that at all times!

94. *I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts.* "I am Yours, save me." Oh, what a sweet assertion. "I am Yours"—Your creature, Your redeemed one, Your chosen, Your espoused. "I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts."

95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.* Let them wait.

95. *But I will consider Your testimonies.* I will not consider the wicked—they are not worth it—they would only distract or distress me. I will keep my thoughts fixed upon Your word, and so shall I be at peace and escape from their malice.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection: but Your commandment is exceedingly broad.* Yes, all perfection in the creature! In very deed it is an attribute of the Creator, and whether it is true or false, whether men have the excellence they boast of, or have it not, there must be an end to it all—either as to its extent or its duration—but Your commandment has no limit, it covers everything! And it has no termination, it endures forever! "Your commandment is exceedingly broad."

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A SWEET BOW
NO. 3317

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He delights in mercy."
Micah 7:18.

SONS of men, rejoice that such a God has revealed Himself to you! This should cause a universal Hallelujah, the whole world over, as soon as ever it is heard! "He delights in mercy." Clap your hands and rejoice before Him! Yes, exceedingly rejoice! The heathen did not find this out. Although they had many gods, differing one from another in character, none of them were ever gods of mercy! They were usually fierce demons—some of them only rejoicing in the exaction of human blood. Go this very day to Hindustan (Persian name of India) and see what gods man makes unto himself—gods more beastly, more cruel, more devilish than himself! Such is not the living and true God! Far from taking pleasure in the sufferings of creatures, He tells us plainly that He delights in mercy. It is not enough that He is merciful, but He *delights* in this high prerogative! While we may well suppose that every attribute of God gives Him pleasure in the exercise, *mercy* is supremely singled out as being especially His favorite! Mercy is the last attribute openly manifested—He exercised His power in making men before they sinned or needed mercy—and He displayed His wisdom in balancing the clouds and piling the hills before He needed to show mercy, for sin as yet had not come into the world. If I may say so, mercy is God's Benjamin and He delights most of all in it. It is the son of His right hand, though, alas, in bringing it forth, it might well have been called the son of sorrow, too, for mercy came into this world through the sorrows of the only begotten Son of God! He delights in mercy, just as some men delight in trade, some in the arts, some in professions—and each man, according to his delight, becomes proficient in pursuing a work for the very love thereof. So God is proficient in mercy. He addicts Himself to it. He is most Godlike, most happy if such a thing may be said of Him! He delights in mercy when He is stretching out His right hand with His golden scepter in it, and saying to the guilty, "Come to Me. Touch this scepter and you shall live!"

Now, surely it would suffice were I to sound this trumpet again and again with its celestial monotone. If you heard nothing but the same unvarying notes and did but remember them, believe them and come to God in consequence of them—there would be enough of a sermon in the text without further exposition or comment. "He delights in mercy." Nevertheless, as you are willing to listen, it will not be grievous to me to speak on such a lovely theme. Let me, therefore, *mention some facts*

which prove it; answer some objections that are raised against it; warn you against some perversions of it; and then endeavor to push home the great lessons which spring from it.

I. FACTS WHICH PROVE THAT GOD DELIGHTS IN MERCY.

This is clear from the first dawn of promise. When our first parents sinned, He might, if He had pleased, without straining the words which He had spoken, have destroyed them both and so at once have put an end to the race of rebels. He had said, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." If He had chosen to give to that a literal as well as a spiritual meaning, He might surely have put on the black cap and condemned our parents to perish on the spot! But why did He permit them to live and to become the parents of an innumerable race? Why, from that single pair, has He allowed the millions of the race to spring? Because every man that is born becomes a sinner and in every one of these millions there is space for God's mercy—these all furnish so many platforms, I might say, on which God might display His mercy—so many millions of black foils against which God shall put the sparkling sapphire of His mercy that its brightness may be more clearly seen! Surely, it is only because He delights in mercy that He spares this earth to swarm with sinners and to be covered over with multitudes of transgressors!

That He delights in mercy is clear from the fact that *oftentimes after His anger has grown hot, He has spared the offender when he has repented.* God determined to destroy the race of Israel in the wilderness. "Let Me alone that I may destroy them." But the prayer of Moses touched the tender part of God, namely, His mercy—and He said that He would spare the people for His covenant and for His prophet's sake. Even Ahab, that most cruel of kings, when he had been threatened, humbled himself and God said to Elijah, "Go and say unto Ahab, Because he has humbled himself, this thing shall not be in his day." And that great city of Nineveh, which had been given up to all manner of evil, God had said to Jonah, "Go and cry, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" But when they put themselves in sackcloth and repented at the prophet's warning, the Lord would not destroy the city, but spared the multitude for a season. Oh, I tell you, the tears and cries of men move the heart of the Most High! Not a prayer that ever comes from the guiltiest breast, if it is but sincere, fails to enter into the ear of the God of mercy! The tears of penitents force their way into His soul. He has a bottle for those precious drops! He has a ready record for all their groans and sighs. He has proved this in innumerable cases. He has drawn the sword from its scabbard and put it back again when the man has repented. He has lifted the axe, yet laid it down again when the farmer has pleaded and said, "Let it alone this year, also." His sparing, even when His anger has grown hot, proves that He delights in mercy!

Brothers and sisters, I appeal to all of you in this present assembly! *The fact that we are here tonight after all the provocations which we have given to God proves that He delights in mercy!* Ah, I need not begin with the worst, the openly worst. Let me mention some of you who have been

trained from your childhood in the paths of piety and yet you forgot God. You lived without Him—prayer was neglected, His day was weariness—to go up to His house was a real toil. And yet you have been spared though you were useless and unprofitable servants! He might have chased you out of the house and given you your portion among the tormentors, but He has borne with your ill manners and spared you to this hour! Ah, but there are some who have gone farther. They have broken His laws! They have trampled on His statutes. Some have cursed His name—some here have done it! They have dared to imprecate damnation on themselves and have done it often. They have spoken against God, perhaps with impious and infidel lips. They have done worse than that—if worse can be! They have persecuted God's children and that is to touch the apple of His eye, and to hurt Him in the tenderest place! We seemed, some of us, in the days of our sin, as if we would ride steeplechase to perdition—as if nothing could stop the insanity of our suicidal resolve! We would sin even if sin were bitter to us. We would pursue our ruin at all risks and hazards and yet He cried, "How can I give you up?" He turned to plead with us! A mother's voice pleaded— from the grave she pleaded! The fever came and preached to us on the sickbed and we heard it. The cholera came and preached—we heard its voice in the street—we saw its power in the frequent funerals that passed along through the city. The preacher came and spoke as best he could and besought you, as a brother, that you would turn—that you would not perish, but would turn to God! And all these entreaties—these stretching out of the hand, this wooing and these tears which God has used upon you have all been in vain to now—and you have sinned and revolted yet more and more! Does He not delight in mercy to continue still to invite, still to mourn and not to cut it short by destroying you altogether?

And the very best proof that God delights in mercy, I think, is to be found in *the great number of persons who are saved*. I say the great number of those who are saved, for he who says they are but few, contorts some passages of God's word and understands it not as a whole. Look yonder, if your eyes can see as mine can, by faith—you can no more count the spirits that rejoice before the throne of God than you can count the stars in the sky, or the sand upon the seashore! Their music yonder is like great thunders, or like the mighty waves of the sea, for they are ten thousand times ten thousand, a company that no man can number, all having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Jesus, all saved by the mercy of our God! And here below, how many there are of us who are making our way to the Celestial City, led by the precious Christ who is our captain—and in all of our cases the mercy of God is seen!

Nor is the mercy of God to be discovered only in the numbers, but it is seen also *in the character of those who are saved*, for God does not select the most virtuous, the most chaste, the most honest, the most talented. He often takes—to make them monuments of His mercy—the vilest, the

most abased and blasphemous! He lays hold upon the polluted publican instead of the proud Pharisee. He singles out the wandering prodigal before many who thought themselves far better! He lifts the poor off the dunghill and sets him among princes! Glory be to the infinite majesty of eternal grace that has snatched brands out of the burning, who has lifted men from the very gates of hell and passed them through the gates of heaven! The guilt of one soul might sink a world—the accumulated guilt of all the millions whom Christ redeemed will stand forever as a proof that God delights in mercy!

Reflect a moment upon the *conduct of those saved after they have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, for albeit they are renewed, yet they are not perfect. Oh, brothers and sisters, we ought to be ashamed to have to confess it tonight! Blushes should scarlet our cheeks, that we have been ungrateful, unbelieving, and unfaithful! We have sinned against the gracious Father who has taken us into His family! We have sinned against the love of God, against the blood of Christ, against the sweet comforts of the Holy Spirit—and yet no child of His was ever cast away—no believer in Christ was ever disowned of God! The mercy which once flowed to them flows on forever, never pausing for an instant—because He delights in mercy!

But think and here is the main point, think with regard to these guilty ones who have been saved, *at what an expense it was all done*. He spared not His own Son! A son is most dear to a father, yet God so loved mercy that He gave the only begotten to the smart and to the death-pang—to the cross and the sepulcher—that mercy might ride on the milk-white steed, a queen among the sons of men! Behold the Savior bleeding! I pray you let me portray Him to you with hands and feet pierced with nails. Mark His sufferings! View His agonies and let me tell you that this was all for the sons of men—that the mercy of the everlasting Father, without bound and limit—might come to those who seek His face through Jesus Christ! Further proof, surely, is not needed. This is proof, overwhelming proof that should confound despair, proof that should make unbelief impossible! He who gave His son to die *must* be a God that delights in mercy!

II. SOME OBJECTIONS ARE OFTEN RAISED, which I shall very briefly meet.

"If He delights in mercy," says one, "why are some men lost?" Surely, sir, God does not so delight in mercy as to tarnish His justice! If He did, there would be a slur upon His mercy, for sometimes it is not mercy to the many to forgive the few. It were no mercy for London to set free all the burglars and murderers. It would be no mercy to England if every man who had committed murder were allowed to go red handed without punishment! Punishment for the guilty is required even by mercy, itself. Remember, of all the lost, there is not one but has simply and barely the due reward of his sins. And if that had been roughly and evenly given to him, he would have known no reprieve that allowed him to live here, after his *first* offense! To full many of them, certainly to all of you, if finally

lost, you will have had mercy presented to you. You have had Christ preached to you! You have been bid to come to Him! You have been assured, on God's own authority, that if you trust Jesus, you shall be saved! Then if you do it not, lay not your ruin at the door of God's mercy, but at the door of your own folly! If a man dies of fever because he will not take his medicine, who but he is at fault? If a man leaps over a precipice willfully, let him blame no one if he dashes himself to pieces! On the head of every lost one, his own condemnation lies, as yours will unless you turn to God and repent!

"Ah," says another, "*but God is not always merciful*, look at His severity sometimes—Korah, Dathan and Abiram are swallowed up—Sodom is destroyed by fire from heaven." Yes, sir, and even mercy saw this done without a tear in her eyes. What? Should Sodom go unpunished? Shall the bestial vice of which Sodom was guilty never be checked? Why, if this should spread among the sons of men, it would bring in its infernal train ten thousand times more damage than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah! The sin itself is infinitely worse than the fire which burned it up! There is mercy in the physician if he sees poison in the hand when he cuts it out and cauterizes the wound. And this is what God did with Sodom. He did, as it were, cut out the plague-spot and cauterize it, lest that filthy sin should spread over all mankind! As for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their death was the life of others—they were pestilent traitors against the dominion of God and unless they had died, others would have revolted and have perished, too. Many of those things which we call severe judgments are only mercies in disguise. The great fire of London—how the preachers preached about that! I suppose there are hundreds of sermons extant to prove that the great fire of London was a punishment upon London for its gluttony and covetousness! Why, what greater blessing ever befell the city than that fire, burning up as it did all those fever and pest dens where all kinds of malaria and disease constantly lay festering? Nothing could have been better! The deaths of some in the *plague before the fire* had called attention to the evil—and then the fire came and swept the evil away! I do not doubt that even cholera in our own times has been simply God's great sanitary commissioner, sent to London to warn us to cleanse this and sweep away that, that so, on the whole, life may last longer and mercy may prevail. Judge not God, then, by your feeble sense! Wait awhile till you see His judgments in the long run and then you shall discern how they are always seasoned with mercy and love holds the sword!

Should anyone say, with blank surprise, "If God delights in mercy, *why is there such a thing as the unpardonable sin?"* I think I would reply, with a burst of gratitude, "Is it not a great mercy that there is only *one sin* that is unpardonable?" There might have been a catalog of crimes for which forgiveness was impossible! There is but one—that one is only unpardonable because the person who commits it has so seared his

conscience that he never asks for pardon. Any of you, man or woman that sincerely asks for mercy, shall have it, whatever sin you may have committed! But that one sin strikes a cold chill about the heart and, henceforth, the man never desires mercy, but perishes an impenitent and a careless sinner!

Should another ask, "How is God merciful *when I feel in my own self that He cannot have mercy upon me?*" I should reply, Your feelings are not to be trusted! Whatever despair may whisper, or doubts may suggest, one text of Scripture is worth 50 fears and doubts, or fifty thousand of either. You may be a black sinner, but He delights to wash you. You may have offended Him, year after year, and done despite to His grace, but His arm is still not shortened that He cannot save. I care not how far you may have gone, I am sure He can come after you. Lost sheep, bleating on the mountains, the shepherd can hear you and the shepherd can reach you! You may fall into a pit but it shall not be so deep that He cannot bring you out! While life remains there is hope! Sin as you may have sinned, there is abundance of pardon with a gracious God. Oh, put not your thought so in opposition to the declaration of heaven, but believe tonight that God is able and willing to forgive you—and come with a penitent prayer and find forgiveness now! All objections to the delight of God in mercy are but illusions of your brain—or delusions of your heart.

III. THERE IS PERIL OF MISUSING THIS MERCY OF GOD, lest instead of leading us to repentance, it should plunge us deeper into sin.

Though God delights in mercy, sin is no trifle in His estimation. Sin is an enormous evil, an evil so great that it never could have been prevented from destroying us all except by God, Himself, coming into this world, taking upon Himself our nature and suffering to the very death in our place! Calvary tells us that sin is not a thing to be laughed at. It cost our Savior unutterable groans and griefs that can never be measured to deliver us from our guilt! And if the sinner comes not to Christ, it shall cost him endless tears! It shall cost him everlasting misery! His sins shall sink him to hell forever! Oh, trifle not with sin because God is merciful! This is a cruel, brutal thing to do—to sin because grace abounds. If you do so, you shall find that there is no grace for you!

Say not that because God is merciful *a prayer or two on your dying bed will suffice*. How do you know you may ever have a dying bed? Men fall dead in the streets! There was one who always said, "I shall set it all right at last. I shall say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and it will be all right." Returning home drunk one night, he spurred his horse over the parapet of a bridge into a deep river—and the last words he was heard to say was a sentence too blasphemous for me to repeat. And why may not you die so? You cannot tell. Put no trust in deathbed repentances—they are, of all things, the most deceitful! Every thief repents when he comes to the prison—and every murderer will leave a word of repentance on his pathway to the gallows! It is a sign of the heart being set right to cry and groan when you are coming near to your punishment. God is merciful to these who seek Him early, but procrastinators will find that He is just.

"Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, lest He swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest."

Though God is merciful *you are not, therefore, at liberty to despise the Lord Jesus and His salvation,* for all His mercy flows to us through the silver pipe of Jesus Christ the mediator. I speak advisedly—there is no mercy in heaven or earth in the shape of *saving mercy* except through Jesus Christ! Unless you come to the cross for it, you shall not have it. God has nailed up every other door but this. This one, alone, is left open—the door sprinkled with blood on the lintel and the two side posts, and on which is written, "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish, but have everlasting life." There is an alternative. It is, "He that believes *not*, shall be condemned." What? Even if he does this and that; if he humbles himself, if he is virtuous? Yes, yes, God makes no exception! The sentence comes to kings and queens and emperors, as well as to crossing sweepers, paupers, or even to convicts, "He that believes *not* shall be condemned." They shall take which they will. If they will have Christ and God's mercy, so be it—God's grace has compelled them to take that. But if they will not have Christ, there is no mercy—no, not a drop of mercy—but wrath, righteous wrath against those that despise the Son of God!

Nor must you think that *the doctrine of God's free mercy at all comes into conflict with the doctrine of God's electing love*. No, rather, by His election it is seen that God delights in mercy**—**thinking mercy, planning mercy before men needed mercy, in the eternal covenant—determining the persons upon whom mercy should come—selecting them, not because of any good in themselves, but entirely out of His own good pleasure, and thus proving His mercy! If God had sent into the world a gospel full of conditions and of human doings, it would have been no gospel to anybody, for no man could fulfill the conditions except by divine grace. But He has sent an unconditional gospel! He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion—and in this great free grace gospel, the mercy of God is magnified to the fullest!

IV. WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM ALL THIS? *If God is so merciful let His ministers preach of His mercy*.

If God delights in mercy and not in sacrifice, do not let His ministers be dressing themselves up and performing genuflections, bowing to the east, winking with their eyes, making signs with their fingers, offering incense and I know not what besides! God is not a child to be amused with toys that are beneath the notice of babies. God delights in mercy. Let the pulpit, therefore, ring with mercy! Let the preacher be continually telling of mercy through the blood of Jesus! Mercy through faith in His name! Mercy for crimes of deepest dye, mercy that comes to us through the atoning Savior! This ought to be our daily message when we preach. We ought to remember that God delights in mercy. As God's

ambassadors let us proclaim most freely that which He has the most pleasure in, His mercy—His mercy—oh, His mercy, it endures forever!

Christian people, here is a noble example for you. If God delights in mercy and you are His children, *be like He is—let mercy be your delight*! Be merciful to the poor. Be merciful to the ignorant. Be merciful to the guilty. Never be the man to cast the first stone at the fallen woman, for your Master did not condemn her. Never be the man to pass by the naked and the poverty-stricken. Your Lord's eyes were quick to detect the leper. Mercy well becomes the heir of the God of mercy! And if you are not merciful, how can you expect to obtain mercy, or think to be numbered among the children of the great merciful one? To all of you I would say—take care, as you expect the mercy of God, to deal it out to others. Never say, "I won't forgive," for you seal your own condemnation when you do! And if you forgive not your brother his trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. You have chosen your own destruction when you shut the door against your child, or against your neighbor and say, "I will treasure up that enmity as long as I live." I tell you, sirs, your offerings at God's altar are an abomination to Him until you have forgiven all of your fellows their trespasses! Your prayers cannot come up before God—they are most effectually hindered. How can you pray when one of the petitions which God puts into your mouth is this—"Forgive us our debts as we forgive them that are indebted unto us"? How can you, with one hand on your brother's throat, lift your other hand and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"? Go your way, tonight, and if possible, before you close your eyes in sleep make your peace with any whom you have offended or who have offended you! As God delights in mercy, let the children of God likewise delight in mercy!

Still, the great lesson I want to bring out is this—*if God delights in mercy, then why should those who have offended Him be afraid to seek Him?* He will hear your prayers be they ever so feeble or broken! He is ready to forgive you, however grossly you may have offended. Think of that! If He is so kind, why do you stay away from Him?

Oh, come to Him, come now! 'Tis all mercy today. You are not bidden to come to a judge, nor to advance to the bar where the sentence shall go against you—'tis a sweeter note you hear—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Oh, I wish I could lead you to the Lord! It is not in my power. His Spirit, alone, can do it, but ah, do come, and welcome! There is not a hard word in the whole of the Bible for a coming sinner! There is nothing to keep back a soul that desires to be at peace with God. God's house is open! God's heart is open! God's table is spread! God waits to be gracious—no, He comes to meet the sinner that comes to Him! Are you willing to have Him and to have His mercy? If so, you may have it! Come, then—come and welcome, sinner, come!—

"Lord You have won, at length I yield!
My heart, by mighty grace compelled

Surrenders all to Thee!
Against Your terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquers even me!
If You had bid Your thunders roll,
And lighting's flash to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been—
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Savior I have viewed,
And now I hate my sin."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 136; EPHESIANS 1

Let us make this occasion a time of praise and thanksgiving! Let our hearts dance at the name of our God! Let our lips give expression thereto in joyful music!

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* That is the beginning of our praise—the essential goodness of God from which all the streams of mercy flow. Oh, deep abyss of infinite love!

2, 3. *O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever.* His greatness, which is beyond that of all potentates on earth or principalities in heaven—this, also, is to be our joyous theme song! His greatness and His goodness together make us magnify His name.

4. *To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.* Nothing is absolutely wonderful except God—all other things are dwarfed and diminished in wondrousness as compared with Him. The seven wonders of the world are trifles compared with the seven-million wonders of God!

5. *To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever.* They boasted of the Colossus that strode across the sea, but what shall we say to the heavens that span not only the earth but the entire universe? And in those heavens there is mercy to be seen as well as wisdom—the adaptation of the physical world to the circumstances of man—so that there is a relation between the weight of every dewdrop and the structure of the human body!

6-9. *To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that made great light, for His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule by day: for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.* See how these ancient godly ones loved to dwell upon a thing! When the note was "light" they did not just sing it through and have done with it, but there were many repetitions in their music. But the music of today is "rattle through it as fast as you can, and quickly have done with it." Our forefathers liked to linger a bit on these sweet praises of God. So did the Hebrews." "Great lights!" Yes, but there must be the sun and the moon and the

stars. They could never have enough of it—they rolled these sweet morsels under their tongue and then out upon their lips as they praised God!

10. *To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever.* Yet it was an awful judgment and it needs a reverent, lowly, saintly spirit to sing over even the judgments of God. Had certain theologians of the present time been present at the Red Sea, they would have cried in sentimental sympathy over the Egyptians! But instead of that, Miriam took a timbrel and said, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." The fates of sinful men are of small moment as compared with the glory of God! Jehovah fills all things and when the heart is fully taken up with the glory of God, it learns to sing even this stern refrain—"To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever."

11-15. *And brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever.* See how they prolonged the strain—and what blessed exercise this is, to take mercies to pieces and examine all the details—and have a fresh verse for each particular of God's goodness to us! Glory be unto His blessed name forever and ever!

16. *To Him which led His people through the wilderness; for His mercy endures forever.* Therefore He will lead you through the wilderness and bring you through great droughts—and your manna shall drop from Heaven, and your waters flow from the Rock. Sing, then, to His name, you that are in the wilderness!

17. *To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever.* That is a terrible and tragic matter, that smiting of kings. Yes, but these singers did not groan over it! There are no less than four notes over this.

18-23. *And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel, His servant: for His mercy endures forever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever.* The note descends a little from the martial strain of trumpet, from smitten kings and the drowned chivalry of Egypt. But though it sinks how it sweetens! What a soft, clear sound there is about it.

24-26. *And has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever. Who gives food to all flesh: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for His mercy endures forever.* Glorious redemption! That is always the choicest note of all. Ring that silver bell again! This is the Christian's true promised land of great spiritual blessings. May we have faith enough to enter into the full possession of it. It is a very wonderful chapter!

Ephesians 1:1-2. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* That is a sort of crossing of the Jordan to go into the land and get grace and peace. Grace changes us, peace quiets us, and then we are over Jordan.

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* They are all yours! He has not blessed you with a part of the blessings, but with all of them! They are all yours. Have you the courage and the faith to take possession of them? That is the point. If you have grace and peace you are in the land. Now let your foot rest first on one blessing and then on another and appropriate them all to yourself.

4. *According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.* What an inheritance! To be made holy! Oh, that we might be perfected as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, sanctified through and through! We are elected to this end—it is the very objective of the divine choice that we may be without blame before Him in love.

5-6. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.* See how Paul goes on taking one city after another of this heavenly Canaan? It was election. Now it is adoption. Now it is acceptance in the Beloved. He is a good Joshua for us if we will but really and truly follow Him and take possession of the Promised Land.

7-10. *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.* Oh, what a wonderful gathering that will be when all the things in Christ shall be gathered together! No division among the people of God! When the whole redeemed inheritance shall be one and we shall as one body possess it forever. "In whom also we *have* obtained an inheritance." Got it! God has given it to us! We have a right to it—we are the heirs of it in Christ!

11. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.* He not only wills it, but He works it! When He wills to give His people a broad inheritance—of that large inheritance they shall certainly have for He "works all things after the counsel of His own will."

12-14. *That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you*

were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. You have got the Holy Spirit. He is God's seal upon you that you are, indeed, saved men and women! In getting that, you have already received the earnest, that is, a part of the inheritance never to be taken back. A pledge has to be restored, but an earnest is kept forever! The Spirit of God is ours and in having Him we have all things!

15, 16. *Therefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.* Having got so much, you might get a great deal more.

17, 18. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* That is a wonderful passage! We are not only to know our inheritance in God, but God's inheritance in us! Wonderful thing, and yet it is so! The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. Joshua gave each one of the people his own portion, but all the people were God's portion! And today God delights in His people. He finds a solace in those whom He chose, in those whom He redeemed by blood, in those whom He brought near into daily fellowship with Himself!

19-23. *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.*

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HOW TO READ THE BIBLE
NO. 3318

A SERMON
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"Till I come, give attendance to reading."
1 Timothy 4:13.

OF course this counsel and exhortation is intended primarily as a direction to Christian ministers and especially to young Christian ministers. They must read much if they are to be profitable to others as preachers. There used to be a very stupid conceit in some sections of the church, that if a minister read extensively, he would only give forth stale truth, or what some simpletons called, "dead men's brains." Men have now learned, however, that he will be most fresh and original in his own thoughts who most diligently cultivates his mind by studying and pondering the thoughts of other minds. He who never quotes, will never be quoted, and he who does not read is not very likely to be read. Of course the first thing the minister needs is to be taught of the Spirit, but then the question is—How does the Spirit teach? He teaches, no doubt, mainly through the word and through our own experimental acquaintance with that word. But if He pleases to reveal a truth of God to another man, and I will not read that truth as it has been recorded by that other man, I have neglected the teaching of the Spirit of God. You know, with regard to the Savior's miracles, that there was not one of them that was unnecessary. He never did a thing by miracle which could have been performed by the ordinary laws of nature. So it is with the teaching of the Spirit—I have no right to expect that the Spirit will reveal truth to me without the use of a book when I can find it out for myself with the book. "The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities," but not our idleness! He is given to us on purpose that He may help us when we are weak, but not that we may be indulged where we are slothful. I have sometimes had the unutterable misery of listening to a sermon which has been professedly dictated by the Spirit of God, but in which it was clear that the preacher had never thought upon the subject before he spoke—and I can only say that I was quite at a loss to perceive any peculiar beauty in the sermon, nor did I see anything at all which made it a source of edification superior to a sermon which had been prepared by someone else. I thought I detected a good many traits of human ignorance—and but very few traces of the working of the Holy Spirit.

There are many young fellows here tonight who are preparing for the ministry. I shall not, however, enlarge on this point, but shall only press on their earnest consideration and their most devout meditation. This

inspired exhortation, which is not mine, nor even an apostle's only, but the exhortation of the Holy Spirit of God through the apostle—"Give attendance to reading." If, brothers, you would bless God's church and train up a band of really intelligent Christians, do not be always appealing only to the emotions, but also give out good, sound, strong gospel doctrine—and illustrate the doctrine, so as to expound and comment to others. Do this especially by reading the words of the greatest masters in Scripture theology—and these will prove your delightful and dear companions and your splendid helpers in making your ministry richly profitable to your hearers.

This, however, is not our special subject for tonight. This same exhortation so peculiarly suitable to the minister, will suit all his hearers, too, because the ministry is not a religious caste peculiar to some few, but we are, all of us, to teach others according as God shall teach us! And in order that we may be useful in our sphere, as the minister is in his, we must adopt the same means to fit ourselves for our high privilege and to prepare us to be used by God. As the minister without reading will have but little power, so will it be with Christians in general. "Give attendance to reading" is an exhortation which I would press upon most of you, especially those of you who have leisure and who are not called to exhausting labors which take up all your time.

I am not, however, going to keep so closely to my text as merely to exhort you to read. I want to ask you to read God's Word! That seems to me to be the Christian's book. You may read other books and your mind may thereby be well-furnished with spiritual things, but if you keep to the Word of God, though you may be deficient in many points of a liberal education, you will not be deficient in the education that will fit you for blessed service here, for the service of skies, for communion with God on earth and communion with Christ in glory!

My objective this evening is to say a few things about how to read the Bible. Last Thursday night we spoke at length upon God's Word as to its excellences. Tonight I think it fitting that we should speak a little about how to read that word with greatest profit to our souls. In doing so we shall hope to consider seven precepts all bearing powerfully upon this important matter. Our first precept shall be—

I. READ AND DEPEND *on the Spirit of God*. How often do we open the sacred book and read a chapter through, perhaps at family prayer, or perhaps in our own private devotions and, having read from the first verse to the last, we shut up the book thinking we have done something very right and very proper—and in a vague way somehow profitable to us? Very right and very proper, indeed, and yet, right and proper as the thing is, we may really have gained nothing thereby! We may, in fact, have only drilled ourselves in the merely external part of religion and may not have enjoyed anything spiritual, or anything that can be beneficial to our souls if we have forgotten the divine spirit through whom the word has come to us!

Ought we not even to remember that in order to properly understand the holy word we need to have the Holy Spirit *to be His own expositor?* The hymn says concerning providence—

"God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain"

and certainly it is so with regard to the Scriptures! Commentators and expositors are very useful, indeed, but the best expositor is always the author of a book, himself. If I had a book which I did not quite understand, it would be a very great convenience to me to live next door to the author, for then I could run in and ask him what he meant. This is just your position, Christian! The book will sometimes puzzle you, but the divine author, who must know His own meaning, is always ready to lead you into its meaning! He dwells in you, and shall be with you, and Christ Jesus said, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall lead you into all truth."

But to understand the word is not enough. We also need that He *makes us to feel its power*. How can we do this except through the Holy Spirit? "Your word has quickened me," O God, but it is only as *You* did quicken me through it. The Word of God is to be read literally, but, "it is the letter that kills." Only "the Spirit gives life" and, excellent as are its statements, yet even they have no spiritual force in themselves! Unless the Holy Spirit shall fill them, even they shall become as wells without water and as clouds without rain. Have you not often found it so yourselves? I appeal now to your own experience. You have sometimes read a portion of Scripture and the page has seemed to glow, your heart has burned within you and you have said that the word came home to you with power.

Just so, but it was the Holy Spirit who was bringing it home to your spirit in its true power and making it a sweet savor of life unto life to you! At other times, you may have read the very same page and painfully missed the sweetness which once you had tasted—and lost the lovely light that once flashed from it upon your mind's eye!

Everything must depend upon the Spirit speaking through it, for even the light of the Word of God is, to a great extent, but moonlight. That is to say, it is a reflection of the light which streams from God, Himself, who is the one true source of light. If God shines not upon the word when we read it, then the word shines not back upon us, but becomes a dark word to us, or as one says, "rather an obscuration than a revelation, rather concealing God from us, than revealing Him to us." Look up, reader! The next time the book is in your hands, look up before you open it—and while your eyes are running down the page, look up and pray that God would shine upon it! And when the chapter is finished and you put the book away, take a minute, again, to look up and ask His blessing. If by reading the Scriptures we were only always reminded of the Holy Spirit. If we got no other good from the Scripture, itself, except the turning of our souls to think upon that divine and blessed one, that

would be, in itself, an inestimable blessing! Do read, then, thoughtfully remembering the great author.

Our second precept is—

II. READ AND MEDITATE.

There is no exercise more out of fashion, nowadays, than meditation! And yet, to use Brookes' expression, "it is a soul fattening duty." The cattle crop the grass, but the nutrition comes from the chewing of the cud! Reading is the gathering together of our food, but meditation is the chewing of the cud, the digesting, the assimilating of the truth of God! I quarry out the truth when I read, but I smelt the ore and get the pure gold out of it when I meditate! Ruth gleaned, but afterwards she threshed. The reader is the gleaner, but he who meditates is the thresher, too. For lack of meditation the truth of God runs by us and we miss and lose it. Our treacherous memory is like a sieve—and what we hear and what we read runs through it and leaves but little behind—and that little is often unprofitable to us by reason of our lack of diligence to get thoroughly at it. I often find it very profitable to get a text as a sweet morsel under my tongue in the morning and to keep the flavor of it, if I can, in my mouth all day!

I like to turn it over and over again in my mind, for any one text of the Scriptures you will find to be like the kaleidoscope. Turn it one way and you say, "What a fair truth of God is this!" Turn it another way and you see the same truth, but under how different an aspect! Turn it yet once more—and keep doing it all day—and you will be amazed and delighted to find in how many lights the same truth will appear and what wonderful permutations and combinations you can find in it! When you have been doing this all day, you will be compelled to feel that there is an infinity about even one text, so that you can never completely comprehend it but find it still is beyond you! If you get a passage of Scripture given you, do not quickly give it up because you do not immediately seize its force and fullness. The manna which fell in the wilderness would not keep sweet beyond one day—if kept over unto the second, it bred worms and stank. But there was one portion of manna which was put into a golden pot and laid up in the ark of the covenant which never lost its sweetness and heavenly nutriment! And there is a way of keeping the precious portions of God's Word that are given you today, in such a manner that you may go in the strength of it for forty days and continue to find fresh food in the same text day after day, and even month after month! But this is only to be done by *meditating* upon it. Our hymn has a fable in it when it says that the—

"Spicy breezes
Blow soft over Ceylon's isle."

Voyagers who have been there, tell us that they have never smelt "the spicy breezes," for the cinnamon yields no perfume till it is bruised and broken! And certainly God's Word is exceedingly full of perfume, but not till it has been graciously bruised by reverent and loving meditation. You cannot get the sweetness and fragrance from it till you have smitten it

again and again in the mortar of thought with the pestle of recollection. Meditate, then, upon these things!

"But how can we meditate," asks one, "when we have so many things to think of?" But "one thing is necessary," and it is necessary that the Christian should mediate upon the things of God! I know you must give your minds to many things and I cannot ask you not to do so, but whenever you have time to rest, then let your minds come back to the old home. The birds of the air are all day long picking up their food, but they go straight away to their roost at night, and so when the day's business is over and the daily bread has been gained, fly to your nest and rest your soul in some precious portion of God's Word. During the day, too, whenever you are freed from anxiety, let your mind dart upwards—and it will help you to do so if you take a text and make it as wings that enable you to fly to ponder heavenly things. Read and meditate!

The third rule for our guide should be—

III. READ AND APPLY. What I mean is just this. Do not read the Bible as a book for other people. Do not read it merely to say, "Yes, it is true. Very true. I believe *its doctrines* to be the revelation of the infallible mind of God, Himself." But also endeavor in reading a *page* of the Scriptures, always to see how much it *belongs to you*. For some of you there is very little in the Word of God except threats. Pray God to help you to feel the solemnity even of the threats, for if you feel deeply the threats, now, you may be delivered from the tragic fulfillment of them by-and-by! If you are made to tremble under God's Word, you may never be made to tremble under God's *hand*. If you feel the wrath to come, now, you may never have to feel it in the next world. Ask God that His threats may drive you out of your sins and drive you to seek pardon in Christ. Then when you read descriptions of the human heart and the Fall, the corruption and the depravity of our nature, look and see yourselves as in a mirror and say of each man as you hear of his sin, "I am such a man as this was, and if I do not fall into precisely the same sin, yet the possibility and peril of it is in my heart and I could do so, but for God's restraining grace." Take the very histories home to your heart and find a point in them, either of encouragement or of warning for yourselves. As for the doctrines, remember that a doctrine kills except as it is personally grasped and as you feel your interest in it. I have known some rejoice greatly in the doctrine of election who were never elected, and some who were very pleased with the doctrine of justification by faith, but who had no faith by which to be justified! I have known of some, too, who gloried in final perseverance, but who, if they had finally persevered would certainly have been in hell, for they were on the road there! It is one thing to know these truths of God, and even to fight for them with the zeal and bitterness of a controversialist, but it is quite another thing to enjoy them as our own heritage and our portion forever! Ask the Lord to show you your interest in every truth and do not be satisfied until you have an assured personal interest in them! Especially let this be so with *the*

promises. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you!" Well, it is a very fine promise, but if it is read to me thus—"I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you*," what a transformed and glorified promise it then becomes! Stout old Martin Luther used to say, "All vital religion is in the personal and possessive pronouns." Is it not so? "When *you* pass through the river I will be with *you*, the floods shall not overflow *you*!" Oh, truly, such a promise is as a cluster of Eshcol, but it is in Eshcol's valley and I cannot reach it there! The promise applied is the cluster *brought to me just where I am* and I can receive it and delight myself in its luscious sweetness!

Take care, none the less, to seek for the application of *precepts*. Some are always looking out for other people's duty and are great judges and critics for what others ought to do. "Who are you that judges another man?" To his own master he stands or falls. See what precepts are binding upon *yourself* and then, as a child of God, be your feet swift to run in the way of His commandments. Read the Bible as a man reads his relation's will—to find what legacy there is in it for himself. Do with the Bible as the sick man does with the doctor's prescription—follow it by personally doing what it bids you. Ask God not to let your Bible be another man's Bible, but your own Bible—God's own mouth speaking to your soul of the things which make for your peace.

Fourthly—and this is very hard work—**IV.** READ AND PRACTICE. If you do not do this, you are reading to your own condemnation! If you read, "He that believes on Him is not condemned," if you believe not, then you are "condemned already," because you have not believed on the Son of God! The gospel is a very solemn thing to every man because if it is not a savor of life unto life, since it must always be a savor of some sort—it therefore becomes a savor of death unto death! Some seem as if they read the Bible in order to know how *not* to do—the more God commands, the more they will not obey! Though He draws them, they will not come to Him. And when He calls them, they will give Him no answer. A sorry, sorry heart is that which so uses God's Word as to make it an aggravation of its sin! Our life ought to be—and if God's grace is much in it, it will be—a new translation of the Bible. Speak of bringing the Bible down into the vernacular! Well, this is it! The worldling's Bible is the Christian. He never reads the book, but he reads the disciple of Christ and he judges the Christian religion by the lives of its professors! The world will learn better and will more likely be brought to know Christ when the lives of Christians are better, and when the Bible of the Christian life shall be more in accordance with the Bible of Christian doctrine! God make us holy! Sanctify us, spirit, soul and body, and then we shall be made finely serviceable both to the church and to the world! Read and practice! But we shall only be able to do this as God the Holy Spirit shall help us. Then let us—

V. READ AND PRAY. This is, perhaps, coming back almost to the first point, that is, read with dependence on the Holy Spirit. But I desire to impress a rather different thought upon your souls. Martin Luther says

he learned more by prayer than he ever learned in any other way. A stone-breaker was one day on his knees breaking flints when a minister came by and said, "I see you are doing what I often do, breaking up hard things." "Yes, sir," was the answer, "and I am doing it in the way in which you must do it, on my knees."

A passage in Scripture will often open up when you pray over it, which will defy mere criticism or looking to expositors. You put the text into action and then you comprehend it. I suppose if a man were studying anatomy and had never seen the body in life, he might not be able to know what a certain ligature was for, or such a bone—but if he could set that body moving, then he might understand the use of all the different parts, supposing he were able to see them. So when a text of Scripture lies, as it were, dead before us, we may not be able to understand it—but when by prayer the text grows into life and we set it in motion—we comprehend it at once! We may hammer away at a text sometimes in meditation and strike it again and again, and yet it may not yield to us, but we cry to God, and immediately the text opens and we see concealed in it wondrous treasures of divine wisdom and of grace!

But the prayer should not be merely that we may understand the text. I think we should pray over every passage in order that we may be enabled to get out of it what God would impart to us. A text is like a treasure chest which is locked—and prayer is the key to open it—and then we get God's treasure! The text is God's letter, full of loving words, but prayer must break the seal. When reading goes with praying and praying goes with reading, then a man goes on both his feet, the bird flies with both his wings! To only read is unprofitable—to pray without reading is not so soul-enriching, but when the two run together, they are like the horses pulling the chariot and they speed along right merrily!

Read and pray Christian! But take care you do not read without watering your reading with your prayer. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase! And even in this blessed book, Moses may plant and David may water, but prayer must cry to God or else the increase will not come! Now in the sixth place—

VI. READ AND TRY. Try what you hear. Try what you profess. Try what you read. Goldsmiths keep bottles of acid by which they test everything that is offered them for sale, to see whether it is gold or merely tinsel. And the Christian should keep God's Word near at hand and treasured in the soul, to test thereby all that he hears. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Many hearers believe all that is said because of the person who declares it to them. This is not according to Christ's mind! We ought to receive nothing as vital religious truth except it is sent us from above! And however much we may respect the pastor or the teacher, we must not so give up our judgment to any man as to receive his teaching merely because he chooses to utter it. Bring every form of the truth of God that is delivered to you, though it may glitter with oratory and seem reasonable and proper, to the test of Scripture! It

is very difficult, however, to get men to do this. They seem to fancy that you have sinister motives the moment you tell them so. There is a conservatism in the nature of us all with regard to our religious faith which is right enough if it were balanced by another principle. To hold fast what I know is right, but to be willing to receive or to do anything that God would teach me to receive or do is more right still. I must know what it is to which I hold fast, or else I may be injuring myself by the fixedness by which I stand to what I have learned. The woman of Samaria said, "Our fathers worshiped God in this mountain." That is the argument of numbers of persons. "Our fathers did so-and-so." This would be a capital argument supposing that our fathers were always right, but a very absurd argument supposing that they were wrong! I hope we are not like that early Saxon who asked where his father and all his ancestors had gone—and when he was told they were no doubt lost—he replied to the missionary that he would rather go where they were than become a Christian and be separated from them!

There are some who seem to be of this blood and boast in it. Their ancestors believed this or that, and they desire to follow them. Many there are who profess doctrines they have never learned and which they do not really know and grasp. They have the shell but they never reach the kernel. Is not this the case with many of us here tonight? If you even have a doctrine of God in your mind, find out the text or texts which prove it! If there should happen to be other texts which seem to point the other way, do not cut and pare any of them down, but accept all and wait until the Spirit reveals wherein they really agree! Scripture is not to fit your opinions, but your opinions to conform to the blessed word! There is a fable of a foolish gardener who had a tree that would persist in growing oddly. He did not like to restrain it and, therefore, had a wall built for it to grow upon. I think the man was far wiser who let the wall alone and changed the tree! There are people who are very apt to alter Scripture to suit their views, pulling out one word until it is never so long, dropping another, or completely changing the meaning of it, though everybody knows that it is the forced and unnatural one, or else tinkering up a text till it will fit some crank or peculiarity of theirs. This is not reverence! It is not treating God's Word as it ought to be treated. God's Word is no nose of wax to be shaped according to our fancies—or anybody else's. Though nobody else should say what he means, God always does. He would not have us talk in language that is capable of half-a-dozen meanings—and He does not talk so Himself. He speaks so plainly that if we are candid and desire to know what He means, it is not difficult to do so, especially if we go to Him for it. Let us, then, take this advice and try the spirits whether they are of God and, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures whether these things are so—and so read the Scriptures and try what we read.

And, lastly, the text is significantly followed by, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation." I will, therefore, say in the seventh place—

VII. READ AND TELL OUT *what you read*.

This will be an effectual way of imprinting it upon your own memory. When you read a passage of Scripture and have any enjoyment therein, go to your sick neighbor and tell what God has said to you. If you meet an ignorant one when you know somewhat of the things of God, tell them to him. Nations are enriched by the interchanges of commerce and so are Christians! We each have something that another has not and he has something that we need. Let us trade together. "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another," and it is very good that they should do so. Our talk is, alas, too often very frivolous—there is much chaff but little wheat. If we would but talk more of Scripture and establish it as a fashion among Christians, we would grow much faster and stronger, and be wiser in the things the kingdom.

I know one who, when he was a young man, read all day until evening came and then went every evening and preached. The preaching in the evening of what he had read during the day stamped and fastened the truths of God upon his own mind and made them unspeakably profitable to him! When you have read for an hour or so, spend another half-hour in communicating to a child, or a servant, or a seeker, or to some bed-ridden saint the thing that has enriched and helped you.

How I would press this upon you, everyone, my dear brothers and sisters, who are members of this church. We owe very many of the conversions that have been worked here to the personal exertions of our church members. God owns *our* ministry, but He also owns *yours*. It is to our delight at church meetings that when converts come, they often have to say that the word preached from the pulpit was blessed to them, and yet I think that almost as often they say it was the Word of God spoken in some of the classes, or in the pews—for not a few of you have been spiritual parents to strangers who have dropped in! Continue doing this! Let our congregation be full of these spiritual sharpshooters who shall pick out, each man his man, and who shall fire with the gun of the gospel directly at each individual!

Of course, if you know nothing, you can tell nothing. If you have never read anything which by the blessing of God has been brought powerfully home to your own soul, do not attempt to speak to others. There must be something begun in your own soul, first, but if you have been brought into personal contact with divine truth, let it be the first impulse of your soul to—

"Tell to the sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found."

The woman of Samaria left her water pot and went into the city, and said, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" My beloved, let us do the same! I do not know a living thing, even a wild flower in the hedge, but seeks to prolong the existence of its species. The foxglove sheds its seeds all down the banks—no matter how tiny the flower may be, it seeks to produce its like. So you, Christian, who are the noblest work of God, should not be satisfied unless your life

is a continually spreading around of the truth of God which has been made vital to you and will be new life to others!

What a grand crown and close to this night's service it would be could we be used of God to bring a soul from darkness to light, and from slavery to liberty! We cannot do it of ourselves, but God may help us. Would you not walk a mile, yes, many miles to do it? Well, you need not walk miles! It is quite possible that the very person who, as it were by chance, is sitting next to you tonight, is the person whom God has predestinated to be blessed and to be blessed *by you!* At any rate, try it. There shall be nothing lost, there may be much gained. Why has God taught the truth to you? For your own good? Yes, but you are not to be selfish! Be you, at least, as unselfish as the three lepers who, when they found the Syrian camp deserted and an abundance of gold and silver, said, "We do not well to stay here. This is a day of good tidings; let us go in the city and tell." Dear friend, you do not well if you read only for yourself! Having read, go out and tell what you have read, and the blessing shall come into your own bosom, even if it goes not out to others! And you shall be blessed and God shall be glorified!

I would press this, in conclusion, upon some of you who are not converted. Often men have come to Christ by reading the Scriptures. Attend upon a preached ministry, but do also read and search the Scriptures. I recollect when I was seeking Christ. I read Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, but the book muddled me much, though it is a very admirable book in some respects. Then I read Alleine's *Alarm*, and then Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and all these only plowed my heart more and more. But the comfort which I got came out of God's Word. It was from that precious text, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Then I got light! Turn you away from all human books to the divine book, and from all human helpers to Him upon whom help is laid and who is mighty to save! Read God's love in the book of atonement upon the cross, written in the crimson lines of the Savior's flowing blood and streaming veins! Look to Christ and trust in Him, and you shall live! May God bless you for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:105-115.

Verse 105. *Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* We are walkers through the city of this world and we are often called to go out into its darkness—let us never venture there without the light-giving Word of God, lest we slip. Each man should use the Word of God personally, practically and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. We would not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. It is a lamp by night, a light by day and a delight at all

times! David guided his own steps by it and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams.

106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.* Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations and decisions of his God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the Word of God was shining.

107. *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your word.* According to the last verse he had been sworn in as a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us! The Psalmist was a consecrated man and yet a chastened man. Quickening is the best remedy for tribulation—the soul is raised above the thought of present distress and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life—and so the affliction grows light.

108. *Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments.* He offers prayer, praise, confession and testimony—these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience—were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill-uttered as to displease the Lord and, therefore, he implores acceptance. When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed that we may be still more acceptable.

109. *My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Your law.* He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence—hiding in caves, or contending in battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition. But David did not turn aside to find safety in sin. They say that all things are fair in love and war—but the holy man thought not so—while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the law of God in his heart!

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts.* Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger—the Believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him—by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. David was not snared, for he kept his eyes open and kept near his God.

111. *Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.* He chose them as his lot, his portion, his estate. And what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so—taking them into possession and enjoyment. David's choice is our choice. If we

might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God perfectly. To know the doctrines, to enjoy the promises, to practice the commands—be this a kingdom large enough for me!

112. *I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even unto the end.* He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without erring or ending! He made it his end to keep the law unto the end and that without end.

113. *I hate vain thoughts: but Your law do I love.* The opposite of the fixed and infallible law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men! David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this—all his reverence and regard went to the sure word of testimony. In proportion to his love to the law was his hate of man's inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity, but the thoughts of God are truth.

114. *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your word.* To his God he ran for shelter from vain thoughts! There he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding place. When called into the world, if he could not be alone with God as his hiding place, he could have the Lord with him as his shield—and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions.

115. *Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid vain men. Evildoers make evil counselors. Those who say unto God, "Depart from us," ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God's children, "Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors."

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THE WELL-BELOVED'S VINEYARD
NO. 3319

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
TO A COMPANY OF BELIEVERS AT MENTONE.

"My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill."
Isaiah 5:1.

WE recognize at once that Jesus is here. Who but He can be meant by, "My Well-Beloved"? Here is a word of possession and a word of affection—He is mine, and my Well-Beloved. He is loveliness, itself, the most loving and lovable of beings—and we personally love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength—He is ours, our Beloved, our Well-Beloved! We can say no less.

The delightful relationship of our Lord to us is accompanied by words which remind us of our relationship to Him, "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard," and what vineyard is that but our heart, our nature, our life? We are His and we are His for the same reason that any other vineyard belongs to its owner; He made us a vineyard. Thorns and briars were all our growth, naturally, but He bought us with a price, He hedged us about and set us apart for Him—and then He planted and cultivated us. All within us that can bring forth good fruit is of His creating, His tending and His preserving, so that if we are vineyards at all, we must be *His* vineyards! We gladly agree that it shall be so. I pray that I may not have a hair on my head that does not belong to Christ—and you all pray that your every pulse and breath may be the Lord's.

This happy afternoon I want you to note that this vineyard is said to be upon "a very fruitful hill." I have been thinking of the advantages of my own position towards the Lord and lamenting with great shame that I am not bringing forth such fruit to Him as my position demands. Considering our privileges, advantages and opportunities, I fear that many of us have need to feel great searching of heart. Perhaps to such, the text may be helpful. And it will not be without profit to any one of us if the Lord will bless our meditation upon it.

I. Our first thought, in considering these words, is that OUR POSITION AS THE LORD'S VINEYARD IS A VERY FAVORABLE ONE—"My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." No people could be better placed for serving Christ than we are. I hardly think that any man is better situated for glorifying God than I am. I do not think that any women could be in better positions for serving Christ than some of you dear sisters now occupy. Our heavenly Father has placed us just where He can do the most for us and where we can do the most for Him. Infinite wisdom has occupied itself with carefully selecting the soil, site and every tree in the vineyard. We differ greatly and need differing situations in order to fruitfulness—the place which would suit one might be too trying for another. Friend, the Lord has planted you in the right

spot—your station may not be the best in itself, but it is the best for you! We are in the best possible position for some present service at this moment—the providence of God has put us on a vantage ground for our immediate duty! "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill."

Let us think of *the times in which we live* as calling upon us to be very fruitful when we compare them with the years gone by. Time was when we could not have met thus happily in our own place— if we had been taken in the act of breaking bread, or reading God's word, we would have been hauled off to prison and perhaps put to death! Our forefathers scarcely dared to lift up their voices in a Psalm of praise, lest the enemy should be upon them. Truly, the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places—yes, we have a goodly heritage on a very fruitful hill.

We do not even live in times when error is so rampant as to be paramount. There is too much of it abroad, but taking a broad view of things, I venture to say that there never was a time when the truth of God had a wider sway that it has now, or when the gospel was more fully preached, or when there was more spiritual activity! Black clouds of error hover over us, but at the same time we rejoice that, from John o'Groat's House to the Land's End, Christ is preached by ten thousand voices! And even in the dark parts of the earth the name of Jesus is shining like a candle in the house! If we had the pick of the ages in which to live, we could not have selected a better time for fruit-bearing than that which is now current—this age is "a very fruitful hill."

That this is the case some of us know positively, *because we have been fruitful*. Look back, brothers and sisters, upon times when your hearts were warm, your zeal was fervent and you served the Lord with gladness. I join with you in those happy memories. Then we could run with the swiftest, we could fight with the bravest, we could work with the strongest, and we could suffer with the most patient! The grace of God has been upon certain of us in such an unmistakable manner that we have brought forth all the fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps today we look back with deep regret because we are not so fruitful as we once were. If it is so, it is well that our regrets should multiply, but we must change each one of them into a hopeful prayer! Remember, the vine may have changed, but the soil is the same. We still have the same motives for being fruitful and even more than we used to have. Why are we not more useful? Has some spiritual insect taken possession of the vines, or have we become frostbitten, or sunburned? What is it that withholds the vintage? Certainly, if we were fruitful once, we ought to be more fruitful now! The fruitful hill is not exhausted—what ails us that our grapes are so few?

We are planted on a fruitful hill, *for we are called to work which of all others is the most fruitful*. Blessed and happy is the man who is called to the Christian ministry, for this service has brought more glory to Christ than any other! You, beloved friends, are not called to be rulers of nations, nor inventors of engines, nor teachers of sciences, nor slayers of men—but we are soul-winners—our work is to lead men to Jesus! Ours is, of all the employment in the world, the most fruitful in benefits to men and glory to God! If we are not serving God in the gospel of His Son with all our might and ability, then we have a heavy responsibility resting

upon us. "Our Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." There is not a richer bit of soil outside Immanuel's land than the holy ministry for souls! Certain of us are teachers and gather the young about us while we speak of Jesus. This also is choice soil. Many teachers have gathered a grand vintage from among the little ones and have not been a whit behind pastors and evangelists in the glory of soul-winning. Dear teachers, your vines are planted on a very fruitful hill! But I do not confine myself to preachers and teachers—for all of us, as we have opportunities of speaking for the Lord Jesus Christ, and privately talking to individuals—also have a fertile soil in which to grow! If we do not glorify God by soul-winning, we shall be greatly blamable, since of all forms of service it is most prolific in praise of God.

And what is more, *the very circumstances with which we are surrounded* all tend to make our position exceedingly favorable for fruit-bearing. In this little company we have not one friend who is extremely poor—but if such were among us, I should say the same thing. Christ has gathered some of His choicest clusters from the valley of poverty. Many eminent saints have never owned a foot of land, but lived upon their weekly wage and found scant fare at that. Yes, by the grace of God, the vale of poverty has blossomed as the rose. It so happens, however, that the most of us here have a competence—we have all that we need and something over to give to the poor and to the cause of God. Surely we ought to be fruitful in almsgiving, in caring for the sick and in all manner of sweet and fragrant influences. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," is a prayer that has been answered for most of us—and if we do not now give honor unto God, what excuse can we make for our barrenness? I am speaking to some who are singularly healthy, who are never hindered by aches and pains and to others who have been prospered in business for 20 years at a stretch—yours is great indebtedness to your Lord! In your case, "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." Give God your health and your wealth, my brother, while they last! See that all His care of you is not thrown away. Others of us seldom know many months together of health, but have often had to suffer sorely in body—this ought to make us fruitful, for there is much increase from the tillage of affliction! Has not the Master obtained the richest of all fruit from bleeding vines? Do not His heaviest bunches come from those which have been sharply cut and pruned down to the ground? Choice flavors, dainty juices and delicious aromas come mostly from the use of the keen-edged knife of trial! Some of us are at our best for fruit-bearing when in other respects we are at our worst. Thus I might truly say that whatever our circumstances may be—whether we are poor or rich, in health or in affliction—each one of our cases has its advantages and we are planted "on a very fruitful hill."

Furthermore, when I look at *our spiritual condition*, I must say for myself, and I think for you, also, "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." For what has God done for us? To change the question—what has God *not* done for us? What more could He say to us than what He has said? What more could He do for us than what He has done? He has dealt with us like a God! He has loved us up from the pit of

corruption; He has loved us up to the cross, and up to the gates of heaven! He has quickened us, forgiven us and renewed us! He dwells in us, comforts us, instructs us, upholds us, preserves us, guides us, leads us and He will surely perfect us! If we are not fruitful to His praise, how shall we excuse ourselves? Where shall we hide our guilty heads? Shall yonder sea suffice to lend us briny tears wherewith to weep over our ingratitude?

II. I go a step further, by your leave, and say that OUR POSITION, as the Lord's vineyard, IS FAVORABLE TO THE PRODUCTION OF THE FRUIT WHICH HE LOVES BEST. I believe that my own position is the most favorable for the production of the fruit that the Lord loves best in me, and that your position is the same. What is this fruit?

First, it is *faith*. Our Lord is very delighted to see faith in His people. The trust which clings to Him with childlike confidence is pleasant to His loving heart. Our position is such that faith ought to be the easiest thing in the world to us. Look at the promises He has given us in His word—can we not believe them? Look at what the Father has done for us in the gift of His dear Son—can we not trust Him after that? Our daily experience all goes to strengthen our confidence in God. Every mercy asks, "Will you not trust Him?" Every need that is supplied cries, "Can you not trust Him?" Every sorrow sent by the great Father tests our faith and drives us to Him on whom we repose—and so strengthens and confirms our confidence in God! Mercies and miseries alike operate for the growth of faith! Some of us have been called upon to trust God on a large scale and that necessity has been a great help towards fruit-bearing. The more troubles we have, the more is our vine dug about—and the more nourishment is laid to its roots. If faith does not ripen under trial, when will it ripen? Our afflictions fertilize the soil wherein faith may grow!

Another choice fruit is *love*. Jesus delights in love. His tender heart delights to see its love returned. Am I not of all men most bound to love the Lord? I speak for each brother and sister here—is not that your language? Do you not all say, "Lives there a person beneath yon blue sky who ought to love Jesus more than I should?" Each sister soliloquizes, "Sat there ever a woman in her chamber who had more reason for loving God than I have?" No, the sin which has been forgiven us should make us love our Savior exceedingly much! The sin which has been prevented in other cases should make us love our preserver much. The help which God has sent us in hours of need, the guidance which He has given in times of difficulty, the joy which He has poured into us in days of fellowship and the quiet He has breathed upon us in seasons of trial—all ought to make us love Him! Along our life-road, reasons for loving God are more numerous than the leaves upon the olive trees. He has hedged us about with His goodness, even as the mountains and the sea are round our present resting place. Look backward as far as time endures—and then look far beyond that into the eternity which has been—and you will see the Lord's great love set upon us! All through time and eternity reasons have been accumulating which compel us to love our Lord! Now turn sharply around and gaze before you, and all along the future, faith

can see reasons for loving God, golden milestones on the way that are yet to be traversed, all calling for our loving delight in God!

Christ is also very pleased with the fruit of *hope*, and we are so circumstanced that we ought to produce much of it. The aged ought to look forward, for they cannot expect to see much more on earth. Time is short and eternity is near—how precious is a good hope through divine grace! We who are not yet old ought to be exceedingly hopeful. And the younger folk, who are just beginning the spiritual life, should abound in hope most fresh and bright! If any man has expectations greater than I have, I should like to see him. We have the greatest of expectations. Have you never felt like mercy in her dream, when she laughed and when Christiana asked her what made her laugh? She said that she had had a vision of things yet to be revealed!

Select any fruit of the Spirit you choose and I maintain that we are favorably circumstanced for producing it! We are planted upon a very fruitful hill. What a fruitful hill we are living in as regards *labor for Christ!* Each one of us may find work for the Master—there are capital opportunities around us. There never was an age in which a man, consecrated to God, might do as much as he can at this time! There is nothing to restrain the most ardent zeal! We live in such happy times that if we plunge into a sea of work, we may swim and none can hinder us. Then, too, our labor is made, by God's grace, to be so pleasant to us. No true servant of Christ is weary *of* the work, though he may be weary *in* the work. It is not the work that he ever wearies of, for he wishes that he could do 10 times more. Then our Lord makes our work to be successful. We bring one soul to Jesus and that one brings a hundred! Sometimes, when we are fishing for Jesus, there may be few fish, but blessed be His name, most of them enter the net and we have to live praising and blessing God for all the favor with which He regards our labor of love! I think I am right in saying that for the bearing of the fruit which Jesus loves best, our position is exceedingly favorable.

III. And now, this afternoon, at this table, OUR POSITION HERE IS FAVORABLE EVEN NOW TO OUR PRODUCING IMMEDIATELY and upon the spot, the richest, ripest, rarest fruit for our Well-Beloved! Here, at the Communion Table, we are at the center of the truth of God and at the wellhead of consolation! Now we enter the Holy of Holies and come to the most sacred meeting place between our souls and God!

Viewed from this table, *the vineyard slopes to the south*, for everything looks towards Christ, our sun. This bread, this wine, all set our souls towards Jesus Christ and He shines full upon our hearts, minds and souls to make us bring forth much fruit! Are we not planted on a very fruitful hill?

As we think of His passion for our sake, we feel that *a wall is set about us to the north*, to keep back every sharp blast that might destroy the tender grape. No wrath is dreaded now, for Jesus has borne it for us; behold the tokens of His all sufficient sacrifice! No anger of the Lord shall come to our restful spirits, for the Lord says, "I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Here, on this table, are the pledges

of His unspeakable love and these, like a high wall, keep out the rough winds. Surely, we are planted on a very fruitful hill!

Moreover, *the Well-Beloved Himself is among us.* He has not let us out to farmers, but He Himself does undertake to care for us! And that He is here we are sure, for here is His flesh and here is His blood. You see the outward tokens, may you feel the unseen reality! For we believe in His real presence, though not in the gross corporeal sense with which worldly spirits blind themselves. The King has come into a garden—let us entertain Him with our fruits. He who for this vineyard poured out a bloody sweat is now surveying the vines—shall they not at this instant give forth a goodly smell? The presence of our Lord makes this assembly a very fruitful hill—where He sets His feet, all good things flourish!

Around this table we are in a place where others have fruited well. Our literature contains no words more precious than those which have been spoken at the time of communion. Perhaps you know and appreciate the discourses of Willison, delivered on sacramental occasions. Rutherford's communion sermons have a sacred unction upon them. The poems of George Herbert, I should think, were most of them inspired by the sight of Christ in this ordinance! Think of the canticles of holy Bernard, how they flame with devotion; saints and martyrs have been nourished at this table of blessing! This hallowed ordinance, I am sure, is a spot where hopes grow bright and hearts grow warm, resolves become firm and lives become fruitful—and all the clusters of our soul's fruit ripen for the Lord!

Blessed be God, *we are where we have ourselves often grown.* We have enjoyed our best times when celebrating this sacred Eucharist. God grant it may be so again! Let us, in calm meditation and inward thought, now produce from our hearts sweet fruits of love, zeal, hope and patience—let us yield great clusters like those of Eshcol, all for Jesus, and for Jesus only! Even now, let us give ourselves up to meditation, gratitude, adoration, communion, rapture—and let us spend the rest of our lives in glorifying and magnifying the ever-blessed name of our Well-Beloved whose vineyard we are—

"While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and souls employ,
Here we could sit and gaze away
A long, an everlasting day!
Well, we shall quickly pass the night
To the fair coasts of perfect light—
Then shall our joyful senses rove
O'er the dear object of our love!
There shall we drink full draughts of bliss,
And pluck new life from heavenly trees—
Yet now and then, dear Lord, bestow
A drop of heaven on us below."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 5:1-19; PSALM 121:1-7.

Verse 1. *Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.* The song of the vineyard it by no means a joyful soul. It is, indeed,

quite the reverse. It is pitched in the minor key and has a painful theme. This suffices to prove that all our hymns need not consist, as some affirm, of direct praise to God. Such a notion is not according to Scripture, for many of the Psalms are not of that character. There are songs that can be sung to the edification of one another and that is, in part, the design of sacred song. We speak to ourselves as well as to God in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." The members of the church of God are placed in a position where they have very choice opportunities of glorifying God—they are like a vineyard on a very fruitful hill—most favorably placed for fruitfulness.

2. *And He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.* The vineyard was well chosen as to situation. The vine was carefully selected. Everything was done by walling it, to protect it from intruders. Every preparation was made for the gathering in of the fruits. The winepress was there, yet when the time came for grapes sweet and luscious, it brought forth wild grapes! You know what that means. Has it been so with us? Have we rewarded the Well-Beloved thus ungratefully for all His pains? Have we given Him hardness of heart instead of repentance? Have we given Him unbelief instead of faith; indifference instead of love; idleness instead of holy industry; impurity instead of holiness? Is that my case? Is it your case, dear friends? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been at times right only by accident, and have we never carefully and diligently sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to His praise? O Lord, You know! Let us judge ourselves in this matter that we be not judged.

3, 4. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* O you that profess to be His people, what more could Christ have done for you? What more could the Holy Spirit have done? What richer promises, what wiser precepts, what kinder providences, what more gracious patience? "Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes"; from where came this? The stock was good, the vine-grower was wise; from where came these wild grapes?

5, 6. *And now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up brier and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.* "I will tell you what I will do." He does not wait till the men of Judah have given their verdict. There was no need of any. The case was all too sadly clear. "I will take away the hedge thereof. . .and break down the wall thereof." Those providences which guard men from sin shall be removed. You shall be allowed to sin if you like—and as you like. Your will shall have its

freedom to the fullest. "And it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste." There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard! When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the woods lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if in righteous wrath, the divine owner of the vineyard, Himself, lays it waste, what hope remains for it? What fearful words—"It shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste." "It shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up briars and thorns." Nothing happens worse to a church or to a man than to be altogether without affliction—no pruning, no digging, no restraints, no pricks of conscience, no smiting with the rod. "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." That is the worst of all!

7. *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but beheld oppression; for righteousness, but beheld a cry.* Oh, when those who profess to be God's people live ungodly, dishonest, unchaste, ungracious lives, God is greatly grieved! His anger burns against such a church and against such a people. And well it may. "He looked for judgment," for they professed to be taught of God. "But beheld oppression"; He looked "for righteousness," for they said they were righteous. "But beheld a cry"; the passage has a special reference to God's ancient people, and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threat has been fulfilled.

8-10. *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there is no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! In My ears, said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitants. Yes, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.* When men are covetous after the things of this world, God has a way of making them to be filled with disappointment and with bitterness! Woe unto any man who has any god but the living God, or who lives for any objective but to glorify the Creator. Upon such a man innumerable woes shall come!

11-12. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflames them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of His hands.* The covetous man was intoxicated with greed. Here is a man intoxicated with strong drink. It is never too early; it is never too late for men to drink who once are carried away with this passion. They rise up early. They continue until night and then, when they are inflamed with lust, all sorts of evil pleasures are sought after and Satan leads them captive at his will. Woe unto such! Now, it was because there were covetous men who were idolaters; because there were luxuriously living men who were drunkards, who had crept into Jerusalem and lived there, and spread evils among the people—it was for this that God declared that He would lay His vineyard waste. Are there none such in the church of God today? Ah, me! I fear there are professors who do not let it be known openly, but who in secret follow after these things!

13-14. *Therefore My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude*

dried up with thirst. Therefore hell has enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoices, shall descend into it. What a perfect description that is of the church of God when it goes wrong—when there is evil in it. Then evil multiplies itself greatly in the earth and Hell has to be made bigger, as it were. As one old preacher said, "They go to hell in droves." There is none to stop them. When the church, itself, goes wrong, then the world is like that herd of swine that ran violently down a steep place to perish in the waters. Down, down they go! Oh, dreadful sight! Oh, terrible doom that falls upon the ungodly! Would God the church were well awake to see the danger of mankind and that she so lived that God could bless her to the salvation of men!

15-16. *And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: but the LORD of host shall be exalted in judgment, and God, who is holy, shall be sanctified in righteousness.* For whoever may stain himself with sin, God will not. We may think lightly of sin, but He never does. We may be so foolish as to tolerate iniquity in ourselves and wink at it in others, but God will not do so. Even when sin was laid on Christ, He smote Him to the death! Though He was not guilty of any sin, yet when our sin lay there, God turned away His face from His Son and He died! And if He spared not sin in His Son, do you think He will spare it in us? Ah, no! He is a just God and He will clear His hands of any complicity with iniquity. The 16th verse is the song of Hannah, that greatest of ancient poetesses. It is the Song of Mary, who copied it from Hannah, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty."

17. *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.* It is always so. There is always room for the tender, the gentle and the weak when God smites the haughty and the strong.

18. *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope!* "Woe unto them." When we get a woe in this book of blessings, it is sent as a warning, that we may escape from woe! God's woes are better than the devil's welcomes! God always means man's good and only sets ill before him that he may turn from the dangers of a mistaken way, and so may escape the ill which lies at the end of it. "Woe, woe, woe," though it should sound with a dreadful din in our ears, may be the means of leading us to seek and find our Savior—and then throughout eternity no woe shall ever come near to us! "That draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope." This is a very singular passage. It is not very easy to understand it at first sight. Here are some who are said to draw sin "with cords of vanity," which are slender enough. And yet they also draw it "as with a cart rope," which is thick enough. They are harnessed to sin and the traces appear to be fragile, insignificant and soon broken. You can hardly touch them, for they are a mere sham, a fiction—vanity! What can be thinner and weaker than cobweb-cords of vanity? Yet when you attempt to break or remove them, they turn out to be cart ropes or wagon traces, fitted to

bear the pull of horse or bulls! Motives which have no logical force and would not bind a reasonable man for a moment, are, nevertheless, quite sufficient to hold the most of men in bondage. Such a slave is man to iniquity, that unworthy motives and indefensible reasons which appear no stronger than little cords nevertheless hold him as with bonds of steel—and he is fastened to the loaded wagon of his iniquity as a horse is fastened by a cart rope!

19. *That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it!* Blaspheming God and rushing on the bosses of His buckler; defying Him to smite them. And all this came from dallying with sin, from drawing iniquity with cords of vanity! Beware of the eggs of the cockatrice! Remember how drops wear stones and little strokes fell great oaks. Do not play with a cobra, even if it is but a foot long. Keep from the edge of the precipice. Fly from the lion ere he springs upon you! Do not forge for yourself a net of iron, nor become the builder of your own prison. May the Holy Spirit deliver you; may you touch the cross and find in it the power which will loosen you and let you go!

Psalm 121:1. *I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help.* It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands. And it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from His high places and was ready to pour down succor for His injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above! They look elsewhere in vain. Let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire and confidence! Satan will endeavor to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged. Be it ours to firmly resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes—and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also! The purposes of God—the divine attributes, the immutable promises, the covenant ordered in all things and sure—the providence, predestination and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the things to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come!

2. *My help comes from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.* What we need is help—help powerful, efficient, constant. We need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God! Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from Him. Help is on the road and will not fail to reach us in due time, for He who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency! Heaven and earth are at the disposal of Him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper! He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit His people to be destroyed—the perpetual hills, themselves, shall bow rather than He shall fail whose ways are everlasting! We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to Him who made them both—it is vain to trust the creatures—it is wise to trust the Creator.

3. *He will not allow your foot to be moved: He that keeps you will not slumber.* Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we

shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide. And if He will not allow it, we shall not suffer it. If our feet will be thus kept, we may be sure that our head and heart will also be preserved. In the original, the words express a wish or prayer—"May He not allow your foot to be moved." Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer. And we may pray believingly, for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine, the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy, but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the blessing of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. We would not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep. We need Him by day and by night—not a single step can be safely taken except under His guardian eye. God is the convoy and bodyguard of His saints. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep—His watchful eyes are never closed.

4. *Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* The consoling truth must be repeated—it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It would be well if we always imitated the sweet singer and would dwell a little upon a choice Doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew**—"**The keeper of Israel," and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over Him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word, "Behold," is set up as a way mark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor bodyguard around him, but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not and, therefore, the defenseless man was safe as in a castle! He keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasure, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard protects his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it—it affirms the matter thus, "Lo He shall not slumber nor sleep**—**the keeper of Israel." Happy are the pilgrims to whom this Psalm is a safe conduct! They may journey all the way to the Celestial City without fear!

5. *The LORD is your keeper: the LORD is your shade upon your right hand.* Here the preserving One who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named**—**Jehovah is your keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here! The sentence is a mass of bullion and when coined and stamped with the King's name, it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven! Here is a glorious person**—**"Jehovah," assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person—Jehovah is your "keeper," in behalf of a favored individual**—***you*, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour**—**Jehovah *is* your keeper. A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing. Even divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads, the Lord Jehovah, Himself, will interpose to shade us and that in the most honorable

manner, acting as our right-hand attendant and placing us in comfort and safety.

6. *The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.* None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. There are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved**—**literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills—mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine, bright or dim—spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity—eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time—thus the ever-present protection never ceases.

7. *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul.* It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word, "keep," all through the Psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps His own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yes, from evils, themselves! This is a far-reaching word of covering—it includes everything and excludes nothing—the wings of Jehovah amply guard His own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul is kept, all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the lesser so far as it is essential to the main design. The kernel shall be preserved and in order thereto, the shell shall be also preserved. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride—kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil—kept for holier and greater things! Kept in the love of God, kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory! What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

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A BAD KING'S GOOD SON
NO. 3320

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"And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam."
1 Kings 14:13.

WE must take the text, of course, with definite and full reference to its historical context. It seems that in the wicked house and family of Jeroboam, there was one godly child—and death, which very often mysteriously cuts down the green wheat, while it leaves the hemlock to ripen—seized upon this one and laid him low. Yet though he must die, there was this consolatory thought about his death, that it was the only one of the family that would ever have an honored burial, for all the others were to be slain by a death so sudden and violent that they were to be eaten by the fowls of the air or devoured by the dogs! This child was to be the only one who should have a funeral attended by mourners because he was the only child of the whole family in whose heart there was "found some good thing towards the LORD God of Israel."

We shall make several remarks upon this text, perhaps too numerous to call them divisions as a discourse, but they will be illustrations drawn from the narrative before us. The first remark we shall make is this—

I. GOD'S ELECTING LOVE SOMETIMES HAS THE OBJECTIVES OF ITS CHOICE IN STRANGE PLACES.

Of all the houses of Israel, the palace of Tirzah was, surely, the last place one would think in which to look for a worshiper of the true God! The father of the family was a great sinner. He had set up gods of gold and said, "These are your gods, O Israel." Though much distinguished by God's providential goodness and lifted up from the rank of an officer to that of a monarch, he forgot the God in whose sunshine he had flourished and must make the men of Israel bow down before an ox that eats grass! There could be in his palace no toleration for anything like true religion. There must have been a total neglect of all the hallowed engagements of the Sabbath and of everything else that looked like reverence to the unseen, but almighty God of Israel! And yet God's sovereign, electing love was bestowed upon a child of this wicked and

rebellious Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin! God's everlasting mercy had designed that there should be a break in the line of sin and that there should be at least one who should be found among the choristers of glory who had been nursed and nurtured among the degraded worship of calves!

What was the case in Jeroboam's family is often seen in many others. Remember how Paul seems to dwell upon it? "Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." Of all the human animals that ever disgraced the race, the Caesars, as a whole, were the worst. I suppose that three out of four of them ought to have been kept in the worst ward of a lunatic asylum, and yet they were lifted up to preside over the vast Roman empire! Their lives were not only tainted with iniquity, but they reeked with every form of infamy. And yet, in households of such wretches as Tiberius and Nero, there were found true and eminent saints of God! Grace sometime finds its choicest jewels on the worst of refuse heaps. Sometimes it is impossible to account for it, as it is in this case. How should the child know anything about God? Was it, do you think, through his nurse? It certainly was not through his mother, but might it not have been through his nurse? Does not God sometimes send to little children in godless families good governesses? If some of you are in such positions, may you not, instead of running out of the house because it is too godless, hope that God has sent you there to be an instrument of good to some tender little heart, to pluck right out of the fire some brand, to take right away from between the lion's jaws some precious blood-bought lamb for whom the Savior died? It might have been so here. I cannot see how else this child could have known about the God of Israel, but this is certain—electing love had one of its objects in this strange household and *it* knew how to find that one out! I know there are some of you who belong to very strange families, where the name of God is scarcely ever mentioned, except in profanity, where Christ is not loved and where His cross is not reverenced, and yet you are saved. Perhaps it was curiosity that brought you here to hear that odd man who says such strange things against the world's popish church—or for some other reason you dropped in here and God blessed you. Or else you took up some stray book, or you happened to light on a torn-out leaf of the Bible and there, sovereign grace met with you. Oh, how should we praise electing love and lift up heart and soul and voice to say—

"It was not that I chose Thee,
For, Lord, it could not be!
This heart would still refuse Thee
But you have chosen me."

Give the glory, all the glory, to the sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating grace of God!

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, there seems much comfort in this little incident to the Christian minister and to all believers. You

think, sometimes, that the church is getting to a low ebb and that there is a lack of bold, brave men. But we do not know where God may yet find such men. Years ago we said, and you believed, that God would find some of the best preachers of the gospel among the very humblest classes of society—and did not that come true? Have there not been found some men with whose names the ears of England have been made to tingle, who were taken from the coal-pit and other similar places to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, He can do the same again and what will be stranger, still—it may be that before many years or even months are over, He will find courtiers and men of noble blood and rank, after the world's way of talking, who will be down, or rather up to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus! My brothers and sisters, we need never despair! The mighty arm of God can get into courts and houses of lords and reach the mightiest, the proudest, the most priest-ridden of men and lay them down at the foot of the cross, saying, "I intended from before the foundation of the world to make you a vessel of mercy to bear My name to the Gentiles, and you shall do it—arise and go your way." Never despair for the church! Out of the house of Jeroboam, God will bring His Ahijahs, and out of the worst and most unpromising of places, where God is most forgotten, and His truth least known and despised, the Lord will bring testifiers to the truth of God as it is in Jesus! Have hope, then! Have hope in God and look up and expect His blessing!

We shall now turn to a second remark, namely, that according to the text—

II. IT IS NOT ALWAYS, OR EVEN COMMONLY, THAT SOME GOOD THING TOWARDS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS FOUND IN THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF CHILDREN.

It is mentioned, you observe, that in *this child* alone of the entire race there was found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel. It has grown to be a common notion that there is a very great deal that is good in children—and this by unaided nature. Well, there are many traits in the character of childhood, as childhood, which are very beautiful and naturally and, according to the judgment of the natural man there is much about a child to be admired and imitated. But indulge no idea, parents that your child is born with a perfectly balanced mind! Do not fall into the delusion that *your* infant will naturally choose the right and abhor the wrong, for before many days are past it is probable, if you are at all a watchful parent, that the delusion will be dispelled! You will discover, either in stubbornness, or in temper, or as soon as speech comes in, a constant tendency to untruthfulness and disobedience, or other forms of little childish sins that will prove the heart of the child to be far other than the sheet of white, unsoiled paper which some like to represent it to be! Alas, long before we can write upon it, the pen of evil

tendency has traced lines on it which only the grace of God will ever be able to erase! Cowper sings—

"True, you are young, but there's a stone,
Within the youngest breast."

A child soon finds this out for himself, if God enlightens him. Though reared in a godly home, and brought up by godly parents and carefully shielded from everything like evil society or influence, I was very conscious of early feeling myself to be inclined to all sorts of evil, to have found it difficult to be and do that which was right, and easy to be and do that which was wrong. And so far as your memories will serve you, if you have any spiritual enlightenment, you will have found the same thing in relation to yourselves. How could it be otherwise? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one!" "Behold," said David, and we cannot expect that we are better than he was, "Behold, I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." To find good, then, in a child should be to us a subject for deep thankfulness to God! And we should always look upon it as being His work. We should not wonder to see it, for God often puts it there, but we should never look upon true goodness in a child as something from human nature—

"Grace is a plant, wherever it blooms,
Of a celestial birth";

and if there is a desire towards Jesus Christ. If there is a tenderness of heart concerning sin. If there is simple prayer for pardon and childlike trust in the Savior, it is as much a work of grace in the youngest child as in the oldest convert—let us always remember that it is so!

"Well," says one, "one does not like to think of one's children as being fallen." My dear friend! One does not like to think of one's *self* as being fallen! But it is not because the doctrine is unpleasant that it is therefore untrue, for, unhappily, the most of true things about our spiritual state when unregenerate are unpleasant. That we are fallen by sin is a sad fact, but none the less a fact because sad! We know we are fallen short of the glory of God. It is apparent and undeniable to ourselves and, therefore, we discover that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." It is as much a matter confirmed by human experience when it is honest with itself, as it is a divine revelation!

And the same thing rest assured, is true of those who spring from our loins and inherit our nature! We cannot expect to be the parents of perfect children, being ourselves imperfect—but when we find in the heart of a child some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, we see great cause for devout thankfulness to God. We observe now—

III. SOME GOOD THING TOWARDS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, THOUGH IT COMES NOT FROM NATURE, IS OFTEN SEEN IN VERY YOUNG PEOPLE. You will say I am preaching a "sermon to the young" without giving notice of it, but it is also a sermon to parents. There is a

supposition abroad that there cannot be anything really good in people who are not adults. There is, at any rate, a difficulty among some people as to child-like piety. And with some, if a lad or a girl is under 12 years of age or thereabouts, it really is a matter of grave suspicion as to whether piety can be genuine. I have not a shadow of sympathy with such people! I cannot see any more reason for suspecting the sincerity of children than for suspecting the sincerity of those who are far better acquainted with the arts of deception than little children are likely to be! It is not difficult to acquire the pretense of religion so as to impose upon some church officers. It is not difficult to adopt the religious jargon which most people use, and to get it off by rote. But children do not find this to be so easy—besides, they have not been long enough in association with Christian people to have been caught up in the thing—and when a child says, tearfully and carefully, "I have repented of my sins, and I do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ"—I believe that that child is as much entitled to be believed as I am, or as you are! That you have a small quantity of gray sprinkled in your hair is, no doubt, an index of older years and, perhaps, more mature judgment, but I am not certain that it is an indication of a more sincere nature! The child has, I think, at any rate, as much reason to be believed as an older person. And, after all, why not; do years help the Holy Spirit; do we grow better as we grow older?

Is it easier to convert an old sinner than it is a child fresh from its mother's knee? Omnipotence is needed in the one case—and cannot omnipotence suffice for the other? If there are difficulties in either case, I believe there is none when omnipotence puts itself to work. Certainly there are no difficulties in the case of a child which are not aggravated in the case of an older person. Some of the most excellent Christians are those who were converted when they were very young. You shall find your ablest preachers, with few exceptions, to have been young converts. You shall look for your Timothies among those who have learned the Scriptures from their youth up!

If I might venture to do it, I would say to our elder brothers and sisters—Do let us get rid of the idea that we ought to suspect the young folk. Let us be jealous with a holy jealousy, lest they make a profession of what they do not understand. Let us be earnest with them to see that they really receive spiritual things and do not fall into hypocritical or deceiving habits—but do not let us be constantly suspecting children and be looking upon them as if they could not be of the right kind. "Nothing but a parcel of boys and girls!" says somebody. And what would you have them, sir? A company of boys and girls may glorify God in every way as well as a company of even the oldest people you could find! They have their faults, but people of other ages have theirs, too, and, at any rate, it is written, "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength because of His enemies."

We will now go a step further and remark—

IV. THAT A TRULY GOOD THING, IN THE DIVINE SENSE, IS ALWAYS TOWARDS THE LORD.

This is the tendency and the strong direction of the current. You observe it says not merely that "there is found some good thing," but, "*some good things toward the LORD God of Israel.*" Here, then, is a test by which we may try religion, both in the old and in the young! There are many men who have some good thing in them politically. I can admire the man who stands up for the Constitution and who, although he may be called one of the stupid party, yet really believing that it is necessary that things should stand forever where they now are, can readily encounter disgrace for the matter. I can admire even more and with greater intensity the man who goes ahead and who desires to change everything that is wrong, even though it is venerable with years! I can admire him standing in the midst of storm and quietly enduring it, bearing all manner of rebuke for the sake of reform. Yet I can quite imagine all this existing without any "good thing toward the LORD God of Israel." Though one appreciates all this, yet he is compelled to lament if there is not something more. In daily life it is a noble thing to see some good thing in business. There are some of you who would as soon bleed to death as cheat others—to whom it would be the most tremendous misfortune to know deep poverty—but who would sooner be beggars than bankrupt, if bankruptcy meant in your case what it often means today! Now, I can admire this fine noble honesty.

Admire it! Ah, and wish that it were as common as daisies in the field! Admire it! Would God it might spread all over the land! But all this can exist without any good thing toward the LORD God of Israel, for the LORD God of Israel may be forgotten with it all! I can admire in the family the earnest mother bringing up her children with sedulous care, and the excellent daughter, amiable and kind, making everyone happy wherever she goes. And the hardworking father denying himself much that he may bring up his children properly. I can admire all these domestic virtues, but I fear that they often exist where there is no good thing toward the LORD God of Israel! This is the great point—goodness towards God. Perhaps I may have in this congregation some who have in them everything that is good except anything good towards God, Himself. How is it, now, that you can live as God's creatures and think of everybody else but not of the God who made you? The God who preserves you in life you forget! You would be dishonest to no one except to God—and you would be ungenerous to none except to Him who has the greatest claims upon you. Oh, the inconsistency of our evil nature, that the best being in all the world is the least thought of! You would not keep a dog if it did not fawn upon you, or acknowledge you as master, and yet you never acknowledge God to whom you belong! You would not keep a

horse if it rendered you no service, and yet you have been kept by God's goodness for 40 years and have persistently not thought of Him!

You expect when you have been kind to the poor that they will acknowledge your kindness and feel some gratitude for it. And yet you would have been naked, and poor, and miserable, and sick, and dying—no, you would be in hell at this very moment if it had not been for the goodness of God! And have you no gratitude towards Him, no good thing towards the LORD God of Israel? Now let me tell you, with deepest affection, what it is you need, and what you must have, my dear hearer, or else you will never reach heaven. You must have a sense of the sinfulness of all this! You must begin to feel that all this is wrong! That you have turned things upside down, that you have lived for trifles and forgotten realities! That you have remembered father, and mother, and country, and trade, and much else, but you have forgotten the God to whom you owe everything! I pray God to help you to repent, for that is one of the best and first good things towards the LORD God of Israel! But better still is this—God, the gracious one, has provided a way of pardon. He tells you that if you trust His dear Son, who for eternal love of man became a man, and for love of souls did die upon the tree, He will save you—that "there is life for a look at the Crucified One"—that if you want to please Him, faith in Jesus is the way to please Him! That if you must do works, the greatest work you can do is to believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent! He tells you that there is nothing needed on your part, but that all is found in Christ—and He says to you in wooing terms, "Come unto Me! Come, now, and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Before you can get to heaven you must have something in your heart which says, "Lord, I come, I come. I trust Your Son. I believe in Your mercy and rely upon His blood. I trust myself in those dear pierced hands." If you can say this, you have a good thing towards the LORD God of Israel and God sees it and accepts you!

We must not tarry, but advance a step farther and say—

V. THAT WHERE THERE IS THIS GOOD THING TOWARD THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, GOD ALWAYS SEES IT.

You will notice the text says, "There is *found* some good thing." The original Hebrew word used here means sometimes—a thing found without looking for it. But it sometimes means a thing found after long and loving search. And again, it also signifies a thing found after thorough inquiry to be more efficient and adequate—a thing which has been tested and found to endure. Now, wherever there is anything like a good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, God sees it, finds it out, tests it, finds it sufficient and accepts it because of the Savior!

You have not told anybody you are afraid. Mary, you have not even told your mother and you dare not! Many young people do not speak to their parents about their soul's deepest feelings and desires. They can sooner speak to strangers. But you do pray—you cannot help praying, and when you got home tonight you will not venture to go to sleep without earnestly crying to God, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" Your mother knows it not, but your heavenly Father does. You, John, have not got so far as praying yet, but a Sunday or two ago the sermon pricked your conscience and you have not been easy since. You could find no peace in yourself. You are not quite so far awakened as to be able to pray, but still there is a wish in your heart towards the right. You sometimes think it will come to that pass that you must say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned." Well, John, you are a great way off, it is true, but your Father's eyes can see you! And while you are coming to Him, creeping, He is coming to you running! And I do not doubt that before long you will be in His arms, receiving the kiss of His pardon. Some of you live in strange places, perhaps. The gospel light does not shine down that court and does not get into the neighborhood where you are generally found. Ah, but God can see you! And He has noticed with delight the good thing that is in you towards Himself. Yes, my young sister, it is indeed a strange place where you live, where your father curses God and your mother laughs at and ridicules religion—and your sisters, since they know you go to a place of worship, have begun to hate you! Ah, but my dear friend, your Shepherd shall be with you even then! And though your path is a solitary one, and you have no friend into whose bosom to pour your griefs, yet go upstairs into the little room, or even in the crowded street as you walk along—make a prayer-chamber for your heart and get in there with Christ, and tell Him you are alone—and you shall not be alone any longer, for He shall be with you! "Blessed are you, when they shall persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for His name's sake: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." You shall be blessed in this particular that He will be with you—your salvation, your strength, and your endurance! The fish are in the salt sea, and yet their flesh is as fresh as if there were no salt, and so you may live in an ungodly family and yet be as gracious as though you never came into contact with even one unpardoned sinner!

It is beautiful to sometimes see a fair flower growing in the hedge, or among range herbage or wild plants. In one's boyish days one has sometimes been out in the woods hunting nuts and all on a sudden one has come upon a fruit tree. How did it get there? A tree with fruit among the oaks, elms and underbrush! How did it get there? And truly when a Christian is found in ungodly places he does not escape God's attention, for He who looks for fruit is delighted to find an apple tree among the trees of the forest! That being your portion, my dear friend, God will see

you and see you none the less because of your surroundings. Be you, then, of good courage!

And now, to close: **VI.** WHEN GOD SEES THIS GENUINE PIETY IN SUCH PLACES, HE WILL BE SURE TO REWARD IT. He may not reward it by giving long life, for these young people sometimes die early.

But *even the death of young people who have some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel, has a voice to us—*

"When blooming youth is snatched away
By death's resistless hand,"

there is a voice from God speaking to each of us, especially if the youth is converted. What a comfort, what a blessing, to the son of Jeroboam to be taken away! You will say, perhaps, it was a pity, for he might have come to the throne. He was the heir-apparent and might have been king, so why was he taken away? You do not know what he might have been had he been spared. God knew it was best for that child not to be subjected to the contamination of such a wicked court—and so He took him home, as the gardener towards the end of the flowering season gets his flowers out of the open borders because he knows the frosty nights are coming. So does the Master often take some of the young people home while they are yet young, lest the frosts of the world should nip them; but it is a very solemn thing when young people are taken out of the family by death.

It is something like clearing a ship because she is going down. Jeroboam's boat was now to go down to total destruction—and God brings the heavenly lifeboat and takes the last living soul out—and *then* He lets the whole house of the son of Nebat come to ruin!

Yes, my good woman, you came here tonight because your child is dead. You could not bear to stay at home. The poor dear thing is just buried.

Take heed my good woman, lest a worse thing happen to you! It is a dreadful thing to have lost so dear a child whose little beaming eyes were like stars in the house, and whose little voice had learned to sing—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."

You will sorely miss the patter of those little feet and the sound of those sweet revival hymns that she learned at school. You will not forget what she said when she was going, "Mother, follow me to heaven!" But I warn you, even as Ahijah did the wife of Jeroboam, I warn you—take heed lest that child of yours has been taken away because the father and the mother and the household are to be swept away! It is the omen of a blessing when the Lord sends a godly servant or a child into a family—it looks as if God had a purpose of love towards that house. But it is a token of mischief and of evil when a godly child, having been sent in such a household, is speedily taken away! That child of yours was God's little prophet to you. It is true it was not, like little Samuel, clothed with

an ephod, but when you go upstairs and look at the little pinafore or the little frock, you may almost fancy that those were priestly garments, for the child was God's messenger to your heart! Have you listened to this message from the skies? If not, perhaps I may refresh your memory. Perhaps you think I speak harshly. I mean not to do so—I mean in all tenderness to your soul to say, once again to put it plainly, that perhaps God sent that young Abijah to your house to tell you to make your escape from the wrath to come. And that the message being neglected, He took back the child. But I would gladly hope that His judgment still lingers and that His mercy still waits! Let me speak to you mothers, especially for your hearts are most tender. God gave up His only Son for your sakes—He will understand your sorrow. Come to the cross and look up and trust. Trust! Trust! Trust! That word, "trust," is the grandest word in the language of mankind! Trust! Trust Jesus! Trust only Him and you are saved! There is life in trusting, but there is death in everything else.

I saw an illustration somewhere the other day—I do not know now from where it came. It is not mine, but I must give it to you and then conclude.

A gentleman wishing to illustrate faith and to show what it really is—that it is trusting—says that he attended a lecture upon chemistry, and the lecturer was trying to prove the spheroidal properties of liquids.

I do not mean to try to prove it, myself, but he showed that water put upon a bar of iron at a certain heat scattered itself over the iron or turned to steam. But the drops of water poured upon intensely hot iron would turn into spheroids and nothing else, and then roll off the hot iron. In order to prove the various qualities of the spheroids, a man who assisted the lecturer dipped his hand in some water which was standing by—and then plunged it into a vessel of molted lead and took up some of the lead without being hurt—the spheroidal property of the water being such that a man might do that without injury! The person listening to the lecture said, "Now, I quite believe what the lecturer said. He convinced me. He put it so plainly that I could not but see that it was so. Then he invited the audience to come and put their hands into the molten lead! I went up to the lead. I believed that it would not hurt me. I saw the man sitting there who had just put his hand in, but I did not dare to do it—and I found there is a good deal of difference between believing and trusting! But I thought—now either it is true, or it is not, and I am sure it is true. Very well, then, why don't I believe it? I dipped my hand in the water and having hardly courage enough to venture my whole hand, I put one finger in the lead and found that that one finger, after, was colder than it had been before, so then I put in my whole hand—and there were a number of others who were willing to follow my example." Now, that is a very good illustration of what believing in Jesus Christ is, only there is something repulsive about putting one's hand into

molten lead, and there should not be anything like that in believing in Jesus Christ! You believe that Jesus Christ can save. You believe that He has saved a great many and that the only way in which they were saved was by trusting in Him. But it is quite possible for you to believe this and yet not to be saved. If you trust Him, you will try Him, and that will be the true proof. You will come to the foot of His cross and cast yourself entirely, wholly and simply upon the merits of His atoning sacrifice. Then there will be some good thing in you toward the LORD God of Israel—and then I think the mention of the little dead Abijah, though it may have been painful, will have been made a blessing! God grant that it may be so!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 KINGS 20:1-7.

Verse 1. *In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amos, came to him and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live.* That is to say, in the common course of providence, without a miracle, Hezekiah must die. God did by no means change when afterwards He permitted him to live. This time He spoke after the order of nature—the next time He spoke according to the extraordinary work of His marvelous power.

2. *Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying.* What did he do that for? Well, as he could not rise from his bed through weakness, he gets the greatest privacy he can, and the God who accepted Carmel as Elijah's prayer shrine, would accept Hezekiah's prayer when he turned his face to the wall.

3. *I beseech You, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Your sight. And Hezekiah wept sorely.* I do not think this was intended to be a self-righteous prayer, though it reads like one, or else the Lord would not have heard it. He meant to say, "Lord, You have been good enough to make me what I am, be pleased to spare me." In fact, the probability is that at this time Sennacherib had not been routed and Hezekiah could not bear to die while the nation was in danger. Certainly there was no son born to Hezekiah at this time, for Manasseh was only twelve years old when he began to reign at his father's death—and Hezekiah thought it would be a sad thing to leave a troubled kingdom without a prince to be his successor. It may be, too, that seeing he had just commenced the reformation and the casting down of the false gods, he trembled for the cause of God, and could not bear to be so soon taken away. "Hezekiah wept sorely." Ah, these are the things that prevail with God, these tears of His people—

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,

The falling of a tear!
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near!"

4-7. *And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, the captain of My people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David, your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will heal you: on the third day you shall go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto your days fifteen years, and I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for My servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.* This, of course, was not a sufficient means to cure the boil, but God made the means efficacious. Why were the means used? Why, to teach us that we are to expect God's blessing, not in neglecting means, but in using them! See how simple was the remedy—just a thick poultice of figs laid on the wound! Perhaps the physicians had tried expensive medicines without avail. What a mercy it is for us that the good medicine of the gospel is as cheap as it is good, that it is to be had for nothing! While some ransack the world for expensive ceremonies and for gaudy shows, we have Christ, like the lump of figs, ready to heal the wound and make us strong again! Again I say Hezekiah was a man of like passions with us—and he prayed earnestly that his life might be spared and God delivered him from the jaws of death. Let us, therefore, not be afraid to pray!

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GOD IN HEAVEN, AND MEN ON THE SEA
NO. 3321

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation; who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea."
Psalm 65:5.

PLEASE read the 65th Psalm through. May it do you good, whether as landsmen you read of the Lord's settling the furrows, or as sailors you hear of His stilling the noise of the seas. Notice the first two verses—"Praise waits for You," "O You that hear prayer." *Holy men of old were accustomed to mix praise and prayer together*—this is a happy mixture! We are not tied to one thing. We spread the sails of prayer and fly the flag of praise. To praise God without praying to Him would be impossible. To pray to God without praising Him would be ungrateful. Praise takes in a cargo of gold for the King of kings—and prayer stokes the fires to make the good ship steam towards the royal city! Brothers, keep to this throughout all the watches—*pray and praise*—and when you need a change, *praise and pray!* Keep the boat of the soul going with these two oars—praise and prayer.

Notice, also, in this Psalm, that when the saints of the olden time offered prayer and praise, *they addressed themselves at once to God—not to saints and angels.* David is not satisfied with talking about God, but he talks *to* Him, as in our text—"You will answer us, O God of our salvation." There's nothing like straight sailing—let us go directly to God. We ought not to think of what our fellow men will say of our praises. If they are not musical in the ears of men, it matters little, so long as they are sweet to the Lord our God! When we engage in *public* prayer, it is a pity to be thinking about how our words will sound in the opinion of our brothers—let us only think of the Lord to whom we are speaking. We can't steer two ways at once. If we make for the mercy seat, we need not consider the pews. Let us fix our eyes on the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbor and leave the church on the hill and the windmill over yonder, for other people to look at. Brothers, look to your captain and let your mates think what they like! Let us know our port and steer for it—and let the twin ship of prayer and praise never take any course but that which carries our whole heart straight to heaven!

I. First, then, dear friends, let us consider WHAT THE LORD IS TO US. He is the "God of our salvation."

It is clear from this that *we all need salvation.* If it were not clear in this text, we could not doubt it, for the evidence surrounds us on every side. We have, sadly, sufficient proof of our lost estate. Human nature is waterlogged and ready to sink—and in God, alone, is our hope.

The text tells us where salvation is, namely, in God. God is the God of our salvation. You have neither right ideas of yourself, nor right ideas of God unless you see that by nature you have need of being saved from sin—saved by nothing less than a divine hand! The greatest saint on earth is still a sinner. Let him have safely sailed on the sea of life for 60 years, he will be on the rocks before the morning watch unless the Lord saves him. The most intelligent man and the man of longest experience, still needs saving. The oldness of a ship does not increase its seaworthiness. Ask at Lloyd's if a ship is any safer because it has been afloat more than 60 years. No man that lives is safe from rocks, quicksands and tempests, or even from foundering at sea unless the Lord God shall be always the God of his salvation! We have all need to ask for salvation from the *guilt* of sin, the *power* of sin and the *curse* of sin. And it should be our great joy that the Lord graciously condescends to provide all this for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior!

It is this salvation which brings God to us and us to God. I do not think that very many find God by what they see in nature. Men see the works of God, but they do not see God in His works. There is such a thing, I suppose, as going "from nature up to nature's God," but it is a hard climb for cripples, like the most of us! To lift your foot even from the top of the highest mountain to the lowest step of the throne of God is a tremendous effort. Human nature does not care for such an upward climb. The ready way to God, by which tens of thousands have come to Him, is by Jesus Christ our Savior. No man ever comes to God except by Jesus, who is the way of salvation. There may be other channels, but this is the only navigable one. Our boats draw too much water to get to God along the shallow straits of human learning. We shall be wise to keep to the deep waters of redeeming love, for by this channel God came to us. The glorious God came here to earth in the person of His Son, that He might reconcile us to Himself and so save us. Where there is depth enough for God to come to man, there is a fair sea way for man to come to God! Remember that the Lord Jesus came for our salvation. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." Salvation brought God to us and salvation must bring us to God, or else we shall be castaways. Blessed forever be our gracious and glorious God, for in every man that is saved, He is the God of his salvation in Christ Jesus!

The salvation that we get is entirely from God. If you ever hear of salvation that does not come from God, depend upon it, it is not seaworthy, but will turn out to be one of those worm-eaten coffin ships! I would not trust a dog on board of it. If I were to preach a merely human

salvation to you, it would not be worth your while to listen to me. "Salvation is of the Lord" is the saying of Jonah, from the depths of the sea! This salvation began in God's everlasting purpose, in His sacred covenant, in His divine choice of His people. It is carried out by the life and death of our Savior. It is worked in us by the Holy Spirit, by whom we are quickened, illuminated, converted and brought to faith in Jesus. Salvation is of the Lord, from stem to stern, from truck to keel. There is not a bit of rope on board, nor even a spar up aloft which is of man's merit or working. Christ is the A, and He is the Z of the salvation alphabet! He is not only the helper of our salvation, but the God of it, the maker of it, and the all in all of it! Have any of you a salvation which you have manufactured for yourselves? Then drop it overboard and row away from it, as fast as you can, lest it should be a torpedo to work your ruin. The only salvation that can redeem from hell is a salvation which comes from heaven! Eternal salvation must come from an eternal God. Salvation that makes you a new creature must be the work of Him who sits upon the throne of God and makes all things new!

It is a remarkable thing that *in this salvation there is a strange mixture of the terrible and the gracious.* "By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation." In the death of our Lord Jesus we see the salvation of God—in this the Lord is terrible against sin, but most tender to the sinner. God did not put up the sword of His justice, for He was bound to use it. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" To do right He must punish sin. And, oh, how terrible it is to view our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, bowing His head to death in the sinner's place and bearing in His own innocent person the wrath of God an account of sin! Our children's hymn puts the truth of God exactly—

"He saw how wicked men had been,
And knew that God must punish sin
So, out of pity, Jesus said
He'd bear the punishment instead."

In that verse, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, the Lord has perfected praise! It was indeed a display of terrible things in righteousness when the perfect Son of God was made to sweat great drops of blood and to be in an agony in Gethsemane. Terrible things in righteousness were manifest when He was scourged, spit upon and nailed to a tree and made to die without the comfort of His Father's presence, crying in anguish, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Ah, friends, when the Father's best beloved bore those unknown sufferings by which the honor of the divine government was maintained, it was a very terrible day! Not even the pains of the lost are more terrible for a tender and devout mind to think upon, than our Lord's being made a curse for us when He was hanged upon the tree. We seek salvation—the Lord Jehovah answers us and bids us behold it in the blood of His only begotten Son**—"**By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God."

So, also, when God came to deal with us by His Spirit, He mixed the terror with the grace. If you have been praying to God to save you, then if He has answered you, you have had a vision of terrible things. To see your guilt, your present ruin and your future doom, is to be made to tremble terribly. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to our vessel, walking on the sea, He finds us in an awful storm. The sails are torn to ribbons, and every timber groans. We see ourselves wrecked by nature before we see ourselves saved by grace! Conviction of sin does not come to every sinner with the same degree of force, but to some of us, when we were under the bondage of the law, neither sun nor moon appeared, the sea worked and was tempestuous and all hope that we should be saved was taken away from us! We reeled to and fro and staggered like drunken men. We were at our wits' ends—we did not know then that the God of our salvation has His way in the whirlwind! The Lord comes to us with a drawn sword before He comes with a silver scepter! He designs to make us give up self-righteousness and self-confidence—and come and lay hold on Christ, to be our all in all. Men won't take to the lifeboat of salvation while they think their own craft can be kept afloat. But when their vessel is settling down at the head, they are glad to see the lifeboat near!

The God of our salvation has revealed Himself to many of us, not as one who winks at sin, but as a consuming fire. In these days a God is preached who is not in the Bible, nor yet on the sea. Our God is not the new god of proud philosophers, but the God of the olden times! We know that the true God is just, as well as gracious, and will by no means allow His laws to be despised. You that go down to the sea in ships, you know that the God of the sea is terrible upon the roaring billows, when the sea runs mountains high! He is tender, kind and loving, but oh, how terrible when He puts on His dark robes of tempest!

He sets the heavens on a blaze and His terrible voice is heard above the roaring of the sea. The elements are in confusion. Deep calls unto deep, the heavens clasp hands with the ocean and the largest vessel seems like a cockle-shell, soon to sink and no more to be seen! He is a dreadful God, this God of ours! There is none like He in power and justice. Well may the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" This makes us feel that He can smite with iron hands when once He comes forth to deal with sin. Behold the Red Sea! See how the adversaries of Jehovah sank to the bottom as a stone! He is terrible out of His holy places. He is the God of heaven, but a pit is dug for the wicked. The Lord makes His saved ones to know Him as He is—not as He is made out to be by those who would seem to be wiser than the Scriptures!

I trust that many of you can say of the Lord, "He is the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is my hope and my joy."

He is glorious in holiness and terrible in righteousness—and I love Him all the more because He hates iniquity and will not endure evil!

The difficulty with most men is that they will not have God to be their Savior—they want to save themselves. Every man thinks he can be his own pilot to the port of glory. But what can we do? What merit, what wisdom? What strength have we? We are proud fools and deceive ourselves! I have heard a story of a man on board a vessel which was coming home from the other side of the world. He was very conceited and interfered with everything. Every now and then a captain does get such a man on board. He was always grumbling and making trouble. The ship met with rough weather and this meddlesome gentleman picked up the notion that things were in a very bad way and the ship might go down. He was getting into everybody's way and so the captain, calling him to one side, told him that it was highly important that he should keep very quiet for the next hour or two and that he should hold fast a certain rope to which he pointed out to him. Nobody could tell what might depend on his holding on to that rope and saying nothing to anybody! Our noisy friend felt himself to be a person of consequence, put his feet down, set his teeth together and in a very determined manner stuck to his rope! If anybody came along, instead of talking, as he was used to do, he held his tongue. Just as you must not speak to the man at the wheel, so he felt that no one was allowed to speak to him. Did not the safety of the ship depend upon his being quiet and holding tightly to that rope? He kept his post with due gravity till the wind dropped—and then he did not say much—for his sense of merit made him modest. He waited patiently for the passengers to present him with a piece of plate for having saved the ship. He felt, at any rate, that deep gratitude was due to him for his wonderful exertions. It was about the most difficult thing he had ever done in his life, for he had held his tongue for hours and thus made a martyr of himself to save them all! As nobody thanked him, he began to hint at the importance of the service he had rendered. But they did not seem to see it, for, you know, people will not always see a thing that is very plain. At last he stated his case more fully and became so exacting that the captain had to tell him that he had only given him that bit of rope to hold just to keep him quiet and that, really, he had not contributed, in the least degree, to the safety of the vessel! That is just what I feel inclined by do with certain vastly important persons who think they can do wonders in the things of God! If you will keep from boasting and stand out of the Lord's way, that is as much as I hope for from you. And if the Lord leads you to trust yourself in Jesus' hands, then all will be safe enough! With God to save us, what is there for us to do but to trust and not to be afraid?

II. I have set forth what God is to us. Now let us see WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR US. Don't doubt it; the Lord has an open ear to hear His people's prayers.

He will answer us. This shows that *we must all pray.* Every believing man in the world must pray! And we shall never get into such a state of grace that we have no need to pray.

But what do we pray for? Well, according to the text, one of the most important things is to *pray against sin.* "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, You shall purge them away." Do we not need to pray daily for cleansing? This must be the prayer of the man who is seeking the Lord for the first time. Does the leak of sin gain upon you? Are the pirates of temptation all around you so that you cannot get away from them? Are you compelled to say, "Iniquities prevail against me"? Cry to the Lord Jesus to come to the rescue! A word from Him will stop the leak and drive the demons back when they are boarding you. Pray to Him at once!

Do I address a backslider? Did you once acknowledge the name of Christ? Have you taken down the old flag? Are you now trading under other colors? Are you sorry it is so? Do iniquities prevail against you? Ah, then come to the Lord again! Ask Him to come and take possession of you. The pirates are coming board, now, and you cannot get rid of them, but as for your iniquities, He can purge them away." He can sweep the deck of them!

If you have long been a Christian and have not backslidden, you will have, as you grow in grace, more and more a sense of the sin that dwells in you. You will be crying out every day, "Lord, keep me, for I shall perish utterly, even now, after all my experience, unless You preserve me from my inbred sin and the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil." Cry to God tonight in that fashion. Ask to be steered clear of all evil and to be presented faultless. When we are close in shore we need a pilot more than ever. We shall be wrecked in the river's mouth unless the Lord preserves us! Iniquities will prevail unless omnipotent grace prevails. In this direction we shall always need to cry mightily unto the preserver of men.

We also pray *for nearer fellowship with God.* Just let me read you the next words. "Blessed is the man whom You choose and cause to approach unto You." Lord, help me to approach You, so as to know Your love and love You in return. Let us go on reading the record—"That He may dwell in your courts." Lord, help me to be one of Your court and always to live in Your presence.

"We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy temple." Do you not long for that satisfaction? Is there not in your hearts, my beloved brothers and sisters, a great desire to get nearer to God and to abide in His house?

Oh, to have a continual enjoyment of the favor of God! May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit! Blessed be the name of the Lord our God! He will hear and answer that prayer! As He will help you to conquer sin, so will He also help you to grow in divine grace; there is no reason why we should not be far happier and far holier

than we are. If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. It is not that there is no wind, but we do not spread enough sail. If you do not enter into the deep things of God with understanding, and if you do not enjoy them with delight, you must blame yourselves. You have not, because you ask not, or because you ask amiss. If a man will not take the tide while it flows, it will be his own fault if the ebb bears him away from the harbor. If we pray, God will answer.

But, remember, if we pray to be delivered from sin, and to be brought nearer to the Lord, *He may answer us by terrible things in righteousness.* I would like to whisper these words in the ears of all praying men. Often you know not what you ask and, perhaps, if you really knew how God would answer you, you would not pray as you now do! You were praying the other day that God would sanctify you—and now you see more of the workings of evil in your nature than ever before! Crosses and losses have come upon you thick and threefold! Temptations and evil thoughts have beset you more fiercely than ever and you are saying, "Lord, is this the answer to my prayer?" Yes, by terrible things in righteousness He is answering you! The sheep desires to be brought near to the shepherd and the shepherd sends his black dog to fetch it home. Our trials and troubles, afflictions and adversities, are among the best medicines of our Great Physician. A trial has been love's reply to earnest desire. God's wisdom often chooses to give us a head wind to prevent our rushing upon sunken rocks.

Dear friends, *God will answer you surely, though He answers you strangely!* He answers roughly, but rightly. The help of no other can suffice you, but if you cry to God you shall find His strength to be all sufficient, both for crushing sin and for growth in grace. See what the Lord has been doing for the earth during the last few weeks of spring! Only a few weeks ago we went out of doors and saw nothing but the earth wrapped in a winding sheet of snow, or, perhaps, the dull, black ground soaking in rain. Where were the myriads of leaves that now clothe the trees? And where the kingcups and daisies which bedeck the meadows and make them bright as cloth of gold? Where was all this wealth of flowers? Where all this music of song birds? God came! He breathed in pity on the frozen brooks and loosed the waters from their icy chains. He unbound the iron bonds of winter. He made the world look up and laugh with flowers. Brothers, He will do the same with us! Though this may be the winter of our soul's grief and it may be necessary that we should endure it for a little while longer, yet He will answer us—and after an interval of terrible storm He will bless us with rest and joy!

III. The third point is this—WHAT THE LORD IS TO "THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." He is "the confidence of the ends of the earth." All men have a confidence and they are wise who place all their confidence in God!

Who are "the ends of the earth"? They may be those who live in the extremes of climate—the dwellers at the poles and at the equator. These are so tried by cold and by heat that one would think they would hardly live in such regions if they did not confide in God. Those who live at the ends of the earth *are farthest off.* God is worthy to be the confidence of those who are farthest off from His church, from His gospel, from hope, from anything that is good and from God, Himself. This sermon may, one of these days, reach somebody who will say to himself, "I think that I am the farthest off from God of anybody that ever lived. I have been guilty of cursing and swearing and I have committed all manner of vice and so I have gone as far away from God and the very name of religion as it is possible for a man to go." Friend, our God is worthy to be *your* confidence, even yours! You are permitted to put your trust in Him and find salvation in Him, even in His Son, Jesus Christ, who cries "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

The ends of the earth may mean, also, *those that are least known.* Are there not men scattered abroad of whom nobody knows anything? They do not, themselves, know who their father and mother were and nobody cares to acknowledge them. Nobody calls them brother, or knows where they came from. They wish to be forgotten. They would not like to have their stories told. Their character is such that they can get on better without it than with it. Well but, Jesus Christ is worthy to be the confidence of those who are least known. They are known to Him! He knows their past and their present! Oh, that sinners who are far off in that way, and least known, would come and put their trust in Him!

The ends of the earth *are the parts that are least thought of.* We dart a thought towards France with its Exhibition. We think of Germany and its vast army. We think of the United States and the many there of our acquaintances and relatives. These lie within the pale of our thought and consideration, but who cares for Dahomey or Nova, Zembla? Of the ends of the earth no one thinks! Do I speak to one who has been saying, "No man cares for my soul"? Do they quite pass you by? Are you like a man on a raft who has seen many a vessel go by, but cannot manage to make anyone see him and come to his rescue? Put your trust in the Lord, you who are derelict and drifting fast to destruction, for, "He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth." Looking to God when you have no one else to look to, you will find in Him a true helper!

The ends of the earth may also mean *the most tried.* Where the cold is most severe, or where the dog-star burns most furiously, there we have the ends of the earth. And you who are most poor or most sick, or who have least of ability and talent—you are those who should make God your confidence, for He delights to be the strength of the weak, the fullness of the empty! God's grace is the hospital for sick souls—come and enter! He lifts the poor from the dunghill to set him among princes. Driven to your wits' end, brought down to life's dregs, take the Lord for your confidence and it shall be well with you!

"The ends of the earth." Well, they are *the hardest to reach.* We have around us men and women who are as hard to get at as the North Pole. We do not know how to speak to them so that they will understand us, for they are so ignorant. We would, if we could, do them good, but they are so depraved that we are half afraid that they will do us harm! It may be they are so proud and conceited that we can hardly get a good word in edge ways with them. Sailors, you must have met with fellows to whom you give a wide berth. You never felt inclined to take them on board. These ships are too far gone to be towed into harbor and you clear out, lest when they sink you should be sucked down with them! Yet the Lord is ready to help even these! Those whom no man can pity and no man can help, God can love and save! A mortal arm is too short to reach these shipwrecked souls. Cast away on an iron bound coast, there is no hope for them but in the Lord of salvation—but in Him they may trust, for, "He is the confidence of the ends of the earth." Ho, my comrades, when you are at your worst, God is still at His best! When you are all misery, He is all mercy! When you are at "the ends of the earth," you may be at the beginnings of heaven!

IV. I shall not weary you, I trust, for I have come to the last point, which is this—WHAT IS GOD TO SEAFARING MEN? What should He be to sailors? He is the confidence of all them, who are "afar off upon the sea."

In the life of a seafaring man we have a picture of *the voyage of faith.* Hundreds of years ago, when men went to sea at all, their boats kept always within sight of shore. The Greek or Roman mariner might be quite a master of his galley, but he could not bear to lose sight of a headland which he knew, for he had no compass and knew little or nothing of astronomical observations. Here and there a lighthouse might be placed, but it would be regarded as a wonder. But at this day a ship may not sight land for a month and yet its position on the chart will be as certain as your position in the pew! The vessel will be steered entirely by observations of the heavenly bodies and by chart and compass—and yet at the end of thirty days it will reach a point which was never within sight and reach it as accurately as if it had been running on a tram rail instead of sailing over the pathless ocean! Its way is as certain as if it had traversed a railway from port to port! Such is the life of a Christian—the life of faith. We see not spiritual things, but yet we steer for them with absolute certainty! We ought not to wish to see, for, "We walk by faith, not by sight." We take our bearings by the things in the heavens. We are guided by the Word of God, which is our chart, and by the witness of the blessed Spirit within, which is our compass! We see Him who is invisible and we seek a heaven full of "things not seen as yet." Glory be to God, we shall reach the harbor as sure as a bullet goes to the mark! We are making direct tracks for the kingdom of God! We fly to heaven by a bee line even when we cannot see our way! Don't shift a

point, brothers. As the Captain of your salvation has set the helm, so let it remain. Trusting in God, we shall come to our desired haven in due time and shall not miss our way! We need not fear shipwreck, for He that taught us to sail the spiritual sea will guide us safely till we come to the glory land!

Those that are "afar off upon the sea" are *on an unstable element*, but God is their confidence. They are never quiet, the boat is always rocking or rolling from side to side. On the sea they have no continuing city. Is it not so with us? We also dwell upon an unstable element. We talk of the solid earth, but it is only so in contrast with the waves. All things beneath the moon are changing. When I went to my annual resting place in Mentone, after the earthquake, I felt a delight in realizing that everything around me was unsubstantial. I looked at the churches and the houses which had tumbled down, and I said to myself, "Now I feel how unstable the earth is." I went up and down stairs, wondering that the house did not move—regarding it all as likely to give way. Some such impression would be good for us all to carry daily about with us. We live in a world which passes away! This life is made up of shadows—substance lies elsewhere! The things which are seen are temporal. You have dreamed yourselves into the belief that you live in a solid, substantial world, but it is only a dream, for the world passes away! The elements which make up our life are no more to be depended upon than the waters of the sea! What is our life but a vapor? What does it depend upon, but air?—the breath of our nostrils! Remember, you may die at any moment. Death may board you before the next watch. Oh, to live like a man at sea! He has loosed his hold from all things and feels himself committed to an unstable element upon whose calm condition he cannot depend, for at any moment a storm may bear him away. The godly sailor's confidence is in God. In God he has a foundation that cannot be moved! God is the mariner's *terra firma* and He is ours! All else is fickle, but God is immutable!

Next, they that are upon the sea are *liable to great dangers.* They cannot tell at any time that there may not come up from the North a howling blast, or from the South a tremendous cyclone. When above them all is clear blue, save "a cloud the size of a man's hand," they know that within an hour the heaven may gather blackness and the sea, which now sleeps in calm, may rage in fury. A sailor's life makes him see the dangers which surround him, but you and I know that we also live in a world where tempests of trial may be upon us in a moment. When I go home after a time of spiritual enjoyment and feel supremely happy, I say to myself, "I may expect trying news. I cannot be long at ease." In fact, one gets in this world to be afraid of too profound a calm, lest at the back of it should lurk a terrible tempest. Our sign is "The Checkers," and close to the white square lies the black. At sea we may reckon upon all sorts of weathers—we must, therefore, keep the boat trim and never neglect to set the helm and keep the watch wide awake. The sailor must keep his

eyes open, for rocks and quicksands lies below, and hurricanes and cyclones lurk above. If he is a Christian, his confidence is in his God and his watchfulness is towards the world. O true believer, let your confidence be in God, whether on sea, or shore! Say, "O God, my heart is fixed; my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise." What if there should be the devil, himself, let loose upon us, as upon Job of old? Let us still trust in the Lord! When God gives the devil rope enough, he will soon be down upon us, but brothers, we need not fear him, for Christ is the Master of the devil and He can pull him up short when he comes rushing out to attack us! Let us not be afraid. He that is the confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea shall be our confidence in a world of storms!

But the men on the sea also *are familiar with trouble.* It is not only liability to storm, but the storm does break over them. I speak to many who have weathered no end of tempests. In your voyages across the mighty deep, you have found it no child's play to be tossed up and down like a ball in the hand of the storm. You have even been floating on the angry waves, clinging to a hen-coop, or lashed to the rigging. I do not envy you your trying experience but, spiritually, we drink from the same cup, for we, too, have had our rough passages and have been well-near cast away!

You do not want to see any more of such nights as you can remember, when sea and sky were blended in dread confusion—neither do I wish to see those months in which to me, also, the winds were contrary—what a mercy in such seasons to have confidence in God! What is to be done if this fails us? But while God is with us it does not matter whether we live or die. We shall be with the Lord if we die, and if we live, the Lord will be with us!

Beloved friends, those that go down to the sea in ships *soon find out their own weakness.* A man looks like a man when he is on shore, or in command of a fine boat sailing along merrily before the wind, but in a great storm what a poor creature a man is! There he goes—yonder wave has swept him from the deck as if he were a spar. You hear one plaintive cry and it is all over with him. The hungry deep thinks nothing of so small a mouthful! The wind still howls and the waves dance with a horrid glee. If not thus drowned, the strong man is often rendered useless as to helping others. He cannot stir, for he could not keep his footing. He needs to be lashed to the rigging or he will be washed away. The bravest, the wisest, the strongest man is just nothing at all in the day of storm. Then the man almost envies the seabird that is tossed "up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billow's crown" because it is always safe and comes up from the spray as fresh as ever! Dear friends, you and I are often brought into conditions in which we fear that we are not worth half as much as the sea swallows. We have no strength left at

all—we are less than nothing and vanity. Oh, then, let God be our confidence!

I exhort all believers here to have more confidence in God than in all besides. Believe in the Lord a thousand fathoms deep. You will never believe too much nor too well of God. If friends forsake, if all means of comfort fail, let your confidence be so thoroughly in God that such things make no difference to you! It is a grand thing to get off the stocks and really float on the main sea. It is glorious to have an anchor in the skies and to hold to that, alone, when everything else is dragging and the earth itself is dissolved! A sailor is often brought to where, if God does not help him, he will be swallowed up—and you and I are always in the same condition. God is our all and we rest in Him, but apart from Him we are eternally wrecked!

God bless you, my shipmates! We are not yet come to the Pacific Seas—we are still rounding the Cape of Storms, but another name for it is the Cape of Good Hope! With God for our confidence we are not afraid. We shall all meet around the flagship of our Great Captain in the Fair Havens above. We are lying in these roads tonight very near each other, but may never cross each other's track again on this life's voyage. Meet me in the Islands of the Blessed, in the Land of the Hereafter, where the sun shall go no more down forever! The Lord Jesus steer you there! Amen.

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HIDING AMONG THE STUFF
NO. 3322

A SERMON
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"Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come there. And the LORD answered, Behold, he has hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him from there."
1 Samuel 10:22-23.

SAUL seems to have known that he was the elect person, having already been secretly anointed by Samuel and, therefore, while the voting was going on and while the lots were being cast, he hid himself. The Lord answered, "Behold, he has hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him from there."

We hardly know why Saul did this. It would be wrong to impute to him an ill motive; otherwise one would be inclined to say that he did it out of mock modesty, so that he might appear to have forced on him an honor which he did not really covet. But this would not fit with the first part of Saul's life, for in his early days and when he was first chosen king, he did seem to be one of the most hopeful persons who could possibly have been called to the office. At the end of the chapter from which our text is taken, you see an instance of his great wisdom. The men of Belial, we are told, "despised him and brought him no presents. But he held his peace," a piece of wisdom which it were well if some ministers and others, too, among us knew well how to imitate—if they, too, would sometimes be silent when the men of Belial speak concerning them. It, indeed, were well for all Christians to often imitate the example of their Lord who, when He was reviled, gave no answer but that of patient, enduring silence.

We are inclined the rather, therefore, to give Saul the credit for being really so modest that he concealed himself from honor and must have greatness forced upon him. He had been born great in stature, but now to be made great in office seemed a burden which he did not covet—and so he hid himself among the stuff.

From this, if it really is so, we may learn that *without the grace of God the fairest life may yet become foul* and, however beautifully a young man may commence his career, he may stumble and fall and never reach the goal. Oh, how many amiable daughters, the joy of their mother's heart, have been enough, after all, to bring gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! How many goodly lads, of whom we might have said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before us," have, notwithstanding, proved very sons of Belial,

bringing sorrow and bitterness into their fathers' soul! There is only one form of moral life insurance and it is spirituality—the coming to Christ, being regenerated, receiving the indwelling Spirit into the heart—and setting the affections upon the eternal and the heavenly!

This done, we may look forward to a life of holiness, believing that "the course of the just will be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day." Apart from this, however, there can be no complete dependence upon the best outward signs of promise, or upon the noblest and strongest resolutions. Many a young Hazael has said, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?" And yet he has lived to do the very thing of which he would hardly dare to think! The horrible to his youthful heart became the actual deed of his later days!

I thought that this little incident of Saul's hiding himself among the stuff when he was already destined and chosen to be king was much *like what sinners do* for whom eternal mercy has provided a crown and a throne. They are hiding themselves away among the stuff. And then, again, I thought that it was very much *like what many Christians do* for whom the covenant of grace has provided a crown of rejoicing in feasting with Christ and living according to His example—but alas, alas, they are very worldly and seek to escape from the high honors their Lord has in store for them—they, too, hide among the stuff!

First, then, let us have—

I. A FEW WORDS WITH THE SINNER WHO IS HIDING HIMSELF AWAY AMONG THE STUFF.

I dare say he thinks tonight that if he had been Saul, he would not have been hiding himself. If it were to have his head taken off, a man might very wisely hide himself, but to have a crown put upon his head does not seem to be a reason for hiding oneself, but a reason for coming out into the open and saying, "Here I am! Do unto me as seems good to you!" But this conduct, which seems so strange in Saul, is an exact image of the behavior of many of you who are here tonight. There may be some of you here present who may be doing precisely what Saul did, only you are doing it more foolishly than he did. He did but hide away from an earthly crown, but you hide from a heavenly one! He did but shun a crown that fades—you seem as though you would avoid a crown that is undefiled and that fades not away! The crown which Saul sought to hide from no doubt brought many cares with it, for it is only too often true that—

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

But the crown which *you* are avoiding brings no care with it, but much of holy ease and joy—and that head lies easily enough which is crowned with God's crown of kindness and tender mercy! But you hide yourselves away from it—from the crown which prophets and apostles counted on, for which they were willing to sacrifice all things and counted their best prospects but as dross and dung," that they might win it! This crown, which glittered in the martyr's eyes and made him sing as he swam

through a sea of blood to reach it—this crown is lightly valued by you—and you hide yourself away among the stuff, that you may escape from this gift of God's bountiful mercy and love!

My brothers and sisters, we believe there are many of God's spiritual kings who will yet be openly crowned and for whom our daily prayer ascends, but who are hiding among the stuff of worldliness! Is not worldliness the greatest sin of London? Of England? Of the world?

How we started with alarm, some of us, I mean when we heard the other day that the cholera was actually in this country and of cases reported very near to us. For my part, I thought that terrible as such an affliction would be, perhaps God might overrule it to the waking up of the slumbering multitudes of this great city. I think everyone must have observed that during the time of such visitations there is a large measure of tenderness in the public mind. Men dare not play with eternal matters when they feel them to be so near—and when death comes in the next street, or the next house, or the next room—they cannot trifle life away as formerly they did!

Something, certainly, is needed in this vast city to move the masses of our people away from downright stolid worldliness. It is not among any one class—it is common to shopkeepers, artisans and the poorest of the poor—yes, even the wealthiest of the land are perhaps the greatest worldlings of all and the most absurd with vanity and frivolity and a silly round of visits, wasting their time in giddy formalities! The day was when England attached some importance to religion. During the age of the Puritans, men talked of religion and felt ready to fight and die for the things which they held dear. But now religion is very much trifled with and the tone of the whole public press is just of this kind—that it is very much a matter of mere opinion, a matter of indifference! We seem to have gotten into an age of slumbering. Those fearful wars that are now raging abroad must wake up the public mind there to some sense of need more than this poor earth can supply, but we are so prosperous and so peaceful—and have been so long without any particular visitation—that it seems to me as if the whole of England were given up to slumber and to hiding among the stuff of worldliness! We are getting on in the world! We are prospering on the whole—though, of course, there are a few exceptions—but on the whole, things go pretty well and if there is a panic here and there, yet still it is soon over, for the heart of the nation is sound in its business prosperity—and so the mass of men hide themselves among the stuff. How are we to get at the public mind? Where, O God, shall Jonahs be found that shall move this Nineveh? Oh, when shall it ever be that a voice shall startle the slumbering millions? When, great Lord, when, from the highest to the lowest, shall Your gospel have some respect and get an attentive hearing from the sons of men? Well, we have this reflection, that God has some even in this mass of worldliness, some whom He will surely bring in—and it is our business by earnest, indefatigable effort, to seek to bring out these uncrowned

kings who are thus hiding themselves among the stuff! We must be peering here and there, turning over this and that bale of worldliness, trying to get at some of those who shall yet enter into eternal life!

Then, in addition to worldliness, how many there are now *buried among the stuff of ignorance.* They scarcely know the meaning of the word, "sin." Missionaries tell us that in teaching the Hindus, they find it difficult to make them understand what sin is because if you say, sin, they suppose they know what it means. They imagine it means eating meat, or touching animal food. If you speak of righteousness, they will give as their meaning for it the paying respect to a Brahmin!

But this is our difficulty in England, too, and our people, as a common rule, uninstructed and untaught, do not attach the true meaning to the word, sin, nor understand what salvation means. How glibly will they confess "we are sinners." If they knew what it meant, they would never say it because they would be very unwilling to believe it true of them! They talk about salvation, but if they really grasped its meaning, they would eagerly seek it and press forward to obtain it—but they know not what they are to be saved from, nor into what state they are to be brought. They use the words, but the ideas are not brought home to their minds. The multitudes still believe in saving themselves by good deeds. "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," needs as much to be thundered out in London as once it did in Wurttemberg! We need it today as much as they needed it in the days of Luther—and the simple declaration of the plain gospel is still as much required by the sons of men as in the days when Wycliffe sent out his evangelists from Lutterworth—or Whitfield, or Wesley went through the land preaching Christ crucified! Truly, my brothers and sisters, we have this comfort, that dense as this stuff of ignorance is, God will bring out His people from it and we may go on working, hoping and believing that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul! We have seen many such instances. In fact, are we not such instances ourselves? From what blackness of darkness did not God bring some of us? From what utter ignorance of everything like spiritual truth did He redeem us? We hid away among the stuff and did not even understand the ruin of the fall, much less the salvation which He brings us and yet, blessed be His name, today He has made us kings and priests unto our God and we know Him and are known of Him! Put worldliness and ignorance together and they make a terrible heap of baggage, among which sinners may easily hide—and this will render it more imperative upon the Christian laborer to be in earnest to seek out God's uncrowned kings!

But, dear friends, there are some men who, not content with mere worldliness and ignorance, go into *the haunts of sin.* Oh, how many there are for whom the Savior died who are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity—slaves of lust, serving Satan with the members of their body and with all the powers of their soul! "Such were some of you," says the apostle, "but you are washed; but you are sanctified"—and it

must be an astounding sight to the angels if they know the blood-bought ones, if they have any idea of who those are who shall one day wear the crown and stand and sing among them—to see such persons wallowing in the mire of sin! My brothers and sisters! If you look back on your past state without grief and astonishment, I cannot understand you! Do you not sometimes say, "How is it that I, who am God's child, should ever have been an enemy to Him who loved me with an everlasting love and, therefore, drew me with the bands of kindness?"

And perhaps there is some special sin which regretful memory will bring up before your mind tonight. You are now blood washed, now sanctified, now made an heir of Christ and you can scarcely bear to picture yourselves as having been what once you were! How Mr. John Newton, whenever he entered the pulpit to preach the gospel of the grace of God, must have felt astounded to find himself preaching it after having been such a blasphemer and everything else that was vile! And how John Bunyan, honest John Bunyan, when talking to the chief of sinners, must have felt as he would say, "the water standing in his eyes," as he thought how he, too, had been a Jerusalem sinner, and yet "grace abounding" had met with him! Oh, brothers and sisters, we hid ourselves among the stuff, we tried to conceal ourselves from the mercy of God, yet—

"Determined to save
He watched o'er our path,
When Satan's blind slaves
We sported with death"—

and He brought us out to make and crown us kings!

There are some who have hidden themselves more successfully than this if it were possible, for in addition to going great lengths in sin there are *some who abstain from any opportunities which might lead them to be saved.* We know some who never give the minister an opportunity, who take a vow that they will never enter a place of worship at all. There seems to be no likelihood of their ever being saved, for they do not lie by Bethesda's pool, and when the water is stirred they are thoughtless and do not think of stepping in. How many we have round about us of this sort, who, if they have any thought at all about religion, it is against it! They scarcely mention the name of Jesus except to blaspheme and only think of God impiously! Their case might be hopeless were it not that we have an Almighty God to deal with. We might give up in despair the multitudes around us were it not that Christ must see of the travail of His soul and must be satisfied and, therefore, let us, in good hope, hunt among the very darkest part of the stuff, for perhaps we may find some uncrowned member of the royal family of God!

Possibly I may be speaking to one here who is hiding himself among the stuff tonight from God's mercy, not by neglecting the means of grace, not by going into outward sin, but by *raising difficulties in the way of his own salvation.* "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing," but it is true, that the worst enemies to a man are those within his own heart!

Men will resist hope, clamor for despair, urge difficulties and seem as if they were rather intent to make their own condemnation sure than to find out anything like hope! Have I not hunted some sinners—hunted them as men hunt foxes—sought to get hold of them by some means to unearth them? Have I not dug them out of one hole and ferreted them out of another and thought that surely I had them? At one time they could not be saved because they were such great sinners. When that error was dissipated, then they thought they could not be saved because they were not great enough sinners! When that was dealt with, they found their hearts too hard. And when they were informed that Christ could soften their hard hearts, then they had not sufficient sense of need—and if they were taught that a sufficient sense of need was not a meritorious recommendation, but they were to go to the cross to get that—then they turned to some other subterfuge and so, though a thousand refuges of lies were swept away, yet they built up more and more and more and seemed intent on making an unending task for us and to bring an unending loss upon themselves! You are hiding yourselves thus among the stuff, but may God's mercy find you! What advantage can it be to you to doubt God's mercy and readiness to save? Suppose it could be proved to a demonstration that mercy could not reach you? Why, man, let somebody else prove it! Do not try to prove it yourself! Why should you be your own accuser? Why should you be the devil's advocate and stand up and plead against yourself? Soul, I tell you there is still hope! There is hope for you! There is hope till the jaws of death are shut! There is hope till Christ has pronounced the final sentence! So what can be your motive, you foolish one? What can be your motive for wanting to hide yourself away from the promises, to shut out the light of God's word, to get away from the kindness of Jehovah's love? And yet that was the way with most of us—the way with all of us, I suppose, more or less! But we were found out among the stuff. I recollect what a simpleton I thought myself for having hidden away so long. When I heard the message, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," I seemed to say to myself, "Why, whatever have I been doing, that I could not understand that before?" You know how Bunyan puts it with regard to Christian when he put his hand into his pocket and found the key of promise—the first thing he said to Hopeful, his fellow-prisoner, was—"What a fool I am to be rotting in this stinking dungeon when I have a key in my breast that will open every lock in Doubting Castle!" And, truly, what a simpleton are you to hide yourself away from a crown, to be afraid to be made a king, to be afraid to be a child of God, to strive against receiving a gift which shall blot out your sins and cleanse you from all iniquity and bring you safe to heaven! And yet, such folly is committed by many of us!

Now before I leave this point I should like to say to brothers and sisters in Christ here, "Do you not think it is the business of each one of us here to go and hunt among the stuff to find out some of these kings

who are hiding? Some of us are very likely to find them because we were once hidden there, ourselves, and we know a little bit about the place. You experienced Christians, you once were in this muddle, but have now got through it—do you not think that you should lay yourselves out to seek such perplexed souls? You who were once so worldly, may you not often speak to these worldly ones? And you who once were the chief of sinners, who more fitted than you to get at people who are now like what you were then? There are many of our villages in England where the gospel does not prosper and I have frequently thought that the reason is this—there is no adequate ministry. Very likely in the pulpit is a very proper ministry, indeed, very admirable, but such as the people cannot easily understand. He is altogether apart from their life, their tastes and habits, and ways of thinking—and he feels it might be bringing himself down to talk as they talk—and yet they cannot bring themselves up to comprehend him! Now, if the Lord ever will bless His churches, it seems to me that He will raise up a set of men suitable for each class—men who know the temptations of those to whom they preach! Men who have been where their hearers have been—having suffered their trials—and so can speak with both knowledge and sympathy! Let me ask you, then, you people of God, to set to work and hunt among the stuff and, who knows, but you may find a sinner there who will be well worth having because this Saul, though he did hide himself, was yet a fine fellow when they found him! He was head and shoulders taller than any off the rest in the camp—and sometimes I think that some of these big sinners that we find out among the stuff make the very best of saints! Oh, it was a grand day for the church when Richard Weaver, the collier, was found out among the stuff, for he has been head and shoulders taller than a great many of the ministers of Christ in his line of things! And there have been many others of his kind! The church does not often fish, but when she does, she catches her best fish. If we could but launch out a little more into the deep and the working population—and the openly sinning population could be more fully touched with the gospel, who knows but we might find leaders for Israel's hosts and men of valor—men who love much because they have had much forgiven!

I shall now leave that point and for a short time only—

II. SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO HIDE AMONG THE STUFF.

Dear brothers and sisters, we can make a great many excuses for the unconverted arising from their ignorance and their lack of taste for divine things. We can understand all that. According to their nature, their carnal minds will act. But we can make no excuses for ourselves. I think an apology is the last thing which a Christian should wish to make for himself. You and I have avoided many a crown which we might have worn and have hidden ourselves among the stuff to escape from many a privilege which might have been both our enrichment and honor!

Let me mention one or two of these. I think among the crowns which every Christian should covet, one should be *the crown of the victorious suppliant.* Jacob won it at Jabbok. He knelt down as Jacob, but he wrestled so well that God knighted him on the spot and made him Israel! No, He did more than knight him; He placed him in the royal family, for He called him "a prevailing prince." I seem to see Jacob coming over the brook Jabbok in the morning, limping on his thigh, but with a crown on his head which angels might have been proud to wear! He had conquered! This was the crown which Luther wore. He sometimes came down from his prayer chamber crying, "Vice! Vice!" "I have conquered! I have conquered!" He would go there and agonize with God for such-and-such a mercy till he was sure he had obtained it—and then he came down with his mouth filled with song because of it! To be a successful pleader with God is a very high attainment. God does hear the cries of His people—in a measure, of all of them—but there are some of them who understand this verse, "If you keep My commandment, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." An obedient life has given them great power in prayer! They mind God's will and He graciously grants them their will. They delight themselves in the Lord and He gives them the desire of their hearts.

You all know some praying men and women who can do wonders that we cannot. We are in a pinch—God hears and delivers us in our necessities—He is a prayer-hearing Lord to us! But we have not got the *carte blanche* they have to go and ask what they will and it shall be done unto them. It is possible to have it and yet not use it—we have not the power upon our knees that they have. Now, why is this? Is it not the case with all of us that it is because we have been hiding ourselves among the stuff? Why, how many Christians there are whose time for prayer is almost swallowed up through the pressure of business? God forbid that you neglect your business, but those who do most business with God are generally those who do their business best with man—and there is a great saving of time in having time with God in prayer! At any rate, prayer and provender hinder no man's journey, but I am afraid there are some who give more time and care to worldly matters than should be given—and at the expense of their souls. What would you think of a mother who had two children and who gave to one of these children all her nutriment and all her care and left the other poor little thing to pine, to grow weakly, to be crying, to be very sick and near to death? You would say, "What an unnatural mother! Why does she fatten one child and not care for the other when they are both her children?" Now, that is your case. You have got a body and a soul. You are all day long emptying out your carefulness for your bodily gain, but what about that other dear child—let me say, that far better child, for the body only links you with the beast, but your soul, if it is a saved one, leads you into fellowship with God—your poor soul, alas, is left starving, faint and ready to die, while the body is cared for and, perhaps, pampered! Oh, unnatural

parent! And yet most of us may take this matter home and confess that we have been hiding among the stuff.

Again, do not let me be misunderstood. I am not finding fault with those who are diligent in business. I do not think there is any text in the Bible against this. Those who are slothful in business are also slothful about their soul—and there is no disease in the world worse than laziness! But to be so absorbed with business as to be always thinking of it is to give up the soul with all its noblest faculties—we are not citizens of earth—but only strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were.

It is this that so often prevents us wearing the crown of the successful pleader. We have hidden ourselves among the stuff.

There is another crown which it strikes me every Christian ought to seek to wear, and that is *the crown that Christ gives to all who come to His feast and hold fellowship with Him.* The great delight beneath the skies, next door, in fact, to heaven, itself, is communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! And when He brings us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love, He crowns us with the crown wherewith He was crowned in the day of His espousals—the crown of His Church's love and His love for her!

Well, you and I have worn it, but we do not always wear it, and why not? Is it not because we are too much hiding among the stuff? There is too much thinking about the family, perhaps not for God's sake, but merely for our own! Too much planning, even when we are worshiping, with a view to the eye of our fellow creatures. Why, even into this house of prayer there may be a deal of stuff brought! A farmer may have brought his whole farm here! And in these pews, I have no doubt, many a weaver has thrown his shuttle, many a blacksmith has wielded his hammer and many a carpenter has driven his plane! You can bring your stuff here well enough without bringing it on your backs, for you can bring it in your souls—and it is just this distraction, this taking off of the mind from divine things—which prevents our entering into spiritual fellowship. The preacher, too, knows what this is. He knows what it is to think so much about the management of the service, the ruling of the church, the arranging this point, the setting of this brother to work and the calling to account of this other one, that he gets to be like Martha—cumbered with much serving! And he loses the sweetness of sitting at his Master's feet. It should not be so, for it is all hiding among the stuff and, after all, is doing us real mischief. If we had more grace, we would come out and wear the crown at all times and be kings and priests unto our God!

And, again, dear friends. There is another crown which every Christian ought to try to win and that is *the crown of the successful laborer.* I hope we do not mean to go to heaven without our crown, or with crowns without any stars in them. Some of you have had many spiritual children. God has blessed many of you to the conversion of two and three and some of you, of scores! God be thanked for that! You are not an

unfruitful people. You have sought to bring souls to Christ. But, alas, there are some of you who do nothing of the kind. You come here to the house of prayer and listen to the service and are pretty well content. Your children, your families, your neighbors and the outlying world you do not try to win to Christ, nor do you seem to care much about them! God forgive you, my dear friends, and grant that you may not hide among the stuff any longer. When you come to die, it will be a sore matter of regret to you that you did not serve your Master more! I never heard of a Christian who died lamenting he had done too much for Christ, been too earnest, too indefatigable and so had shorted his life! There have been men who have shortened their lives for Christ, but even when chided by their friends, they have only gone on, still working—and have rejoiced to die for His dear sake!

When the physician told Master John Calvin that he must cease from working so much or he would die because he had a complication of painful diseases, he replied, "Would you have my Master come and find me loitering?" Oh, it was well said, Master Calvin! It would be well said, too, if we could all say it! What have you done for Christ, my brothers and sisters? Have you spoken a word for Him? Have you written a word for Him? Have you done *anything* for Him? If not, though you have a crown within your reach, yet you are hiding among the stuff! May you be brought out from that stuff and made to wear the crown of the successful worker!

Once more, the Master is soon coming. He will either come in the clouds in visible personal presence, or else He will come in death. One of the two things will certainly occur before long. *When He comes He comes to crown His people— will He find us, then, among the stuff?* There are crowns and palms for all the faithful when the pierced feet shall stand on Olivet, and the multitudes shall be gathered in the valley of decision. He shall come gloriously upon Mount Zion with His ancients—and in that day when—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway"

and when His kingdom shall be universal, we who have been with Him in His humiliation, shall also be with Him in His glory! But if He were to come tonight would He not find a great many of His people hiding away from their royalty, dishonoring their privileges and unworthy of their crown? "When the Son of man comes shall He find faith upon the earth?" If He came now, how many of us would be found in places and positions far different from those in which we should wish to be found? When I called to see a friend not many months ago, I found her cleaning a doorstep, and she hardly liked me to call upon her when she was so employed. She blushed and said if she had known I had been coming she would _____. "There," I said, "I know what you would have done—you would have put on your best things and wasted an hour or two of your time—but I like to come and catch you just as you are." Then she smiled,

and I said, "My good woman, that is exactly how I should like the Lord to come and find me—at my work. Working for His family in some way or other—scrubbing the doorstep or doing something else—it matters not as long as He finds His people busy for Him."

Some of my brothers seem to be inclined to get their people to stand up with their mouths wide open gaping for the Second Advent. The true way of waiting for His blessed appearing is to work unceasingly for Him! Christ will come, will come personally and visibly! Let this be your great joyous hope, but still believe that the best way to meet Him is with trimmed lamps and burning lights as men watching and waiting for their Lord, and not as idle star-gazers who go out and read the prophesies and stand puzzling their minds about disputed facts while souls are perishing! Oh, brothers, we have something else to do, I hope, with the intellect of the Christian Church, than to have it forever spending itself to no profit!

I might almost say of this what Paul did of certain other matters, that it was wasting precious time and thought on "endless genealogies and old wives fables," for in my heart of hearts I do believe them to be but very little better. Oh, if the Christian wants to be ready for his Master, as he should be, let him be contending with Christ's foes who are many and strong! Let him be caring for Christ's sheep, many of whom are very weak and sorely wounded. Let him work with his fellow servants and eat and drink, and bring out of the storehouse things new and old, for blessed is that servant who, when his Master comes, He shall find so doing!

Now, Christians, let me say to you in closing, do seek, as God shall help you, to get away from that baggage and that stuff of yours. Get up! Get up from those valleys where the reeking fog of earth is always lingering—get up to those healthful mountains where the breezes of heaven fan the cheeks! Get above the mists and clouds into a clearer and serener atmosphere! Ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in your spiritual mounting. Do not let it be said any longer that when a crown is ready for you, you are hiding away from it. May you be ready to be crowned and, being crowned, live as a king and a priest to the glory of your Lord! May God add His blessing to these words for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 120:1-3.

Verse 1. *In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and He heard me.* Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny awakens our indignation by a sense of injustice and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defense. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue! Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows

on the matter of slander, for the more we stir it, the more it spreads. It is of no use to appeal to the honor of the slanderer, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult! However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength! The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively; He catches the first accent of supplication. He makes each of His children confess—"He heard me."

2. *Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.* Lips are soft, but when they are "lying lips" they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men's reputations, nor salved with malicious lies. The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. Those who fawn and flatter, too, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings! They are the seed of the devil and he works in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers! These are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath and whose end lies far below.

3. *What shall be given unto you? Or what shall be done unto you, you false tongue?* The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment! It is the worst of offenses—this detraction, calumny and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough? What will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered His most terrible threats against them—and He will terribly execute them in due time.

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THE BELIEVER'S GLAD PROSPECTS
NO. 3323

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."
Solomon's Song 2:17.

WITHOUT a sentence of introduction, I invite you, beloved, to see herein,

I. A BLESSED SEASON HERE ANTICIPATED!—A time when the day shall break and the shadows shall flee away.

It is not every man who can count upon such a time as that, for to some there is no prospect of the day breaking. They are now in the shade and that shade will grow darker and darker with them till, in the hour of death, their sun will go down forever in a tenfold night—a night not gladdened by a solitary star—a night that shall never have an ending—a night of glooms more terrible than imagination itself could picture! I fear there are some in this place for whom we might utter such forebodings! The world is dark enough to them, now, but they have no hope of the Lord as though it would be brightness to them. Conscience tells them—and if conscience is not enlightened enough to do so—the Word of God tells them that the day of the Lord shall be darkness and not light to them. But, to every soul in this house that believes in Jesus, there is the delightful anticipation of the hour spoken of in the text—when the day shall break and the shadows shall flee away!

Let us take each expression and muse on it. "*Until the day breaks.*" In a certain sense the Christian is now in the light, for he is a child of light and he walks in the light. And he may walk in the light as God is in the light, and so have fellowship with the Father and feel that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses him from all sin. But Paul, in some pages, calls this present estate darkness. "For," he says, "the night is far spent, the day is at hand," meaning thereby this present state of life to the believer, which is far spent, and the daylight, the glorious daylight of eternity, is near at hand!

"The daybreak." Why, this represents to the most of us, probably, the moment of death. To as many as shall be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, it represents the coming of the Lord and the glory of His people. "The daybreak!" *It is the hour of joy.* During the night the earth seems sad. She has covered herself with sackcloth; her eyes are full of the drops of the night. There is silence over the plains. The woods send

not forth their grateful music. There is only heard the hooting of the owl, with, perhaps, now and then a stray note from the nightingale as though she remembered the day. Night is the time of the world's gloom, but daybreak is the time of her festival! Then is her splendor abroad. Then—

"Morn, her rosy step in the eastern clime
Advancing, sows the earth with orient pearl."

Ten thousand winged songsters of the grove waking up from their slumber begin to pour forth incessant streams of music! Every creature, beholding the light of the sun, wakes itself up and is full of joy! Such will the daybreak be to us. This is not our time of fullest joy. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. We have trials without. We have conflicts within. The daybreak is coming when we who are not of the night, nor of darkness, though compelled to pass through it, shall emerge into our proper element—the light of God—and our spirits shall bathe themselves in all that they can desire, being satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord! "I shall be satisfied," says David, "when I awake in Your likeness." We are looking for a time of ineffable delight! All the attempts that have ever been made to describe the joy and glory of heaven have necessarily been failures—and if we were to attempt again, we should fall far below that which God has revealed to us by His Spirit—for eye has not seen, nor ear heard that which He has prepared for them that love Him! Thank God, our joy is coming nearer every time the tick of the clock is heard. Behold, on flying wings it comes! Every day of winter's sorrow or of summer's joy brings it nearer. We said last Sunday evening, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," and we often sing—

"We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

This is one of the choicest consolations of the present—that we are getting nearer to the daybreak!

"The daybreak!" *It is a summons to activity.* The creatures waking up prepare themselves for their day's work. All nature is astir. She was lethargic before, as it were, frostbitten under the raven wing of night, but now that the bright beams of the sun have brought the light, they have also brought restoration to vitality! Now the workman girds up his loins and goes forth to his labor. Ah, brothers and sisters, those of us who are helped to do most for God on earth are not satisfied with what we can do. This seems to be a world of trying rather than of accomplishing. We are straining to be able to serve God. I feel myself constantly, if I can imagine such an experience, like the chick within the shell—chipping it, wanting to get out of it, doing all it can—no, not doing all it can—but doing something and desiring to do more, feeling its circle to be circumscribed and itself to be cribbed, cabined and confined! But what a glorious thing it will be when the young eaglets hatch themselves, leave the nest and try their wings! Such is the happiness we are looking forward to at the

daybreak—that we shall serve God day and night in His temple without any weariness—that we shall serve Him without any sin! That we shall adore Him without any wandering thoughts! That we shall be dedicated to Him without anything that can stir the jealousy of His holy mind! We shall then move forward in the path of duty with as straight a persistency and as divine a perseverance as the thunderbolt when it is launched from the hand of the Almighty! We shall neither turn to the right hand nor to the left. We shall be swift as seraphs and strong as cherubs in the course of service—and that service shall be to us the heaven of our delight! Oh, we may well long for the daybreak, because it will help His servants to serve Him!

"The daybreak!" Is it not, likewise, *the time of clear discovery?* At night we peep about. We spy out the forms of the mountains. We can trace, by the moonbeams, the course of the rivers, and we may know something, more or less according to the measure of our discernment, or the inferences we may draw of what there is round about us. Still, the night is the time of gloom. Nor can all the tapers and lamps that men kindle turn night into day! So here—this is the time of our ignorance. We know something of the truth as God has taught us and, blessed be His name, it is such dear knowledge that we would not give it up for the entire world! But still, we only see as in a glass darkly—we have not yet come to the face to face vision. We read like children spell at school—syllable by syllable—and we do not quite understand what we read. We are like a boy when he first begins to spell out his Horace—he does not comprehend the elegance of the style or the poetry of the language—but just spells it out and sees something of the literal meaning, but that is all that he can get. Ah, I suppose that the greatest divine that ever lived did not know as much, before he died, as a child knows when he has been in heaven five minutes! All that we are able to discover here seems to be little, indeed. We know in part, we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away with! The daybreak no sooner comes to the world than you discern everything in its natural hue and its just proportion! You see color where before everything was black! You perceive the beauty of the landscape, the mountain rises before you, the river rolls on mightily towards the sea—even the tiny flowers challenge your notice! You mark all on earth, for by the sun God has painted the entire world with the colors of the rainbow! And oh, what a glorious discovery our admission into the next world will bring to us!—

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

I often get confused over doctrines that puzzle me. I see this to be true, and that to be true, but how to reconcile the two, I know not. Then the

thought of the daybreak comes in so comfortably. "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Here it is not good for us to know all things. In some respects, it is the glory of God to conceal Himself and He may well say to us—"I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." But there it will be the glory of God to reveal Himself and it will also be to our benefit, our minds being then fortified and strengthened to receive what we could not comprehend here below! Perhaps the glare of the divine light, if it comes to us here, even though tempered by the mediator, Himself, might be too much for these poor eyes of ours. All the prophets, or nearly all of them, when they had visions from God, fell flat on their faces! John, himself, though he had leaned on Jesus' bosom—when he saw the Master in Patmos, writes these very instructive words—"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Now, the Lord has work for us to do, but He does not want us to be always lying at His feet as dead! Consequently, He withholds from us the full radiance of His glory. But there we shall be able to endure much! And there we shall be privileged to *enjoy* much—

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

So, you see, we look forward to a time of perfect joy, of wonderful activity and of full discovery.

What a blessing that we are able to look forward to this and to talk about it as a matter of certainty. "Until the day breaks." Why, there are dear aged brothers and sisters here who, in the providence of God, cannot be with us very long—and how are they accustomed to speak of their departure? I hear them speak constantly with holy confidence and not at all with any reluctance. There have been some people so foolish as not to like to be thought old; some who have seemed to altogether regret that the gray hairs were apparent on their heads. But I do not find it so among the Lord's people with whom I associate! I find them thankful that this life is not all their portion, blessing God that they do not expect to be here forever—and longing for evening to undress that they may rest with God, with holy expectation anticipating the blissful moment when the day shall break! And we who are younger need not think that because we still have strength in our loins, that we shall therefore live long. Oh, how many younger than ourselves have we seen taken away during the past year! Some of our fathers will outlive us—our grandparents will follow us to the tomb, for youth preserves not man! Well, we, too, will join with the reverend seigneurs and we will anticipate the daybreak and talk with them of it tonight!

The other expression of the text is also instructive—"Until the day breaks *and the shadows flee away*." What are these shadows? They are of many sorts. They abound. This is the valley of shadows. Surely every

man walks in a vain shadow and disquiets himself in vain! Some shadows we have that are precious. There are the shadows of the ordinances—baptism and of the Lord's Supper. I speak of them with the highest reverence, yet they are but shadows in themselves. But we need them because we are in the shadow land. He that is immersed in water is not, therefore, buried with Christ—the burial with Christ is the reality, the burial in water is but the shadow! He that eats and drinks at the table of the Master does not, therefore, eat His flesh and drink His blood—the bread and the wine, though they look substantial, are but the shadows. The real flesh and blood of Jesus—these are the inner substance—and only to faith is it given to feed upon these celestial viands! These things are only intended to last until the day breaks, for note, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death until He comes." Then when He comes, the day breaks and the shadow, even that blessed shadow, must flee away!

Other shadows we have that we shall be more glad to lose—shadows of frightful things which haunt us—especially the timid, nervous and faint-hearted people of God. Some of the Lord's people spend their lives in fighting shadows! They make troubles. They sit down and imagine disasters which cannot occur. They bind heavy burdens and put them upon their own shoulders—burdens which God never intended them to bear—and burdens which, in fact, do not exist! And some of them even create actual trouble by foolish anxiety to escape from an imaginary trouble! Well, poor trembler, poor Mr. Fearing, and you, Miss Much Afraid and Miss Despondency, the shadows will soon flee away! Though you generally go limping to heaven with weak hands and feeble knees, and as many sighs as breaths, and as many tears as seconds, there is an end coming to all these and you shall be as merry as any of them by and by! You shall be as near the eternal throne of God as the apostles, themselves, and have as much of the divine love and enjoyment as the strongest believers in Christ ever had! Be of good courage. Strive against those fears! They weaken you. They dishonor our Master! Repent of ever having indulged them, for they are wicked! Still, let this encourage you—they shall all flee away at the daybreak! Do not, therefore, dread dying when with that comes the daybreak! Expect it, even long for it, since then the shadows which oppress you from morn till night shall flee away!

So, too, those doubts and fears which are made of sterner stuff, the deeper shadows and heavier glooms, shall all flee away! There may be some men who never have a doubt about their acceptance in Christ, but I am afraid I cannot count myself as one of them. For the most part I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day. But sometimes when it comes to close heart work and self-examination, I cannot give up Cowper's hymn—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought!
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?
If I love, why am I thus?
Why this cold and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, could they be worse
Who have never known His name?"

Not that it is of any use having such a hymn as that in the hymnbook, for you never ought to sing it! It is not a thing to sing, but to groan out all alone before our God. I think the most of us are compelled to do that sometimes. Well, blessed be God, at the daybreak, all these fears will be gone! We shall never be able, then, to doubt our interest in Christ because we shall be with Him where He is—and shall behold His glory! Then we shall never have any fear lest after having preached to others we, ourselves, should be cast away. We shall not be afraid lest we should be shipwrecked, for though it may be but on boards and broken pieces, yet we shall then have come safely to land—all these fears will have vanished forever!

May not these shadows represent to some of us *that daily sense of sin* which comes upon us and drives us to the cross? Oh, the somber shade which a tender conscience feels under a sense of sin! Some men have not any such tenderness. They can make a profession and be easy in living inconsistent lives. Not so a heart that lives near to Christ—the more pure it is, the more it mourns over its spots! If you are in the dark, you will not see the filth upon your garments, but the brighter the light the more you will see every spot—and the more you will mourn over it. I believe that the more sanctified a man becomes by the work of the Holy Spirit within, the more heavy the burden of sin becomes to him. It is not that he has more sin, but that he *feels* that he has more. And in the light of the love of Christ, which he enjoys in the secret places of communion, he sees more of the abomination of sin and, therefore, is more humbled under it. Oh, but it shall all flee away presently! They are without fault before the throne of God! He shall present us, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Oh, what a blessed presentation! At the daybreak, truly, the shadows will flee away!

Do you not think that the text might have a still more extensive meaning and take in *everything here below?* Things terrestrial, after all, are but shadows. The things which are seen are temporal—only the things which are not seen are eternal. The things which are seen, all these things which are round about us, are but shadowy things—they are passing before us and they will soon be gone like the dissolving view upon the sheet. But the eternal things that men think so shadowy and dreamy—these are the only realities, since they will last forever! Well, the shadows will flee away! That means this poor flesh and blood body full of sickness which declines as the shadow. That house, those lands. Oh, you

rich men! your shadows will all flee away! If you are believers you will not be sorry for that. And, oh, you poor people! Your one room, cold and cheerless, the toil of every day, the needle, the stitching long for little pay—all shadows and very dark shadows! And they seem very real to you now—well, they will soon be over—so soon! They will flee away and all be gone and—

"Leaving all you loved below,
Up to your Father you will go!"

We will not tarry longer on these two causes, "Until the day breaks"—we expect a daybreak—"and the shadows flee away"—we expect that shadows will flee away. We know they will! We rejoice that they will! Here we sit, looking out into the future, not knowing what may befall us, but singing to our souls this song—"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

But while the season of joyful release is anticipated, there is also,

II. A PRAYER PRESENTED. "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

Till heaven shall come to us and we to heaven, sweet Lord Jesus be with us! Let us have Your company. But a difficulty arises. There is so much between us and Christ to keep Him away. Hence the prayer, "Come, Lord, be like some hart or roe—like the chamois of the Alps that leaps from crag to crag—come over all these mountains of Bether and come to us when we cannot come to You."

Remember, beloved, that our sins were once like these mountain of Bether. Christ has come over them. Our daily sins sometimes seem to our unbelief to be mountains of separation. Christ will come over these. He will bring us again unto the cleansing fountain! He will give us the kiss of reconciliation! He will imprint the seal of peace upon our foreheads. He will kiss us with the kisses of His lips and He will send us away rejoicing that He has come over the mountains.

One great mountain that separates us from our Lord is *our need of sight of Him.* You know it is not easy to love one you never saw—to love one you have heard of, but have not seen at all. But faith gets over this difficulty with regard to Christ, for faith has a pictorial power—and it pictures Christ! Faith has a realizing power—and it grasps Christ. Faith has an appropriating power and it claims Christ! Faith has a power of wing that takes the spirit right away to Christ in holy imagination, sacred fancy and blessed meditation—and so it overcomes the difficulty! But still it is a difficulty and hence the delightful power and force of expression of the apostle—"Whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory." The prayer is, then, "Oh, Savior, not only come over my sin, but come over this great difficulty that I never saw You, never heard Your voice and never touched Your hands! Yet come to me over these

separating mountains and make Yourself real to my spirit every day I live."

Ah, brothers and sisters, there are many mountains. I shall not mention them all, but I will name one more—the mountain of *our natural coldness, lethargy and indifference*—and piled on the top of these are our cares and our worldliness! I wish I could keep my heart red hot for Christ, but everything seems chilled. You cannot even live in God's service as I do, but in serving Christ, Himself, you get as Martha did—cumbered with much serving. Oh, that the heart were always on the mountain with Christ—no, I won't say that—were it even in the garden, as long as it were but with Him—in Gethsemane, or on Tabor—it would matter little as long as we could stay with Him! But we have many things to do and many beings to think of more oftentimes than we need, and then we get away from Christ and we cannot get back as quickly as we want and so we have to sing with Dr. Watts—

"Our souls can neither fly, nor go
To reach eternal joys."

Well, then, He comes to us! He kindles a flame of sacred love and that kindles ours. Oh, great Lord, until the day breaks often come in this way to us! Until the shadows flee away, oh, come to our hearts again and again, leaping over the mountains and revealing Yourself to us!

Here is a blessed thing to think of all the year round. Do not ask the Lord to take away the shadows. Do not ask that you may feel this world to be a bright place to your hearts, but turn your thoughts to this—"Lord, whether it is bright or not to my soul, come to me! Oh, come to me! Be near to me! Let me walk in the conscious enjoyment of Your daily presence. To your will I leave everything else, only stay near to me!" Do you ask when may this prayer be used? I think it is a very delightful prayer every night when we go to bed. "Lord, until the day breaks and the shadows flee away literally in the morning, come and be with me."—

"If in the night I wakeful lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply."

If I toss to and fro on my bed, may I have to say, as Your spouse did, "By night, upon my bed, I sought Him whom my soul loves"? May I cry with the Psalmist, "When I awake I am still with You"? I think you may put your head upon the pillow each night very delightfully with that as your prayer!

Then you may pray this prayer *whenever any trouble has come upon you.* Now you may say, "Lord, I see the day has not broken with me yet. The shadows have not fled away. There is this heavy loss in business. There is that dear child ill. There is the wife sickening. There is this disease in my own body. But, Lord, until this trouble is removed, come near, come near and still nearer!" If there is one child in the family the mother cares most about, it is the one that is the sickliest. You are sitting here tonight and you are thinking about one of your children, but

it is not about the one that is 21 and grown up—it is the little one you left in the cradle. The more helpless it is, the more thought you give it. And so does God consider you, poor helpless, troubled ones! Pray, then, as you are entering into the cloud, "Lord Jesus, abide with me in the thick and dark night, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

This prayer will do whenever the affairs of the Church of God or of the nation seem to be in a bad state. There are times with every church when it does not prosper as we would desire. There are times in this nation when we see error very rife and true religion at a discount. Well, then, Christian, instead of your fretting yourself about the ark of the Lord which you can no more keep right than Uzza could, say, "Lord, I would walk with You! I will say as Joshua did, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Only come, be near to my heart, and keep my heart near to You."

And what a blessed petition this would be when we are coming to die! We feel within ourselves that the machinery of life must come to a stop. There are certain indications which mark that the last mortal strife is drawing near. Oh, now to bend the knee at the bedside, or if unable through weakness or faintness to do that, to stay one's self upon the bed and say, "Until the day breaks, so now near to these poor failing eyes, till the shadows flee away and this poor, crumbling body is changed for glory and immortality, come, my beloved, be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." It would be blessed to fall asleep in Jesus with that prayer upon one's lips! Well, you are sure to die with it on your lips if you always live with it on your lips! If it is always in your heart, it will be in your heart at the last. So I commend it to you for daily use and for every special crisis. The Lord make it to be a blessing to your souls!

Only, again I say, I wish with all my heart—it is my heart's desire and prayer—that all of you may have a daybreak to look forward to! It is so sad a thing that so many live as if they were to always live here. They live as if they were to die like dogs and that would be as much an end of them as of the bull that is struck with the pole axe in the shambles. But, as you will live forever, I must again remind you that there remains for you nothing but a fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation! Would you have a daybreak? Jesus Christ is the sun! Trust Him! He has told us that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. To believe is to trust. Now, leaving all your sins—it is time you left them! Now, abhorring all those things in which you once took delight—and you may well abhor them, for they are damnable! They are serpents—fair are their scales but deadly are their fangs! Leaving all these, come to Jesus! He died for sinners, for the very worst of sinners—and whoever trusts Him shall have everlasting life!

Oh, that you just now might end your service of the devil and forthwith commence your service of the Lord Jesus! The Master grant it by the power of His Holy Spirit, and His shall be the praise!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 7.

Verse 1. *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.* Observe that God has servants always ready for His work. There were winds to be restrained. "And I saw four angels"—mighty spiritual beings—who had power over the air. These winds were to be restrained until all God's people were safely sealed and you may depend upon it that no calamity shall happen to destroy the people of God—they must first be saved. There shall be no deluge till there is the ark—there shall be no Romans to destroy Jerusalem till there is a little city in the mountains to which the disciples may flee. God will protect His own. The dead calm, the perfect quietude which prevailed while the angels restrained the winds is set forth in these words. The wind did not appear to blow on land, or sea, or tree—not a ripple broke the surface of the waters, not a leaf stirred on the bough—everything is quiet until God's people are secured.

2, 3. *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.* See how other things are protected for the sake of God's people? The earth and the sea and even the trees have a cordon of safety round about them while God's people are being secured! When the Lord Jesus put to sea on the Galilean Lake, we read that there were with Him many other little boats—and when the calm came for His ship, they were in the calm, too. And so it is a good thing if you are not in the church, yet to have some sort of connection with it—a great thing for the age to have the church of God in it, for God will take care of a nation often for the sake of His people. As He would have spared Sodom had there been righteous men found in it, so does He spare nations for the sake of His saints.

4. *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.* Now we are going to read their names. I hope you won't say it is tiresome to read them. Remember He that wrote this book is the Father of them, and children's names are not wearisome to their own father! Remember, He that fills this book bought them with His blood, and wore them upon His breastplate as the great High Priest of Israel bearing all these names upon His heart, engraved upon the palms of His

hands. We need not be weary of hearing names which Christ has worn on His breast!

5-8. *Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.* Judah stands first and Benjamin stands last—they were joined together, but here they are as widely divided as they can be, yet they stand in an equal position—and the day shall come when first and last shall rejoin together in the equal blessing of the Most High. Where is Dan? Not mentioned here. See, there is nothing without mystery. We shall never understand all the things of God. It seemed simple enough to bless the 12 tribes, but yet there is one lacking.

9. *After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.* This is the great gathering of the Gentile multitude redeemed by blood, numbered by God, never to be numbered by men, being like the sand on the seashore, innumerable! Of all colors they shall be and they will look to us on earth if we could see them, to be a motley group. And if we heard them speak, it would seem a strange jargon. Many are the languages of earth, but one is the speech of heaven! All hearts are alike in the kingdom of the Most High, whatever the color of the skin. That entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem seems to me to be the pattern we have here before us, only this is the fulfillment of it. Here are the crowds that gathered about Him—the 12 disciples lead the way and here are the multitudes with the palms in their hands scattering them in the pathway of their King!

10. *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.* In Jerusalem they cried Hosanna, which was, "Save, Lord," but now they have risen a little higher, and they sing, "Salvation to our God." It is the same melody but it is pitched to a loftier key and there are more to sing it. And they are not now conducting a prince to his throne but they are looking up to the King upon His throne, reigning there!

11. *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.* Not *some* of the angels, or many angels, nor even an

innumerable company of angels, but ALL the angels—they shall all gather on that august occasion around the throne of God and the Lamb!

12. *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.* What a deep, sonorous, Amen, that will be! What a mighty volume of sound! How full and rich, how hearty! Oh, that our ears may be there to hear it and our tongues to swell it!

13. *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes and from where did they come?* "And I said unto him, sir, you know." You see the question was put by an angel. As an answer, one of the elders answered. Whom did he answer? Why, John! And what John's heart was inquiring. He was saying to himself, "Who are these?" And one of the elders was responsive to his heart's inquiry and put the same inquiry into words on his behalf.

14-15. *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. 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.* Shall "tabernacle over them," that is the exact word, as though He were a pavilion, a canopy over them.

16-17. *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 fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* It looks almost as if they might have a tear in their eye when they first come there—certainly they shall never be sure of being without a tear till they have crossed the pearly threshold—but then He shall wipe away the very tear—there shall be no possibility of weeping there! May our eyes behold that sinless and sorrowless land and its eternal Lord!

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TURNING FROM DEATH
NO. 3324

A SERMON
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"Turn you, turn you from your evil ways;
for why will you die, O house of Israel?"
Ezekiel 33:11.

IT is a token of the great mercy of God that He is very earnest in His pleading with men to turn from their sins that He may not be compelled to punish them, as He must do if they go on in their iniquities. A cruel governor is glad of an opportunity to show his severity and, therefore, not especially anxious to prevent offenses. But a kind, tender-hearted monarch He must be who leaves His throne and comes down among the rebels and, with tears in His eyes, cries to them, "Oh, do not this wicked thing that I hate! Offend not against Me! Do not compel Me to take the sword out of its scabbard! Do not force Me to say that I will have no mercy upon you, but turn you, turn you from those evil courses which will certainly bring you mischief!" Sinner, God speaks to you tonight out of His infinite mercy. He has no pleasure in your death! It will give Him no satisfaction to cast you into hell! He has taken an oath concerning it. "As I live," says the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies," and to prove the sincerity of the oath, He cries, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways: for why will you die, O house of Israel?" If you are not spared, but perish, it will not be because God is not merciful to you but because you are not merciful to yourselves!

The text as it stands is a very earnest exhortation from God. It is directed, I doubt not, to all sorts of sinful men. And it is directed to such in all sincerity and honesty, for albeit we believe without reserve in the doctrines of sovereign grace, we do not for a moment desire to lessen the force or explain away the reality of so earnest an appeal as this! We can preach from such a text with all sincerity and intensity—indeed, as much as if we did not believe in any election of grace!

We would seek to give to all and every Scripture, the genuine meaning which it contains. But, dear friends, solemnly penetrating and heart-searching as His exhortation is, and given as it is by God, Himself, if a man rejects it, he thereby adds to his sin. God calls to the sinner to turn, but turn he never will unless there is something more than the call! By the public ministry, by sickness, by the Bible, by conscience—yes, and by the common and universal operations of the Holy Spirit, God calls to men—"Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" But they seem determined

to die and, therefore, they go over hedge and ditch to destruction—and this against all the warnings and rebukes of the Most High!

So they will continue in their sins and aggravate them by the rejection of the very exhortation which was meant to deliver them from them—and so make themselves yet more guilty before God by turning against His word which was meant to have a blessing in it for them. I do not intend, therefore, being the means of adding to your guilt tonight. When I took the text, I felt as if I dared not preach from it. It shook me, though it may not shake you. As I read it, and read it, and read it again, I thought, if I deliver it as I find it there, I shall very likely only have to come back and say, "Who has believed our report?" And the most of my hearers who are unconverted will only go away and say, "What care we for those alarming words?" So I remembered that when the Holy Spirit comes effectually to work upon the souls of men He uses the very same means and instruments which in our hands seem powerless. If I say to you, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" you will take no notice of it. But if the Holy Spirit shall come and say this to you, then you shall certainly be obedient to it, for He has the key of the heart and He knows how, without violating the free agency of man, to make man willing in the day of His power! So that when He says, "Turn you, turn you," they do turn, and when He says, "Why will you die?" they begin to reason with themselves and they see it is an ill thing that they should perish and, therefore, they turn to God!

Now, I will earnestly hope and pray that God the Holy Spirit will use these words upon some heart. And I intend to preach upon them, not as they stand in the book, but as they will then stand in your hearts! Let me try, if I can, to picture what will take place in the man's heart in whom God the Holy Spirit shall say by His effectual grace, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" I shall try, therefore, to give an outline sketch of the spiritual experience which will be known in the human breast in which the Holy Spirit is now pressing home this solemn question.

There will be three things there—first *the fears will be awakened.* That word, "die," will come like the point of a dagger to slay the soul's false peace. In the second place, *the heart will be affected.* "Turn you, turn you," will cause the heart to turn away from its former lusts and turn towards God. And then, in the third place, *the understanding will be set vigorously working*, for the question, "For why will you die?" if pressed home by divine power, will turn reason into *right* reasoning—the man will begin to consider his ways and to ask himself seriously, why he should throw away his soul—why he should lose his most precious possession for which nothing can ever be given in exchange, or at its purchase price.

Solemnly then, as before the Lord, let us deal in turn with these three things. If, my dear hearer, it should be your happy lot to have this question brought home to your inmost soul by the power of God's Holy Spirit you will tonight—

I. HAVE YOUR FEARS AWAKENED.

This is how it will operate. You will begin to say within yourself, "This text tells me that I must either turn or die. I must change my present state, habits and ways—and I must turn with full purpose of heart in another direction or else I shall die—a deserved sentence, a capital sentence is passed against me. Not that I shall be imprisoned, not that I shall be transported for such-and-such a time, but that I shall die! The most terrible sentence of the law of God, it seems, will come upon me unless I turn." Oh, heart, look that in the face! Oh, you fears, endeavor to awaken yourselves and on those dull and leaden eyes to see what it is to die!

First, my hearer, if this test should come home to you, you will say, "*Why, I am not ready to die in the common sense of that term.*" If you were called to die tonight, my hearer, your house is not in order. You could not go home to your bed with anything like joy if you knew that you were about to lie down upon it, never to rise from it again! I recollect when the cholera was here the last time that I was going to a house on Blackfriars Road where a man had just put up a bedstead. He had moved only that very morning from another district which was unhealthy. He had only just put up the bed, and he lay there, fast dying, and I knelt by his bedside. Now, suppose that were to be your case?—

"Should swift death this night overtake you,
And your bed become your tomb—
Would the morn in heaven awake you
Clad in light and deathless bloom?"

Can you hope so? Ah, there are many of you who have no such hope! The thought of death is very unpleasant to you just now! That hot blood does not like to think of the chill cold hand—and those happy eyes do not welcome the thought of the bleak pall, the cold vault and the sad refrain—"Dust to dust, ashes to ashes." So then, my soul, if you are afraid even to die, which is but the beginning of sorrows, do let yourself be affected with that awful fact that there is another death far more terrible than this first death, and a doom more fearful by far! Do let these thoughts come home to you, my hearer—you must either turn or die—and in that death of the soul, there is an emphasis of unutterable woe!

Then, again, if I am not prepared to die and this text is brought home to me with power by the Holy Spirit, I shall see that I am still less *prepared to take my last trial before the great judge.*

It is certain that when my soul leaves my body, it will not die, but will be summoned into the august presence of the great King and then, during the time that will elapse between death and resurrection, your soul and mine, if they are guilty, will begin to suffer under an apprehension of the wrath which is yet to come! Am I prepared to face God as a disembodied spirit? May we not well start at the thought? May not even the true Christian feel it to be no child's play to think of his spirit coming before the bar of God? But much more the man who is without God and without hope!

Oh, soul, what will you do when this poor flesh is left behind and you must pass that solemn test? But before long, how soon we cannot tell, the body which has been moldering in this grave shall rise again! The trumpet of the archangel, shrill and loud, shall be heard over hill and dale. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels shall descend and in the midst of them shall come the cloud, the great white cloud, and on the cloud shall be the throne, and on the throne, the Son of Man who once was crucified—no longer with His hands pierced with nails, but grasping the scepter of all worlds! No longer "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but now—

"With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!"

If the heart is properly affected by this text it, will say, "I am not ready to meet Him! I am not ready to be in that great assembly! I am not ready to hear the cry—'Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!' I am not ready be to put onto the scales! I am not prepared to be brought up before those eyes of fire! I am not ready to have my secrets read before assembled men and angels! I am not ready to hear the Judge say, 'Depart you cursed!'" Well, but if the mere dying, which is only the leaving of this world. If the mere coming before the bar of God, if ultimate coming before Him at the last great day is terrible**.** Oh, if the text should come home with power, my dear hearer, and I pray God it may!—you will recollect that all this is not dying—it is only being tried and sentenced, but it is not the execution! Oh, if judgment is so terrible, what must *execution* be? If merely to be brought up and committed for trial is terrible, what will it be to be taken out to the mount of doom? If we are afraid of the Judge, how much more of His sentence being carried out! Why, before condemned souls hear their retribution fixed, you hear them crying, "Rocks, hide us, mountains fall upon us!" Christ has not smitten them—He has only *looked* at them—but its condemnation of them for the rejection of His saving mercy makes them appeal to the flinty rocks to yield them a shelter, for they cannot find a place of refuge! I say again, if the judgment is so awe inspiring, what will the execution of that judgment be? Guilty soul! Where will you fly or hide, then? Shall my soul ever be there? If God the Holy Spirit applies this text of mine with power, we shall ask ourselves, "How can I bear to die the second death?" What is that second death? Surely it means this—that just as the first death takes away man from all *earthly* sources of life and joy, so the second death separates from all sources of spiritual peace and pardon, Grace and salvation!

No more your feasts, the dance, and the sound of the violin! No more the jest or song of ribaldry. You die and all these are over! But the greater death means no more the house of God, the opportunity to pray, to repent, to believe, to receive God's free and full salvation! It means—that second death—the anguish more than these lips could dare to speak even if this mind knew! Oh, the anguish of a soul that is withered

beneath the curse of God! Oh, the anguish of a spirit that is banished forever from the presence of the Most High!—

"To linger in eternal death,
Yet death forever fly!"

Here comes the worst of it that this death is forever! What says the Scripture? "Eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord"—not a moment, and then it is all over—but eternal destruction. The Scripture has put the two side by side, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal." The same word applies to both. As long as heaven shall shine so long hell shall burn! As long as saints are happy, so long shall those whose impenitence has made them castaways be wretched!

How I recall the time when this truth of God came home to my heart with power! And I can only say of it, that I bless God I ever felt it! I think I would never have hated sin. I would never have fled to Christ if I had not been shown the flower that springs out of the seed of sin. Sinner, do not turn your head away and be angry! If you love sin, look at the child of this ill mother! Sinner, you love sin; that is but the seed—come and see the flower that springs out of it! No, man, look at your own work! Sin is the spark and this is the flame. If you would escape hell, escape sin! If you are afraid of hell, O sinner, be as afraid of sin! May the Lord drive this home! I know I cannot. It is a topic so distasteful that it is not likely that the mind will linger on it. I know you will try to shake it off and dismiss it. "Die," you say, "what is there in that? Or what care we about it?" But I tell you in deepest love, that if the Holy Spirit presses home the question of my text, there will be no sleep for you until you have found the Savior! There will be no rest in you until you find it in Jesus Christ! You will then begin to cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner. Help me to flee from the wrath to come, enable me to hide in the Rock of Ages cleft for me."

Thus I have strived to make plain to you the first point. The soul's fears are awakened when it sees that it must either turn or die, must look these two things in the face, "I must give up my sin, or I must be cast away eternally."

The second truth of the text is this—that where this solemn question is pressed home by the Holy Spirit**—**

II. YOUR HEART WILL BE MOVED.

"Turn you, turn you," says the text, twice over. It is earnest, emphatic, and importunate. "Turn you, turn you." It looks as if it had been wet with tears, or as if a sigh and a groan were in the very sound of it. "Turn you, turn you." It seems to have the plaintive love of a mother about it and yet the majesty and authority of a divine command, "Turn you, turn you." Now, if this shall be brought home to you by God the Holy Spirit, you will begin to say, "Then *I must turn from all my evil practices*. I must be done forever with my drinking and my cursing if I have been guilty of these. I must now be done with Sabbath breaking, with coarse and evil talk. I must be done with all these sins and lusts of the flesh!" "Turn you, turn

you." But, more than this, you will say, "I must have done with my evil thoughts—'let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.' I must have done with proud thoughts, lying thoughts, vain thoughts, and murmuring thoughts. God calls me to turn from them all! I must have done with skeptical notions. I must have done with boastful utterances. I must have done with everything that is contrary to the pure mind of God. But that is not all. The text says, 'Turn you, turn you.' It means that I must turn altogether *from my natural enmity to God.* I must love Him whom I hated! The very things at which I have laughed, I must now reverence. It must by such a complete turning round that the things I despised I must love, and the things I loved I must hate. I hear God saying concerning all my darling pleasures, 'Turn you, turn you!' It will make me change my companions. It will change my way of talking. It will make a new man of me altogether if this text comes with force to me, 'Turn you, turn you.'"

But I think I hear you say, "Oh, *but this is too hard a task,* if to turn is to be as thorough as this! If it were merely a turning from drunkenness to abstinence, or a turning from open vice to morality, I could manage it." Ah, that you might, and a very good thing it might be, my hearer, but it would not save you! The turning that is needed is more than this. "Except you are converted and be as little children you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "You must be born-again." "Well," says one, "then I am bid do a task that is impossible!" Yes, that is true—most true. The exhortation that comes to you is meant to teach you something of your powerlessness. "Turn you, turn you." You can turn from your outward sins, from many evil ways, but if ever you are to be turned from wicked thoughts and evil nature, it will be by something more than your own strength—you will need to look to a stronger arm and a mightier power than a merely mortal one! Listen to me, then, for I think this word will drop like the balm of Gilead, or the honey from the honeycomb. "Turn you, turn you" to Christ, for He can do for you what you could never do for yourself! You cannot resist your sins in your own power. And you cannot change your sinful nature and renew it in purity and holiness! But there is One who can do it for you! I think I see your history. You are like the vessel that is in the stream. It is a mighty stream—so strong, so swift, that no vessel ever came within its tremendous force and escaped there from. The vessel is floating on and the passengers on board are frivolous and happy. They are wondering where the wind came from that makes them sail softly and so swiftly. They dance upon the deck, they drink, they laugh, and they sport the happy hours away. They know not that the maelstrom is but a little way ahead—that there is an awful whirlpool that will suck in the vessel and all its passengers and crew—and take them down to sure destruction! As the vessel sails gaily along there is heard a voice above the wind, "Turn you, turn you," and the captain looks about and wonders from where it came. "Turn you, turn you," comes the cry again, and the passengers go to the helm. A mysterious impulse comes over them all and then, as they

look beyond they can see the gulf, they can see the maelstrom, they can see the danger—and now they are all ready to obey the voice that sounds mysteriously in the air! They rush to the helm, but—O God! O God—it is gone! There is no power to turn it and the vessel is drifting on! She goes more swiftly than ever! She flies upon the stream. "Turn you, turn you!" the voice still sounds, but every passenger is crying, "We are mocked! It must be a demon voice that mocks us, for how can we turn? The helm is gone! In same unguarded hour of ribaldry we unshipped the helm and lost it, and now we cannot turn!" Just then there is seen descending from the skies a bright Spirit. They know Him by the pierced hands and feet, and He comes upon the deck. They cast themselves down before Him, and cry, "Help us! Help us!" and with a touch he refits the helm and turns the vessel around and, against the stream, with many a struggle, she begins to make her way, while a heavenly breeze comes and fans the sail and the vessel is safe! Thank God, she is safe, with all on board! Now, that is your case tonight, my dear hearer! You have got into the stream of sin and your habits have got too strong for you. If it were for you, and for you only, to turn the vessel around, I would despair, but while the voice sounds, "Turn you, turn you!" oh, lift up your eyes to heaven and say, "Master, Jesus, turn us and we shall be turned! Come into our hearts! We trust You, You bleeding One! Your hand was once outstretched to be wounded and made to bleed for sin—stretch it out now to save us from sin, and turn our boat, and make her sail by Your good Spirit in the way of righteousness."

Now this cry, "Turn you, turn you," will be of no use, then, it seems, unless it is attended with the divine power, but when it is, what a great blessing it is! Alas, there are many who hear us who will not turn for all that, but they that are wise will obey the command. My friend, Sir John Burgoyne, once told me that in the Peninsular War he and some other officers were entering—I think it was the town of Salamanca, which stood upon the side of a hill in such a way that a church which was built on the slope would have its roof level with the earth higher up the hill. He went, not knowing anything of danger, in at the door of the church—and there were Frenchmen with guns on the roof to defend the place. He said he could not forget how the courtesies of those brave men, anxious not to shoot officers who were more civil than military, made them to call out "Retire, retire," and how he did retire fast enough and was not anxious to tempt a gun when entreated to retire! Now something like that appears to me to be the position of the ungodly man. He goes where he should not be. He trespasses, but a voice from above which might have been silent—and there might have been a deadly cannonade of divine resentment—calls out, "Retire, retire," tempt Me no longer, sinner! Provoke Me no more! My anger has long been held in! I have restrained Myself! I have sent My Son to you! I have bid you trust Him and love Him! I have called unto you by My servants. I have bid you, repent, but you have not repented—are you still My enemy? You are going on in your sins, but I charge you once again, by My eternal mercy, turn, turn, turn, for why

will you die?" This, then, seems to me to be what the text will do in the heart if God the Holy Spirit sends it home.

And so we shall close with the third point. Should the text be made by God the Holy Spirit to be as an arrow fixed in the heart—

III. IT WILL MAKE AN APPEAL TO THE UNDERSTANDING.

The understanding, being thus appealed to, will begin to ask questions like this—"Why should I die? I know that this death is terrible, indeed. Why should I have to suffer it? What reason is there why I should be subject to it?" And, my dear hearer, if God the Holy Spirit awakens you, you will not be able to give a good answer to that! On the contrary, you will begin, one by one, driving out as foolish all the answers you used to give. You will say, "Oh, I used to say, 'Let well enough alone. What is to be will be.' I used to be quite indifferent to it, but I cannot be indifferent now. Indifferent when I am in danger of death? Indifferent when I may, within the next few minutes, know all that is to be known of eternal things? Careless where eternity is concerned? No, my God, my madness is now over! Behold, I turn to You! I cannot thus answer the question."

Once, too, the sinner could say, "I hated to be troubled. I said do not bother me with any of your religion! Keep it away." But now, "I wish to be troubled—the more troubled I can be, the better, so that I may not be troubled at the last. Once I liked a fashionable preacher who spoke in fine and gaudy words, but who never seemed to insinuate that he had a sinner in his congregation or that there was perdition for the ungodly—but now let me know the worst of my state. Let me be dealt with honestly and faithfully, and if I am in great danger, God grant that I may know it, so that I may escape from it. The more a man can cut open my heart and send the arrow direct into my conscience, the better! I am only afraid lest mortification should set in and that I may die before I can be awakened and healed and saved."

Moreover, if God the Holy Spirit has awakened you, you will *have given up all your other excuses.* Once you said, "I cannot give up my pleasures." Now you say, "I cannot afford to sell my soul for an hour or two of merry effervescence! I cannot give reality for shams. I have tried the world's pleasures and all I can say is, there is nothing in them that is real and satisfying! I am sick and weary of them"—

'I cannot sell my soul so cheap,
Nor part with heaven for you.'"

Once you used to say, "I cannot turn. I could not face my old companions. I could not bear to hear that man that I shall meet tomorrow say, 'Ah, so you have become religious, have you?'" "Now," says the conscience, "I could meet the very devil! I feel as if I would be afraid of no man if I might but be saved." They may laugh who will, but they will not laugh you to destruction if the Holy Spirit should really send home the text! Mark you, I am only speaking on that supposition, and then the soul will say, "Afraid of man? No, I am too much afraid of God! Afraid of being laughed at? No, I am too much afraid of hearing the voice, 'Depart you cursed.' I may well bear the laughter of men so that I may escape the wrath of God!"

You used to say, "Time enough yet," but if this text comes home, you will not say that. You will feel as if every moment were important and as if every tick of the clock might be your last. You will be asking that you may hide in Jesus, and that you may hide there at once! You used to say, "Pshaw! Religious people are all hypocrites!" But you will not say that now, or if you do, you will say, "That is no reason why I should not be sincere. If every minister should be a insincere pretender and every professor should be a hypocrite, what will that matter to me? Must not I escape *personally* from the wrath to come? Their being condemned, as they justly must be if they are hypocrites, will not make my doom any more light and, therefore, I will not hide behind an accusing of others, but I will accuse myself." I do not know how it is, dear friends. I did want to bring home this text to the heart, but I am conscious now, more than ever, that it is not for *me* to bring it home, but for the Master to do it. I can say, "Turn you, turn you," but He can turn you! I can tell you of this death, but He can enable you to feel its terrible power. I can tell you of the love and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, but He can make you to pant and thirst after them! And remember, if you want them, you may have them! If you desire Christ, you may have Him! If there is a sinner here that would to saved, let him flee to Jesus! Let him, sitting where he is, look to Christ with his soul's eyes as He hangs upon the cross. Rest your soul upon Him, sinner! Black as it is, trust Him to cleanse it. Though you are altogether ruined and undone, if you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes! Never did a soul rest on Christ and find Him fail him. Come to Him! Come to Him! The doors of His heart are opened! He is waiting to receive you! You need not wait until you are prepared—come as you are! Come in your loathsomeness if such is your state. Come in spiritual ruin and depravity if such is your condition. Come now! Come now! "Why will you die?" Mercy provides the means of life. Christ died. Why will you die? Christ lives, why should not you live?

I remember a powerful preacher once finishing a sermon which God had helped him to deliver with extraordinary force, by turning to his congregation and asking, "Why will you die?" Then he paused and continued, "What reason have you? What motive, what argument, what apologies, what excuses? *Why* will you die?" Then he stopped a moment, and said, "Why *will* you die? Why *will* you? Why this desperate resolve? Why this firmness? You vacillate elsewhere—why be so obstinate here? Why will you? Why is your heart set fast like iron? You can bend like a willow towards the wrong—why are you firm as granite against the right? Why *will* you die?" Then looking round his congregation, and picking out certain members of it, he said, "Why will *you* die? You gray heads who have had such an experience of the vanity of the world, why will *you* die? You young people to whom there is such happiness offered, why will you *die*? You chief of sinners, whose doom will be so terrible, why will you die? You moralists, you amiable ones, you who seem to have some desire towards God, why will you die? So he put it to each one. And then he came to the last, "Why will you die? Why will you be driven from God's

presence? Why will you receive His curse? Why will you make your bed in hell? Why will you dwell with the devouring fire? Why will you abide in everlasting banishment from God? Why will you die? Do you see anything so tempting in the face of doom? Is there anything so sweet in that grim lake of fire? Why will you die?" Oh, may the force of this exhortation come home to you—"Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, house of Israel?" May the Lord put His arm to this work and then great good shall be done—and His shall be the glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 3:12-25.

Verse 12-14. *Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, backsliding Israel, says the LORD; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you.* There is a mixed figure here, but there is no mixed sense—children and yet married unto Him. The bond was a double one—they were begotten and betrothed. God cares little about the rules of human oratory and formal eloquence. If His meaning can only be made perfectly plain, He freely breaks through all such rules and regulations as we properly make for our talk. "O backsliding children I am married unto you."

14. *And I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.* That is, "two of a tribe," for the word, "family," was used in a very large sense in those times and comprehended perhaps the whole of one of the twelve tribes.

15. *And I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* The backsliders, when they come back, shall not be left outside the fold, but they shall have shepherds to watch over them. And they shall not be left to a lean pasture, but they shall be fed with knowledge and understanding. This is fine fare for the hungry soul! Knowledge is good, but understanding is better. To know may be of little service unless we have the inner and deeper knowledge with it and understand what we know. These pastors shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. They shall not only teach, but teach so that you cannot fail to learn!

16. *And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more. The ark of the covenant of the LORD; neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.* Ceremonial retreats into the dim background when the spiritual is in full vigor! They have come to God for themselves and they now need not that

sacred ark of gopher wood lined within and without with gold. In the present day those that walk near to God think but little of the eternal. That which God commands they obey, but their confidence lies in Him. True religion is not a form, but a life—and the soul living near to God is the main, the really essential thing.

17. *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.* This is, I believe, yet to be literally fulfilled in Jerusalem, itself, and also spiritually to be fulfilled in the church, when she shall not be behind the nations but become their head and take the lead in all of blessing for mankind!

18, 19. *In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your father. But I said, How shall I put you among the children?* As if God, Himself, were at a pass and brought to a nonplus! These people had sinned so much and had been driven, consequently, to the ends of the earth. "I said, How shall I put you among the children?"

19. *And give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations and I said, You shall call Me, My father.* When God gives us the spirit of children, then it becomes easy for Him to put us among the children! Where the nature of children is given by divine regeneration, the rights of children may well be given by adoption! "I said, You shall call Me, My Father."

19. *And shall not turn away from Me.* I always look upon that second part of the blessing as being perhaps the richer of the two! The final perseverance of the saints forms the cluster of crown jewels that is found in the casket of the covenant. "You shall not depart from Me. You shall not turn away from Me." Oh—

"If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ could fall away
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall ten thousand times a day!"

But He that has begun the good work has promised to carry it on. There is our safety and our rest! "You shall call Me, My Father, and shall not turn away from Me."

20-21. *Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high place, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.* The worst of crimes—that a wife should be false to her marriage vows and turn aside from her husband whom she is bound to love! And very seldom is it that a husband calls a treacherous wife back again—but God, in infinite mercy, hates putting away. He cannot bear divorce. He still holds to the object of His love and, therefore, complains with a sweet fidelity of affection, of the treachery of Israel. And

while He is doing it, a voice is heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel, for they have perverted their way and have forgotten Jehovah their God—and, therefore, what was there for them but sorrow? They were on their high places offering sacrifices and incense to their new gods! And instead of joy and holy Psalms and hymns of delight, they were crying like the priests of Baal and cutting themselves and torturing themselves! God heard it—weeping and supplications—but not to Him, for they had perverted their way. Their sorrow did not come from Him, for they had forgotten the Lord their God. But that sorrow had something hopeful about it. They found no joy in their new gods and derived no comfort from their backslidings.

22. *Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* Oh, the wonderful mercy of God! He treats sin as a disease. It was a grand thought, that, on God's part, that He would not so much look upon sin as being a willful deed and crime, but would look upon it as a malady of the mind and soul. "I will *heal* your backslidings." And see the sweet answer that Israel gives to this—

22. *Behold, we come unto You, for You are the LORD our God.* Oh, that that answer might come from every backsliding heart that is here tonight**—**that there might be a restoration of the wanderer to his God!

23. *Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains.* See, they were trying to get it from their high places! They lifted up their voices to their gods, but they only learned to mourn and weep. "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains."

23-25. *Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.* May such repentance as that fall to the lot of any wanderers who listen now to my words!

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

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SOLACE FOR SAD HEARTS
NO. 3325

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To console them that mourn in Zion."
Isaiah 61:3. *(NKJV)*

IT is no small advantage to know beyond mistake of whom this is declared. Our gracious Master has appropriated this as His very own and we can be under no possible delusion now when we see in this servant of the Lord, the Son of God, Himself. When in the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath, He read before the astonished congregation this marvelous passage from the Scripture roll and then handed it back to the leader of the synagogue. He began to interpret it by saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is no surprise for us to find that His hearers fastened their eyes upon Him in admiring wonder because of "the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth."

Think what was the burden of this unique discourse! It was concerning Himself as the preacher of good tidings—as the binder up of the brokenhearted and the liberator of the enslaved!

No doubt there was an allusion here to the ancient Jewish jubilee. When the silver trumpet sounded in the morning because the 50th year had come, that moment every captive throughout Judaea's land was free and none could hold him in bondage—

"The year of jubilee is come,
Return, you ransomed captives, home."

That is the song I want my hearers to sing now. Jesus Christ proclaims it—*proclaims* it. Do you notice that! A proclamation is a message which all loyal subjects are sure to attend to. It is not headed V. R.—*Vivat Rex!* But *Vivat Rex Jehovah!* Long live Jehovah the King! He issues the proclamation from His throne and bids His Son tell captive souls that Christ Jesus sets them free! Let them but believe Him and they shall rise to instant liberty! The Lord grant that many may accept this good news! We may expect it, for the Spirit of God rests upon the preaching of Christ.

But there is yet another proclamation, and that of a double kind. There is a necessary connection between the two, "the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God." It is because God has visited and executed vengeance upon our sins when laid on His dear Son as our Savior, that now it is possible for us to find acceptance through Him. Out of this there springs, therefore, the reasonable ground of comfort for them that mourn. The Savior's sacrifice is a full fountain of

hope for hearts that sorrow for sin. No mourner need despond, much less despair, since God has executed the sentence of His wrath upon the Great Substitute, that He might freely accept every sinner that believes! We are now going a step farther and instead of reminding you that those who mourn may be comforted, we shall proclaim the loving-kindness of the Lord and make it clear that God has a peculiar regard to mourners—and that he has appointed, provided and reserved special blessings for them. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." So runs the eternal purpose and so did our Lord declare in the opening of His Sermon on the Mount.

The anointed Savior came "to console them that mourn in Zion." Consider carefully four things. *What are they doing?* They mourn. *Where are they doing it?* In Zion. *Who thinks of them?* The Great God who here speaks about them. And *what is He doing for them?* His purposes are "to console them that mourn in Zion." First, then—

I. WHAT ARE THEY DOING—these people of whom the text speaks? They are *mourning*. Not a very cheerful occupation. Nobody will be very much attracted towards them by that fact. Most men choose lively, happy company—and mourners are generally left alone. Are they not to be greatly pitied? Reason thinks not! But faith has heard Jesus say, "Blessed are they that mourn" and, therefore, she believes it to be better to be a mourning saint than a merry sinner—and she is willing to take her place on the stool of penitence and weep, rather than sit in the seat of the scorner and laugh!

Because these people mourn, *they differ from other people.* If they are mourning in Zion, their case is peculiar. There is evidently a distinction between them and the great majority of mankind, for men of the world are often lighthearted and frivolous, never thinking or looking to the future. So unreal is their happiness that it would not bear the weight of an hour's quiet consideration! And so they make mirth in order to drown all thought of their true state. They are all for pastimes, amusements, gaieties—these are your lighthearted, jolly fellows who drink wine in bowls and "drive dull care away." It is greatly wise for a man to commune with his own heart upon his bed and be still, but these foolish ones never do this and, therefore, they flash with the effervescence of mirth and sparkle with false joy! Those who mourn in Zion are very different from these giddy, superficial people. In fact, they cannot bear them, but are grieved with their foolish conversation—as any man of sense may well be! Who wants to have these blowflies forever buzzing about him? The gracious ones who mourn in Zion are as different from them as the lily from the hemlock, or as the dove from the hawk. He who allows reason to take its proper place and to be taught right reason by the Word of God, from that time separates himself from the giddy throng and takes the cool sequestered path which leads to God.

Equally does this mourning separate the gospel mourner from the obstinate and the daring, for alas, many are so wicked as to wear a

bronze brow and exhibit a heart of steel in the presence of the Lord. They defy the divine wrath and impudently scorn the punishment due to sin! Like Pharaoh, they ask, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" They despise death, judgment, eternity and set themselves in battle array against the Almighty! Those who mourn in Zion are not of this company, for they tremble at the word of the Lord. Their hearts are sensitive to the faintest sign of God's displeasure and when they know that they have done that which is grievous in His sight, immediately their sorrow overflows! They deeply lament their provocations and humbly pray that they may be kept from further offenses.

Zion's mourners are also very different from the self-conceited who are puffed up with high notions of their own excellence. They are never known to assert that from their youth up they have kept all the commandments, nor do they even dream of thanking God that they are better than others! Room for boasting they find not, for they rather abhor themselves in dust and ashes! Their sins, follies and failings are a daily burden to them and they loathe the very idea of self-satisfaction!

Those who mourn in Zion are not among those loud professors who glory in the abundance of their grace and reckon that they are out of the reach of temptation. You will never hear them cry, "My mountain stands firm! I shall never be moved!" No, their prayer is, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." Holy anxiety to be found sincere and acceptable with God prevents all self-confidence. I would not encourage doubts and fears, but I will go the length of the poet and say—

"He that never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps he may, too late."

I fear that not a few who dream that they possess strong faith are under a strong delusion to believe a lie. And instead of having the confidence which is worked of the Spirit of Lord, which is quite consistent with holy mourning, they feel a false confidence based upon themselves and, therefore, founded upon the sand! This puffs them up with a false peace and makes them talk exceedingly proud, to the sorrow of the Lord's wounded ones. The Lord's people should prudently get out of the way of these lofty spirits who grieve the humble in heart! They are the strong cattle of whom Ezekiel speaks, which thrust with horn and shoulder, and despise the weak ones whom God has chosen! Lord, let my portion be with the mourners, and not with the boasters! Let me take my share with those who weep for sin and weep after You! And as for those who are careless, or those who are rebellious, or those who are self-righteous—let them take their frothy joy and drain the cup—for true saints desire not its intoxicating draught!

The mourners in Zion are not only different from other people, but they are also *much changed from their former selves.* They are scarcely aware of the great change which they have undergone, but even their mourning is an evidence of their being new creatures. The things wherein they formerly rejoiced are now their horror, while other things which they

once despised, they now eagerly desire. They have put away their ornaments—their finery of pride they have exchanged for the sackcloth of repentance! Their noisy merriment for humble confession! They now wonder how they could have thought the ways of sin to be pleasurable and feel as if they could weep their eyes out because of their extreme folly! You would not think that they were the same people! In fact, to tell you the truth, they are *not* the same, for they have been born again and have undergone a new creation of which their humiliation before God is no mean sign. Their hearts of stone have been taken away and the Lord has given them hearts of flesh—to feel, to tremble, to lament, and to seek the Lord!

God's mourners also find themselves *different from what they are at times even now,* for they see themselves wander and immediately they quarrel with themselves and smite upon their offending breasts! Such occasions of self-abhorrence they find daily. The man who is satisfied with himself had better search his heart, for there are signs of rottenness about him. The man who is deeply discontented with himself is probably growing fast into the full likeness of Christ. Do you, dear friend, feel that you could justify yourself as to all that you have done, or thought, or felt today from morning to evening—at home or abroad, in the shop or in the street? Oh, no! I am sure you will confess that in many things you have fallen short and you will penitently grieve before the living God. You would not on any account do or say again all that you have done and said! You bless God who has sanctified you and delivered you from the dominion of sin, but still you have to complain that sin has a fearful power to lead you into captivity and, therefore, you are not pleased with yourself—and are more ready to join in a confession, than in a hymn of self-glorifying. The text says of mourners of that kind that God has appointed great things for them, and therefore let us pray the Holy Spirit to work this mourning in us.

Now, *this mourning*, of which we are speaking, *is part and parcel of these people's lives.* When they began to live to Christ, they began to mourn. Every child of God is born again with a tear in his or her eyes. Dry eyed faith is not the faith of God's elect. He who rejoices in Christ, at the same time mourns for sin! Repentance is joined to faith by loving bonds, as the Siamese twins were united in one. The new birth always takes place in the chamber of sorrow of sin—it cannot be otherwise! The true Christian was a mourner at conversion and since then he has been a mourner, even in the happiest day he has known. When was that? The happiest day I ever knew was when I found Jesus to be my Savior and when I felt the burden of my sins roll from off me. "Oh, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away," but I mourned that day to think that I had been so greatly polluted and had needed that my Lord should die to put away my sin! I mourned to think that I had not loved and trusted the Savior before—and before the sun went down I was mourning to think that I did not—even then—love my Lord as I desired! I had not gone

many paces on the road to heaven before I began to mourn that I limped so badly, that I traveled so slowly and was so little like my Lord. So that I know by experience that on the very brightest day of his spiritual experience, a true believer still feels a soft, sweet mourning in his heart, falling like one of those gentle showers which cool the heat of our summer days and yield pleasurable refreshment. Holy mourning is the blessed pillar of cloud which accompanies the redeemed of the Lord in their glad march to heaven! Dear brothers and sisters, to some extent we live by mourning! Do not imagine we do not rejoice, for in truth, "we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," but this is quite consistent with holy mourning. We sorrow every day that there should be any remains of sin in us, that we should still be open to temptation and should have the slightest inclination to evil. We mourn that our eyes should look so longingly on vanity and that our tongue should be so apt to speak unadvisedly. We mourn that our right hand should be so unskillful in holy service and that we should be so apt to let it be seen of men when we are giving to the Lord! We mourn especially that our heart should still be unbelieving, unfeeling and fickle. Yet, we are very happy, but we mourn to think that being so happy, we are not more holy—that, being so favored, we are not more consecrated! We "rejoice with trembling."

To the Lord's mourners godly sorrow is so essentially a part of themselves that *they grow while they mourn* and even grow by mourning. A man never becomes better till he is weary of being imperfect. He who is satisfied with his attainments will stay where he is. But he who mourns that he is not yet up to the standard will press forward till he reaches it. He that says, "My faith is weak," is the man who will become stronger in faith. He who confesses that his love is not so intense as it ought to be, will have more love before long. He who mourns daily that he has not obtained that which he desires is by that very agony of spirit approaching the goal! It will be well that mourning should be our companion till we come to the gates of paradise—and there we shall mourn no longer! I was going to say, so precious is the mourning which the Spirit works in us that we might almost regret parting with it! Rowland Hill used to say he felt half sorry to think that he must part with the tears of repentance at the gates of heaven. And he was right, for holy mourning is blessed, sweet, safe and satisfying. The bitterness is so completely evaporated that we can truly say—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee!
And then I would—oh that I might—
A constant weeper be."

Dear friends, *holy mourning is no mere melancholy or sickly fancy*—it has abundant reasons whereby to justify it. We do not mourn because we give way to needless dependency, but we lament because it would be utter madness to do otherwise! We cannot help mourning. A Christian

grieves over himself and his shortcomings. And this not from mock modesty, but because he sees so much to sigh over. He will tell you that he never thinks worse of himself than he ought to do—that the very worst condemnation he has ever pronounced upon himself was most richly deserved. If you praise him, you pain him. If you commend him, he disowns your approbation and tells you that if you knew him better, you would think less of him and you would see so much infirmity and imperfection within him that you would not again expose him to danger by uttering flatteries!

A child of God also mourns because he is in sympathy with others. It is one part of the work of grace in the soul to give us considerateness for our afflicted brothers and sisters. Is a child of God, himself, prosperous? He recollects others who are poor and in adversity and he feels bound with them. He is a member of the body and, therefore, he suffers with the other members. If each believer were distinct and separate and kept his own joy to himself and his sorrow to himself, he might more often rejoice. But, being a member of a body which is always more or less afflicted, he weeps because others weep and mourns because others mourn. The more sympathy you have in your nature, the more sorrow you will experience. It is the unsympathetic man who laughs every day—but the friendly, tender, brotherly, Christ-like spirit must mourn—it is inevitable!

And chiefly do believers mourn because of the sins of others. This great city furnishes us with abundant occasion for deep concern. You can hardly go down a street but you hear such filthy language that it makes your blood chill in your veins! The sharpest blow could not cause us more pain than the hearing of profanity. And then the Sabbath—how little is it regarded! And the things of God—how little are they cared for! Everywhere a child of God with his eyes open must have them filled with tears. And if his heart is as it ought to be, it must be ready to break! Alas, the cause is frequently in the Christian's own family! He has an ungodly child or an unconverted wife. A Christian woman may have a drunken husband, or a godly daughter may have a dissipated father. These things make life gloomy beyond expression. Woe is me, cries the saint, that I dwell as among lions, with those who are set on the fire of hell. Ill society makes a child of God sick at heart. As Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and as David cried for the wings of a dove that he might fly away and be at rest, so do the saints pine in this world! Let such mourners take heart while they perceive in the text that Jesus has come to comfort all that mourn. Now, secondly, let us note—

II. *WHERE* THESE PEOPLE ARE MOURNING. They are mourning *in Zion.* They could not carry their griefs to a better place. Sorrow is so common that we find mourners in Babylon and Tyre, and even in Sodom and Gomorrah! But these are of a different order from the mourners in Zion.

If we are wearing our sackcloth in the house of the Lord, let us thank God, in the first place, that we are not mourning in hell! We might have

been there. We *should* have been there if we had received our due! But we are mourning where mourning meets with acceptance from God. We are lamenting where a dirge can be changed into a song. I thank God, also, that we are not mourning as those do who fiendishly regret that accidentally they have done a good thing. You remember how angry Pharaoh was with himself because he had let Israel go—I have known men who have never been penitent till they have, by mistake, done something good, or given too much away! They could gnaw their own hearts out for having done a good turn to another! God save us from such diabolical mourning as that! And yet it is not uncommon.

We have known some mourn, too, because they could not do others a mischief—because their hands were tied and they could not hurt God's people. Like Haman, they have fretted because of Mordecai. They cannot endure the prosperity of the godly, but would gladly take them for a prey and make them as the mire of the streets. That is a horrible mourning which makes a man have fellowship with Satan!

Some even mourn because they cannot take their fling of sin. They would like to indulge every vile passion, have a mint of money at their command and none to check them in any way—and they mourn because they are hedged up and hindered from destroying themselves! Such foolish ones mourn on the ale bench. They mourn in the synagogue of Satan. But as for God's people, they mourn in Zion!

Now let us indulge ourselves with a visit to the courts of Zion to see in what parts thereof the mourners may be found, for from her outer walls even to her innermost courts, you will find her inhabited by them! Some of them mourn just hard by the walls of the holy city. Like the Jews of the present day, they have their wailing place under the walls of Jerusalem. Poor souls! They dare not enter into the holy place, and yet they will not, cannot go away! They wait at the gates of wisdom's house and they delight in the posts of her doors. They never like to be away when the saints assemble, yet they feel as if they had no right to be there. They are satisfied with any corner and are content to stand all the service through. They take the lowest seats and reverence the meanest child of God!

They sometimes fear that the good word is not for them and yet like the dogs, they come under the table hoping for a morsel. If it is a sermon full of thunder, "Yes," they say, "the minister means me!" But if it is very sweet and full of comfort they say, "Alas, I dare not think *that* it is for me." They would not stay away from the holy congregation, for they feel that their only hope must lie in hearing the gospel—and they half hope that a word of comfort may be dropped for them—but yet they come trembling. They are like the robin redbreast in the winter time—they venture near the house and tap upon the window pane—and yet are half afraid to come in. When the cold is very severe and they are very hungry, they are daring and pick up a crumb or two. Still, for the most part, they

stand at the temple door and mourn. They are in Zion and they sigh and cry because they feel unworthy so much as to lift their eyes towards heaven! Ah, well, the Lord appoints great blessings for you—He is good to those who seek Him. He has regard to the cry of the humble. He will not despise their prayer. Now, if the archenemy should ever suggest to you that it is of no use for you to be found hearing the Word of God, for you have heard the preacher so many times and even for *years* have remained unblessed and, therefore, it is all hopeless—tell him he is a liar! Be all the more diligent in your attendance and strive to lay hold of what is preached. He will persuade you not to come when you are most likely to get a blessing! Whenever you feel as if, "Really, I cannot go again, for I am so often condemned and find no comfort," say to yourself, "Now, I will go this time with all the more hope! Satan is laboring to prevent my going because he fears that Christ will meet with me." Oh, seeking mourner, forsake not the courts of Zion, though you flood them with your tears. Be found where the gospel note tells of Jesus! Be found at the prayer meetings. Be found on your knees. Be found with your Bible open before you, searching for the promise and, above all, believe that Jesus came to save such as you are—and cast yourself upon Him!

Many ransomed ones have been enabled to enter the temple a little way. At the entrance of the holy place stood *the laver* full of water, where the priests were known to wash themselves. He who frequents the courts of Zion will often mourn at that laver, for he will say, "Alas, that I should need such washing! Alas, that I should so frequently spot my garments and defile my feet! Cleanse You me, O God. Wash me day by day. Dear Savior, cleanse You me from secret faults." These mourners are deeply grieved at what others consider little spots, for sin hurts their tender consciences and in the light of God sin is seen to be exceedingly sinful in those whom God so highly favors. Hard by the laver stood *the altar*, where they offered the victims. Now, he who sees the one great sacrifice by which sin was put away, while he rejoices in the finished atonement, also laments the sin which slew the substitute! Many a time may you hear the plaintive sing—

"Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

The surer we are of our pardon the more we mourn over our sin. We look on Him whom we have pierced, and a mourning takes hold upon us like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo when Judah lamented the best of kings and saw her sun go down in blood. Awakened souls mourn for Jesus as one that is in bitterness for his first born. You can never stand at the altar and see Jesus bleed without your own heart bleeding if, indeed, the life of God is in you! Can any but a heart of stone be unmoved at the sight of Calvary? Blessed are they who amidst their

joy for pardoned guilt wash the pierced feet of Jesus with tears of love and grief!

Further on in the holy place, as you will recollect, there stood *the altar of incense.* It was placed before the veil which hid the holy of holies, but that veil is torn. Now, they whom mourn in Zion often stand and weep as they think of Him whose prayers are the incense which God accepts—even Jesus, by whose intercession we live! They think, "Alas, that I should be so cold in prayer when Jesus pleads so earnestly!" They look over their own intercessions and they see such faultiness, such wandering of thought, such coldness of heart, such forgetfulness, such pride, such lack of faith, such utter unworthiness that they cannot help deeply mourning! Besides, they remember when Satan desired to have them and sift them as wheat—and would have destroyed them if Jesus had not prayed for them—and they mourn the state of heart which placed them in such jeopardy. As by faith they perceive how sweet the merits of Jesus are, they remember their own ill savor and begin anew to loathe themselves. Their very sense of acceptance in the Beloved fills them with humiliation! It seems too wonderful that Jesus should do so much for them and make them so sweet to the Lord. Great love is a melting flame. When we nestle like doves in the bosom of our Lord, we mourn like the loving turtledove—we mourn because of the great love which makes us almost too happy. We rejoice with trembling and feel both fear and exceedingly great joy!

And then, those who entered the holy place would see a table covered with loaves of bread. It was called *the table of the showbread.* Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is that bread and we feed on Him as the priests of old did on the showbread. But I confess I never stand there, myself, and think of how He feeds my soul with His own self, without mourning that I have not a larger appetite for Him and that I do not more continually feed upon Him. I lament that I ever hoped to find bread elsewhere, or tried to feed on the swine husks of the world. Oh, to hunger and thirst after Christ, for this is to be blessed! Oh, to feed upon a whole Christ, even to the fullest, for this is to be satisfied with royal dainties! We cannot feed on Jesus without mourning that others are starving and that we are not more eager to bring them to the banquet! We cannot feed on Jesus without mourning that we are not, ourselves, more familiar with heaven's bread, so as to know how to hand it out that the dying multitudes of our great cities may be fed! O Lord, cause Your people more and more to lay to heart the sad fact that millions are famishing for want of the bread of heaven!

Within the holy place also stood *the seven-branched candlestick*, which was always burning and giving forth its pearly light. Before it we also mourn. When we rejoice in the light of God's Holy Spirit we cannot help mourning over our natural darkness and our former hatred of the light of God. We also mourn to think that we, ourselves, shine with so feeble a

ray that our light does not so shine before men as to glorify God to the fullest extent. We cannot enjoy the light of the divine Spirit without praying that we may have more of it. We acknowledge that if we have but little of it, it is our own fault, for He is ready to light us up with a splendor which shall make the sons of men to wonder from where such a luster came! We also mourn because the nations sit in darkness and death shade and refuses the heavenly light of God. And thus, you see, we mourn in Zion, from the entrance even to the innermost court.

Even when we pass through the torn veil and stand at *the mercy seat*, and enjoy the believer's true place and privilege, we still mourn. We think of the law, covered by the propitiatory and we mourn our breaches of it. We think of the pot of manna and mourn the days when we called the heavenly food, "light bread." We remember Aaron's rod that budded and say to ourselves, "Alas, it is a memorial of my own rebellion as well as of my Lord's power!" We ask ourselves, "Where is my pot of manna of remembered mercy? Alas, my rod does not bud and blossom as it should, but often it is dry and fruitless! Alas, that law which my Lord hid in His heart—how little respect have I had for it or remembrance of it." And then, looking at the golden mercy seat, we wet it with our tears because here the blood drops fell, by which we are brought near. The glory of Jehovah between the cherubim bows us down and we cry, "Woe is me, for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Our impurity prostrates us when, like Isaiah, we behold the glory of the Lord! Is it not meet that it should be so?

Thus, you see, from the outer courts of Zion, right into the holy of holies, every spot suggests mourning! And true children of God yield to the influence thereof. In every place of mercy and privilege which they occupy they look down upon themselves with shame and confusion of face. Old master Dyer used to say, "When the peacock shows his fine feathers, he ought to recollect that he has black feet and a horrible voice." And so, truly, whenever we are full of divine graces and blessings it becomes us to recollect what we are by nature—and what there is of impurity still lurking within us—that we may be humble and with our confidence in Jesus may mingle repentance of sin! Thus much upon where they mourn. And now, thirdly—

III. WHO THINKS OF THESE MOURNERS? Who consoles those that mourn in Zion? Who looks upon poor and needy souls? Very often their friends shun them—if they mourn much and long, their friends shun their society and their familiar acquaintances know them no more. There are places of worship where mourners in Zion might come and go by the year together and no one would utter a sympathetic word! A broken heart might bleed to death before any hand would offer to bind it up! I love to see Christian people anxious after poor mourners and eager to meet with penitent and desponding ones. It ought not to be possible, dear friends, in an assembly of believers, for a mourning soul to come and go many times without some Barnabas—some son of consolation, seeking him out

and offering a word of good cheer in the name of the Lord! But mark this—whoever forgets the mourner, the Lord does not! There are three divine persons who remember the mourner! The first *is the eternal Father.* Read the first part of the chapter. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because *the LORD* has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. *He has* sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." God, the ever blessed Father, pities His sorrowing children and has respect unto their prayers! Poor soul, you are deeply wounded because of your sin and no one on earth knows it, yet your heavenly Father knows the thoughts of your heart and He tenderly sympathizes with your anguish of mind! Where are you standing, poor fretting Hannah? You woman of a sorrowful spirit, I come not, like Eli, to judge you harshly and censure you unjustly. Where are you? Do you mourn and sigh after your Lord? Then go in peace! The Lord grant you your petition. It shall surely be done unto you according to your faith. God, the eternal Father, first of all, remembers those who mourn. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me."

Moreover, *God the Son* has the same kind thoughts towards His mourners. What does the first verse say? "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon *Me.*" And you know that it is Christ who speaks. "The Lord has anointed Me to bind up the brokenhearted." Jesus, then, undertakes the cause of the troubled! He was a mourner all His days and, therefore, He is very tender towards mourners—

"He knows what fierce temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

"I know their sorrows," He says. "In all their afflictions, He was afflicted." He was made perfect through sufferings. Rejoice, O mourner, for the Man of Sorrows thinks upon you!

And then *the Holy Spirit*—the third person of the blessed Trinity—according to the text remembers mourners. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me," He says, "because the LORD has anointed Me." Yes, You blessed Spirit, You are the Comforter and who can You comfort but mourners? It would be useless to comfort those who never knew a sorrow! It were a superfluity to attempt to offer consolation to those who were never depressed! The Holy Spirit hovers like a dove over the assemblies of the Sabbath and whenever He finds a heart which is broken with a sense of sin, He alights there and brings light and peace and hope! Be of good courage, then, you mourners, for the three divine persons unite on your behalf! The one God thinks upon you and the gentleness and tenderness of His almighty heart are moved towards you! Is not this good cheer? Our fourth and last point is this—

IV. WHAT DOES THE LORD DO FOR THEM?—"*To console them that mourn in Zion.*"

Let us take first the ordinary rendering of the text—"*To appoint them.*" God makes appointments to bless mourners. It is His decree, His ordinance, His purpose to bless those who mourn in Zion. Some

mourners are greatly frightened at predestination—they are afraid of the divine decrees. Be of good comfort, there is no decree in God's great book against a mourner! "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek you Me in vain." God's terrible decrees are against the proud, whom His soul hates, and He will break them in pieces. But as for the humble and the meek, His purposes concerning them are full of grace. Read the following verses and see—"To give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." It is registered in the record office above and stands in His eternal book and so must it be, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they *shall be* comforted." When you think of the decrees, remember this decree and be of good comfort.

But an equally accurate rendering of the text is, "*To provide* for those that mourn in Zion." "To provide." God not only purposes to bless, but He does bless His mourners. Our heavenly Father prepares good gifts for His mourning family. For whom did Jesus die but for mourners? For whom does He live but for mourners? For whom are the blessings of His coming but for mourners? O you that are troubled because of sin, and hate it—all God's heart goes out towards you, and all the riches of the everlasting covenant are yours! Make bold to take them, since for mourners they are provided. For whom are clothes but for the naked? For whom are alms provided but for the needy? For whom the bath but for the filthy? For whom the medicine but for the sick? For whom God's grace but for you that need it and mourn because of your need? Come and welcome! The Lord bring you to Himself at this very hour! Amen.

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THE WONDROUS COVENANT
NO. 3326

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." Hebrews 8:10.

THE doctrine of the divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and of grace. May God grant us now the power to instruct—and you the grace to receive instruction on this vital subject.

The human race in the order of history, as far as this world is concerned, first stood in subjection to God under the covenant of works. Adam was the representative man. A certain law was given him. If he kept it, he and all his posterity would be blessed as the result of obedience. If he broke it, he would incur the curse, himself, and entail it on all represented by him. That covenant our first father broke. He fell—he failed to fulfill his obligations—and in his fall he involved us all, for we were all in his loins and he represented us before God. Our ruin, then, was complete before we were born! We were ruined by him who stood as our first representative. To be saved by the works of the law is impossible, for under that covenant we are already lost. If saved at all, it must be all quite a different plan, not on the plan of doing and being rewarded for it, for that has been tried—and the representative man upon whom it was tried has failed for us all. We have all failed in his failure! It is hopeless, therefore, to expect to win divine favor by anything that we can do, or merit divine blessing by way of reward!

But divine mercy has interposed and provided a plan of salvation from the fall. That plan is another covenant; a covenant made with Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who is fitly called by the apostle, "the Second Adam," because He stood again as the representative of man. Now, the second covenant, *as far as Christ was concerned*, was a covenant of works quite as much as the other! It was on this wise: Christ shall come into the world and perfectly obey the divine law. He shall also, inasmuch as the first Adam has broken the law, suffer the *penalty of sin*. If He shall do both of these, then all whom He represents shall be blessed in His blessedness and saved because of His merit. You see, then, that until our

Lord came into this world, it was a covenant of works towards Him. He had certain works to perform, upon condition of which certain blessings would be given to us. Our Lord has kept that covenant! His part in it has been fulfilled to the last letter! There is no commandment which He has not honored. There is no penalty of the broken law which He has not endured! He became a servant and obedient, yes, obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He has thus done what the first Adam could not accomplish and He has retrieved what the first Adam forfeited by his transgression. He has *established* the covenant, and now it ceases to be a covenant of works, for the works are all done!—

"Jesus did them, did them all,
Long, long ago."

And now what remains of the covenant? God on His part has solemnly pledged Himself to give undeserved favor to as many as were represented in Christ Jesus. For as many as the Savior died for, there is stored up a boundless mass of blessing which shall be given to them—not through their works, but as the sovereign gift of the grace of God, according to His covenant promise by which they shall be saved!

Behold, my brothers and sisters, the hope of the sons of man! The hope of their saving themselves is crushed, for they are already lost! The hope of their being saved by works is a fallacious one, for they cannot keep the law—they have already broken it! But there is a way of salvation opened on this wise—whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ—receives and partakes of the bliss which Christ has bought! All the blessings which belong to the covenant of grace through the work of Christ shall belong to every soul that believes in Jesus! Whoever works not, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, unto him shall the blessing of the new covenant of grace be undoubtedly given!

I hope that this explanation is plain enough. If Adam had kept the law, we would have been blessed by his keeping it. He broke it and we have been cursed through him. Now the Second Adam, Christ Jesus, has kept the law—we are, therefore, if believers, represented in Christ and blessed with the results of the obedience of Jesus Christ to His Father's will. He said of old, "Lo, I come to do Your will, O God! Your law is My delight." He has done that will and the blessings of grace are now freely given to the sons of men!

I shall ask your attention then, first, *to the privileges of the covenant of grace.* Secondly, *to the parties concerned in it.* This will be quite enough, I am sure, for consideration this evening during the brief period allotted to our sermon.

I. As to THE PRIVILEGES OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

The first privilege is that *to as many as are interested in it there shall be given an illumination of their minds.* "I will put My law in their minds." By nature we are dark towards God's will. Conscience keeps up in us a sort of broken recollection of what God's will was. It is a monument of God's will, but it is often hardly legible. A man does not care to read it—he is averse to what he reads there. "Their foolish heart was dark," is the

expression of Scripture with regard to the mind of man. But the Holy Spirit is promised to those interested in the covenant. He shall come upon their minds and shed light instead of darkness, illuminating them as to what the will of God is. The ungodly man has some degree of light, but it is merely intellectual. It is a light that he does not love. He loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. But where the Holy Spirit comes, He floods the soul with a divine luster in which the soul delights and desires to participate to the fullest degree! Brothers and sisters, the renewed man, the man under the covenant of grace, does not need constantly to resort to his Bible to learn what he ought to do, nor to go to some fellow Christian to ask instructions. He has not got the law of God now written on a tablet of stone, or upon parchment, or upon paper—he has got the law written upon his own mind! There is now a divine, infallible Spirit dwelling within him which tells him the right and the wrong—and by this he speedily discerns between the good and the evil. He no longer puts darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! His mind is enlightened as to the true holiness and the true purity which God requires!

Just mark the men to whom this light of God comes. By nature some of them are deeply depraved. All of them *are* depraved, but by *practice* some of them become yet further dark. Is it not marvelous that a poor heathen who scarcely seemed to recognize the distinction between right and wrong before the Spirit of God entered his mind, has afterwards, without needing to be taught all the precepts, individually, received at once the quick light of a tender conscience which has led him to know the right and love it, and to see the evil and eschew it? If you want to civilize the world, it must be by preaching the gospel! If you want to have men well instructed as to the right and the wrong, it must be by this divine instruction which only God, Himself, can impart. "I will do it," and oh, how blessedly He does it when He takes the man that loved evil and called it good, and so sheds a divine beam into his soul that henceforth he cannot be perverse, cannot be obstinate, but submits himself to the divine will! That is one of the first blessings of the covenant—the illumination of the understanding.

The next blessing is, "*And I will write My law in their hearts.*" This is more than knowing the law—infinitely more. "I will write the law, not merely on their understandings, where it may guide them, but in their hearts where it shall lead them." Brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit makes men love the will of God, makes them delight in all in which God delights and abhor that which the Lord abhors! It is well said in the text that God will do this, for certainly it is not what a man can do for himself. The Ethiopian might sooner change his skin or the leopard his spots! It is not what the minister can do, for though he may preach to the ears, he cannot write God's law on the affections. I have marveled at the expression used in the text, "I will write My law in their hearts." To write *on* a *heart* must be difficult work, but to write *in* a heart, in the very

center of the heart—who can do this but God? A man cuts his name upon a tree in the bark and there it stands. And the letters grow with the tree—but to cut his name in the heart of the tree—how shall he accomplish this? And yet God does divinely engrave His will and His law in the very heart and nature of man!

I know what the notion is about Christian people—that they do not conform to this and that custom because they are afraid—they would like to revel in the vanities of the world, but they do not care to encounter the penalties. Ah, you sons of men, you comprehend not the mysterious work of the Spirit! He does nothing of this sort! He makes not the child of God to be a serf, a slave, in fear of bondage, but He so changes the nature of men that they do not love what they once loved! They turn away with loathing from the things they once delighted in and can no more indulge in the sins which were once sweet to them than an angel could plunge himself down and wallow in the mire with the swine! Oh, this is a gracious work! And this is a blessed covenant in which it is promised that we shall be taught the right, to know and love the right, and to do the right with a willing mind!

Am I addressing some tonight who have been saying, "I wish I could be saved." What do you mean by that? Do you mean you wish you might escape from hell? Ah, well, I would to God you had another wish—namely, "Oh, that I could escape from sin! Oh, that I could be made pure, that my passions could be bridled! Oh, that my longings and my likings could be changed!" If that is your wish, see what a gospel I have to preach to you! I have not come to tell you—do this, and do not do that. Moses tells you that—and the preacher of the law speaks to you after that fashion—but I, the preacher of the gospel, unveiling the covenant of grace tonight, tell you that Jesus Christ has done such a work for sinners that God, now, for Christ's sake, comes to them, makes them see the right and by a divine work *upon* them and *in* them, makes them love holiness and follow after righteousness! I count this one of the greatest blessings of which ever tongue could speak! I would sooner be holy than happy if the two things could be divorced. Were it possible for a man to always sorrow and yet to be pure, I would choose the sorrow if I might win the purity, for, beloved, to be free from the power of sin, to be made to love holiness though I have spoken after the manner of men to you, is true happiness! A man that is holy is in order with the creation—he is in harmony with God! It is impossible for that man to suffer long. He may for a while endure for his lasting good, but as sure as God is happy, the holy must be happy! This world is not so constituted that in the long run holiness shall go with sorrow, for in eternity God shall show that to be pure is to be blessed, to be obedient to the divine will is to be eternally glorified! In preaching to you, then, these two blessings of the covenant—I have virtually preached to you the open kingdom of heaven—open to all such whom God's grace shall look upon with an eye of mercy!

The next blessing of the covenant is—"*I will be to them a God.*" If any ask me what this means, I must reply, Give me a month to consider it.

And when I had considered the text for a month, I should ask another month! And when I had waited a year, I should ask another year—and when I had waited till I grew gray, I would still ask the postponement of any attempt to fully open it up until eternity! "I will be to them a God." Now, mark you, where the Spirit of God has come to teach you the divine will and make you love the divine will, God becomes to you—what? A Father? Yes, a loving, tender Father. A shepherd? Yes, a watchful Guardian of His flock. A friend? Yes, a Friend that sticks closer than a brother. A rock? A refuge? A fortress? A high tower? A castle of defense? A home? A heaven? Yes, all that, but when He said "I will be their God," He said more than all these put together, for, "I will be to them a God," comprehends all gracious titles, all blessed promises and all divine privileges! It comprehends—yes, now I stop, for this is infinite, and the infinite comprehends all blessings. "I will be to them a God." Do you need provision? The cattle on a thousand hills are His—it is nothing to Him to give! It will not impoverish Him! He will give to you like a God! Do you need comfort? He is the God of all consolation—He will comfort you like a Lord. Do you need guidance? There is infinite wisdom waiting at your beck and call! Do you need support? There is eternal power, the same which guards the everlasting hills waiting to be your stay! Do you need grace? He delights in mercy and all that mercy is yours! Every attribute of God belongs to His people in covenant with Him. All that God is or can be—and what is there not in that?—all that you can conceive and more! All the angels have and more! All that heaven is and more! All that is in Christ, even the boundless fullness of the Godhead—all this belongs to you, if you are in covenant with God through Jesus Christ! How rich, how blessed, how august, how noble are those in covenant with God, confederate with heaven! Infinity belongs to you! Lift up your head, O child of God, and rejoice in a promise that I cannot expound, and you cannot explore! There I must leave it—it is a deep which we strive in vain to fathom!

Notice the next blessing, "*And they shall be to Me a people.*" All flesh belongs to God in a certain sense. All men are His by rights of creation and He has an infinite sovereignty over them. But He looks down upon the sons of men and He selects some, and He says, "These shall be My people, not the rest. These shall be My peculiar people." When the King of Navarre was fighting for his throne, the writer who hymns the battle, says—

"He looked upon the foemen, and his glance was stern and high.
He looked upon his people, and the tear was in his eye."

And when he saw some of the French in arms against him—

"Then out spoke gentle Henry, No Frenchman is my foe
Down, down, with every foreigner, but let your brethren go."

The king looked for his people even if they were in rebellion against him! He had a different thought towards them from what he had towards others. "Let them go," he seemed to say, "they are my people." So, mark

you, in the great battles and conflicts of this world, when Lord lets loose the dread artillery of heaven, His glance is stern upon His enemies, but the tear is in His eyes towards His people. He is always tender towards them. "Spare My people," He says, and the angels interpose lest these chosen ones should dash their feet against a stone!

People have their treasures, their pearls, their jewels, their rubies, their diamonds—and these are their peculiar stones. Now, all in the covenant of grace are the peculiar stones of God. He values them above all things else! In fact, He keeps the world spinning for them! The world is but a scaffold for the church. He will send creation packing when once it has done with His saints. Yes, sun, moon and stars shall pass away like worn-out rags when once He has gathered together His own elect and enfolded them forever within the safety of the walls of heaven! For them time moves! For them the world exists! He measures the nation according to their number and He makes the very stars of heaven to fight against their enemies and to defend them against their foes! "They shall be to Me a people." The favor which is contained in such love it is not for tongue to express. Perhaps on some of those quiet resting places prepared for the saints in heaven, it shall be a part of our eternal enjoyment to contemplate the heights and depths of these golden lines!

II. And now, brothers and sisters, I wish I had time to go over the other parts contained in the 11th and 12th verses of the chapter, but I have not, for I have a practical business to do, and it is to inquire—FOR WHOM HAS GOD MADE THIS COVENANT?

I said He made it with Christ, but He made it with Christ as the representative of His people. The question tonight for you, and for me, and for each one is, "Am I interested in Christ? Did Christ Jesus stand for me?" Now, if I were to say that Christ was the representative of the whole world, you would not find any substantial advantage in that because the great proportion of mankind is lost; whatever interest they may have in Christ, it is certainly of no beneficial value to them as to their eternal salvation! The question I ask is—have I such a special interest in Christ that this covenant holds good towards me so that I shall have, or so that I now have the enlightened mind, the sanctified affections and the possession of God to be my God? Be not deceived, my brothers and sisters—I cannot and you cannot turn over the leaves of the book of destiny! It is impossible for us to force our way into the cabinet chamber of the eternal! I hope you are not deluded by superstitious ideas that you have had a revelation made to you, or that there has been some special sound or dream which makes any one of you think you are a Christian!

Yet on sounder premises I will try to help you a little. Have you already obtained any of these covenant blessings? Have you got an enlightened mind? Do you now find that your spirit tells you which is the right and which is the wrong? Better still, have you got a love for that which is good? Have you got a hatred for that which is evil? If so, as you have got one covenant blessing, all the rest go with it! Now, men and women, have

you passed through a great change? Have you come to hate that which you once loved? If you have, the covenant lies before you like Canaan before the ravished eyes of Moses on top of the mountain! Look now, for it is yours! It flows with milk and honey and it belongs to you—and you shall inherit it! But if there has been no such change worked in you, I cannot hold you out any congratulations, but I thank God I can do what may serve your turn! I can hold you out divine direction—the direction for the obtaining an interest in this covenant and for clearing up your interest in it is simple. It is contained in few words. Mark well these three words—"Believe and live," for whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life—which is the blessing of the covenant. The argument is obvious. Having the blessing of the covenant you must be in the covenant! And being in the covenant, Christ evidently must have representatively stood sponsor for you. But says one, "What is it to *believe* in Christ?" Another word is a synonym to it. It is—*trust* Christ. "How do I know whether He died for me in particular?" Trust Him whether you know that or not. Jesus Christ is lifted up upon the cross of Calvary as the atonement for sin and the proclamation is given out, "Look, look, look and live!" And whoever will cast away his self-righteousness, cast away everything upon which he now depends—and will come and trust in the finished work of our exalted Savior, has, in that very faith, the token that he is one of those who were in Christ when He went up to the cross and worked out eternal redemption for His elect! I do not believe that Christ died on the tree to render men salvable, but to save them! Not that some men might be saved "if," but to really redeem them! And He did then and there give Himself a ransom. He paid their debts there. There cast their sins into the Red Sea and there made a clean sweep of everything that could be laid to the charge of God's elect. You are one of His elect if you believe! Christ died for you if you believe in Him and your sins are forgiven you. "Well but," says one, "how about that change of nature?" It always comes with faith! It is the next akin to faith. Wherever there is genuine faith in Christ, faith works love. A sense of mercy breeds affection. Affection to Christ breeds hatred to sin. Hatred to sin purges the soul—the soul being purged, the life is changed!

You must not begin with mending yourselves externally—you must begin with the new internal life and it is thus to be had—the gift of God through simply believing in Jesus! A slave who had been for some time attending a place of worship, had imbibed the idea and a very natural one, too, that he was saved because he had been baptized. He had been to one of those places where they teach little children to say after this fashion, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." "Now," said he, very simply and very plainly, for so the catechism teaches—and a gross delusion it is—"I am saved because I have been baptized! That has made me a child of God." Now the good man who sought to instruct him better

could find no metaphor to suit
his intellect better than taking him into the kitchen and showing him a bottle of black ink. "Now," he said, "I will wash it," and he washed the outside of the bottle and invited the man to drink out of it because it was clean. "No," said the man, "it is all black! It is all black—it is not clean because you have washed the *outside*." "Ah," said he, "and so it is with you! All that these drops of water could do for you—all that baptism could do for you is to wash the outside—but that does not make you clean, for the filth is all within!" Now, the work of the covenant of grace is not to wash the outside, not to clean the flesh, not to pass you through rites and ceremonies and episcopal hands, but to wash the *inside*—to purge the heart, to cleanse the vitals, to renew the soul—and this is the only salvation that will ever bring a man to enter heaven! You may go tonight and renounce all your outward vices—I hope you will. You may go and practice all church ceremonies; and if they are scriptural, I wish you would. But they will do nothing for you, nothing whatever as to your entering heaven if you miss one thing else—that is, getting the covenant blessing of the renewed nature which can only be had as a gift of God through Jesus Christ—and as the result of a simple faith in Him who did die upon the tree!

I press the work of self-examination upon you all. I press it earnestly upon you church members. It is of no avail that you have been baptized! It is of no avail that you take the sacrament. Avail? Indeed it shall bring a greater responsibility and a curse upon you unless your hearts have been by the Holy Spirit made anew according to the covenant of promise! If you have not a new heart, oh, go to your chambers, fall upon your knees and cry to God for it! May the Holy Spirit compel you to do so! And while you are pleading, remember the new heart comes from the bleeding heart; the changed nature comes from the suffering nature. You must look to Jesus, and looking to Jesus, know that—

"There is life in a look at the crucified one!
There is life at this moment for you!"

These blessings I have spoken of seem to me to be a *great consolation and inspiration.* They are a great consolation to believers. You are in the covenant, my dear brother, but you tell me you are very poor. But God has said, "I will be your God." Why, you are very rich! A man may not have a penny in the world, but if he has a diamond, he is rich. So if a man has neither penny nor diamond, if he has his God, he is rich! Ah, but your coat is threadbare and you do not see where means are to come from to renew your apparel. "Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." You have the same God that the lilies have—shall He so clothe the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, and shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? I also said it was an inspiration and I think it is. It is an inspiration for us all to work for Christ because we are sure to have some results. I would, indeed I would, that the nations were converted to

Christ. I would that all this London belonged to my Lord and Master, and that every street would be inhabited by those who loved His name! But when I see sin abounding and the gospel often put to the rout, I fall back upon this—"Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure. The Lord knows them that are His." He shall have His own! The infernal powers shall not rob Christ! He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied! Calvary does not mean defeat! Gethsemane a defeat? Impossible! The Mighty Man who went up to the cross to bleed and die for us, being also the Son of God, did not there achieve a defeat but a victory! He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His day, and the pleasure in the Lord shall prosper in His hands! If some will not be saved, others shall. If, being invited, some count themselves not worthy to come to the feast, others will be brought in, even the blind, the crippled and the lame—and the supper shall be furnished with guests! If they come not from England, they shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north and from the south. If it should come to pass that Israel is not gathered, lo, the heathen shall be gathered unto Christ! Ethiopia shall stretch out her arms! Sinim shall yield herself to the Redeemer! The desert ranger shall bow the knee and the far-off stranger inquire for Christ! Oh, no, beloved, the purposes of God are not frustrated! The eternal will of God is not defeated! Christ has died a glorious death and He shall have a full reward for all His pain. "Therefore, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5:1-11; PSALM 81:1-14.

Romans 5:1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* The gospel is full of "therefores," it is above reason, but it is never against reason—it is the most reasonable thing under heaven! "Therefore"—it is a matter of argument. You will have to read the previous chapters to see how this conclusion flows naturally from what he had before taught by the Holy Spirit.

Let us linger over these sentences while we read them. "Being justified by faith." Is it so? Are you, indeed made just by faith in Jesus Christ your righteousness? Then you have peace this day and hour—peace within your own conscience and with your fellow men—but what is much better, you have peace with God! As soon as we are justified by reliance on Jesus, we cease to have any quarrel with God and He has no quarrel with us! We are allies, we are in happy union, we have peace with God! Not shall have it by and by, but we have it *now* as our present glad possession because we are justified by faith. We are now in the enjoyment of perfect peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Since we are at peace with God, we may enter His house. His door is

open to us—we have divine welcome unto His grace and we abide in it—abide in it with certainty and full assurance!

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Oh, what a comfort this is to be rejoicing, especially to be rejoicing in hope! It is better ahead—there may be clouds and darkness, here, but we can see the sunlight breaking yonder—"until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," we will make hope to be our bright candle of the Lord! We "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and not only so." When we once get into God's house, we rise higher in it—we go up another pair of stairs. "Not only so," though that seems to be enough—to be rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, and to have access into His grace and to have peace with Him because we are justified! But it is not only so—"we glory in tribulations also." We transform our troubles into gladness and glorying! We get spiritually enriched by tribulation!

3, 4. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation works patience and patience, experience and experience, hope.* Another hope, or rather the same hope rising up into another form. We begin with rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God by faith. Now we get a further hope which is born of experience—the things we have tasted and handled of the love of God create in us a more radiant hope inferred from what we have enjoyed.

5, 6. *And hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* What is the connection here? Is it not this—that the Holy Spirit makes us feel what a wonderful love the love of God is to us because when we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly? Wonderful love! When we were Godless and Christless, in due time Christ *died* for us!

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.* Nobody would feel impelled to die for a man who is severely and strictly just. He may command our admiration, but not our affection. Aristides the Just is, indeed, at last banished—men cannot bear a man whose whole character is bare justice, for they are themselves usually so unjust. But "a good man"—he commands our love. A man of that character who is gratuitously kind, gracious and benevolent, *perhaps*—and it is a bare perhaps—somebody might be found to die for such as he. It is not, however, very probable.

8. *But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* He did the utmost for us when we were the least deserving of it! Oh, what a love is this! Let it be shed abroad in our poor stony hearts and commended by us to others.

9. *Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* This is a resistless argument and should be the deathblow to all misgiving. If He died for us when we were unjust, will He

let us perish, now that He has made us just and completely justified us? Impossible!

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* There are three points which strengthen the argument here, which you will readily see by reading it at your leisure. The Lord our God who justified us when we were enemies, by the death of His Son, will save us now that we are friends through the life of His Son. "And not only so." Here we ascend again—it is ever higher and higher, something yet more—so that we are never at the end of this blessed record of mercy and grace!

11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* We are at one with God. We are perfectly reconciled to Him and we have at present, at this very moment, a great joy and delight in God!

Now we shall read together the 71st Psalm, just in order that we may see how good men in all ages have been assisted by their experience and their hope—and how their hope has grown out of their tribulation, their patience and their experience. The old man's Psalm. You can remember it, dear friends, who are aged, by its being 71—it is just past the threescore years and ten!

Psalm 71:1. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.* There is his trust and there is his fear. His trust he dares to avow, his fear he turns into a prayer.

2, 3. *Deliver me in Your righteousness, 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.* "Be you my strong habitation whereunto I may continually resort." Not merely now and then a hiding place in emergencies, but my constant abode, my home—so that from morning to night I may come to You and feel myself secure. "You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress." You see he knows that God has commanded nature, providence and His grace to protect him! He has commanded His angels—indeed, He has commanded all His forces to protect David for this reason—that David feels an inward rest and peace in God. That calm, that divine repose expressed in the words, "You are my rock and my refuge," are the tokens that God has given commandment to save us.

4. *Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of the wicked, out of the hands of the unrighteous and cruel man.* Two iron hands are trying to pull him down, but he cries to God, whose one almighty hand can set him free!

5. *For You are my hope, O Lord God: You are my trust from my youth.* Happy man that can look back upon a youth spent in God's fear, for if we have trusted God in our youth, depend upon it, He will never cast us away!

6. *By You have I been held up from the womb: You are He that took me out of my mother's womb: my praise shall be continually of You.* When we could not help ourselves, in the very moment of our birth, God took care of us! And He will take care of us even to the end. Men and women who are old should remember how carefully the Lord nursed them when they were infants—and if you come to a second childhood, you shall still have the same God!

7. *I am as a wonder unto many.* They cannot make me out! I am a blessed problem and puzzle to them—it seems so strange that being so much afflicted I am yet so much upheld!

7. *But You are my strong refuge.* Yes! There is the answer to the riddle. If God is with us, men may well wonder, but He will always help us.

8-9. *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.* A prayer which both young and old may offer, for if we live long enough, that time of weakness will surely come. There are many men who cast off their old servants—but God does not. When we are worn out, He will still bless us.

10-14. *For my enemies speak against me and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God has forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. 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.* In the 8th verse he had said, "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise." That is a mouthful! Now he says, "I will praise You more and more." As if he needed more mouths wherewith to praise! More room for his heart's grateful thanksgiving to God! "I will praise You more and more."

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OUR LORD'S HEROIC ENDURANCE
NO. 3327

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"For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds."
Hebrews 12:3.

IF we regard the Christian as a racer contending for the great race, we see that he is subject to several dangers. He may give up the race and turn back unless everlasting mercy shall prevent so dreadful a calamity. He may leap out of the track and leave for a time the only path that leads to victory and reward. Or he may be so clogged and hampered with weights that though he may run, he may run altogether in vain. Or he may be tripped up and fall—and so others may pass him and take the prize of his high calling. But even if he shall fully have avoided all those dangers, if he shall keep to the course, if he shall be kept upon his feet, and if his racing should be of the best kind, yet there is still the possibility—for the best Christian is still flesh and blood—that he may faint.

A man when running for a prize exerts every nerve and sinew and muscle. He throws his whole being into the effort. If he may not pass his rival by several lengths, he will at least seek to pass him by a neck and to this end he strains and strives even to the point of agony, if by any means he may attain unto the first place and so win the reward. Now, while the body is in such a state of tension as that, it is possible that it may suddenly give way—that the overworked frame may not be able to endure the toil and stress, and the man, with the best of intentions, may yet lack the power to carry them out. He may grow weary and though just now he almost grasped the prize in the fond anticipation of hope, he may fall dead upon the ground like a stone through faintness. The apostle knew this, for I do not doubt that even he, in his great fight with afflictions, when he had fought with beasts at Ephesus and when he had passed through trials of every shape and form, even he sometimes felt as if he might faint and might, after all, be unsuccessful. Hence it is that instead of merely exhorting us not to faint and bidding us not be weary, he does what is far better and more helpful—he supplies us with a double restorative whereby our strength may be recruited. Just as Antaeus is said to have revered his strength when he touched mother earth and, therefore, he could not be killed until Hercules held him in the air and strangled him there, so is the Christian strengthened by the act which the Apostle Paul here speaks of—by touching Christ, by looking again to Jesus, by considering Him—and the only possibility for the

destruction of the Christian would be so to separate him from Christ that he would not be able to derive any strength from considering the great apostle and High Priest of his profession! The apostle does as good as say to us, "You are very likely to faint in your minds, and to grow weary in your spirit, so if you would prevent this, I recommend you to consider the Lord Jesus Christ, to think much of Him, to have Him constantly before your mind's eye." And he is very precise about this, for he not only bids us consider Christ, but he exhorts us to consider Him under a very special aspect, that is, as a sufferer, and from one particular form of trial, namely, "suffering the contradiction of sinners against Himself."

It seem to me as if the apostle felt that one of the most likely things to make Christians faint would be the contradiction which they meet with from sinners. The persecution, the slander, ill-usage, bad return and recompense which they get from an ungodly world—all this would be likely to make them weary at heart in well-doing.

So he bids them look away to the Savior, bravely enduring the same trials. "Consider Him," he says, "who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest *you* be weary and faint in your minds."

I am not able to speak to you this evening as I would gladly speak. I scarcely feel in the condition either of body or of mind suitable to the study and proclamation of so gracious a topic as the one before us, but in my weakness I desire also to consider Him who was wearied and sat upon the well. And in speaking to you, I would ask His help that my weakness may not rob you of the blessing.

I shall introduce the theme to your attention in this way—first, let us consider *the contradiction of sinners which Christ endured.* Secondly, let us for a minute or two consider *His endurance of it.* And then, thirdly, coming to the fullness of the text, let us *consider Him who endured such contradiction.*

The particular form of trial of which we are invited to think is—

I. THE CONTRADICTION OF UNGODLY MEN WHICH THE SAVIOR ENDURED.

Even early in His ministry He had to endure this. At the very first sermon which He preached in the synagogue of His own town, was he received with joy? No acclamations awaited Him who spoke as never man spoke, but the whole congregation gnashed upon Him with their teeth! And had it not been for His supernatural escape, they would have taken Him to the brow of the hill whereon the city was built and have cast Him down headlong! And yet it was not that He had said anything bitter against the town. It was not that He had railed against their favorite vices. It was only that He had committed that most unpardonable of all sins, namely, that He had preached the doctrine of divine predestination! They listened to Him well enough until He said, "Yes, and many widows there were in Israel, but unto none of them was the prophet sent except to the widow of Zarephath," and when He thus declared the doctrine of divine sovereignty—when He spoke of the giving of the blessing to the Gentiles who were the most unlikely individuals—then it was that they gnashed their teeth and would have cast Him down headlong from the

brow of the hill! Nothing, it seems, excites some men's envy like the doctrines of grace. Throughout the whole of our Savior's life, this which was at the commencement followed Him! His speech teems with wisdom. He preeminently carried out His own teaching, "Be you wise as serpents and harmless as doves." It is true His teaching was very bold, but at the same time it need not have irritated anyone. Those who thus took His teaching to themselves and perceived that He spoke of them, might be irritated apart from that. I suppose that never did man put the truth of God in a better form, or after a fashion less likely to provoke prejudice, but the Pharisees were always contradicting Him. They endeavored to catch Him in His speech. Sometimes it is puzzling questions about the law with some woman in the midst. At another time it is something about the government of the country. The Herodians joined with the Pharisees in the endeavor to embarrass, to perplex Him, to catch Him in His talk, to make Him an offender for a word. They plotted to draw Him out in speech, somehow or other, that they might get some sentence they could use against Him. Never did they listen with candor, never regarded Him with any honesty, but dogging His footsteps like bloodhounds, waiting for the first opportunity when they might tear Him in pieces! So, during His lifetime, He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

And you know, besides this, how men of the baser sort offered contradiction against Christ's life. They said He was a drunk and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They that sat in the gates spoke against Him and He became the song of the drunk! Reproaches fell upon Him—the reproaches of them who reproached without a cause. Our Lord Jesus Christ was thus perpetually, constantly and wholly the butt of slander and of scorn! He was permanently standing in the pillory to be ill-treated by the hands of them whom His power had *created*, and whom His own love had spared! What a "contradiction of sinners against Himself!"

But I think what was especially in the apostle's mind was that which came at the time when He was betrayed by Judas. Then, brothers and sisters, the old serpent vented his worst venom. They could not find witnesses that agreed together, though they found many false witnesses, yet even none of them agreed together till they had at last induced two, their evidence being words which the Savior had used in a certain sense, twisted to another sense in order to try to get it to be strong enough to stain the charge which they brought against Him—which was neither more nor less than this—in Pilate's court, the *civil* court, treason! In the court of Annas and Caiaphas, the *ecclesiastical* court, blasphemy! What a contradiction of sinners against Himself was this! Being Almighty God to be accused of blasphemy! And being truly the King of the Jews to be accused of treason! I wonder not that the apostle should have said, "*Such* contradiction of sinners!"

Just let us look, then, at this contradiction of sinners which came upon Him at the last, and I think you will see the grievousness of it when you observe, first, the *grossness of the charges alleged against Him.*

Before Pilate's court it was no minor offense with which He was charged. It was treason—the highest offense in the category of the Roman law. He had made Himself to be another king in opposition to Caesar, who was the world's monarch! This was a very gross charge to bring against the Savior and more especially because He, of all men, must be acquitted of anything like sedition! How often did He hide Himself when multitudes who had been fed by His bounty would have made Him a king? And how often when His own disciples were anticipating the coming of a great earthly kingdom, did He set Himself directly in opposition to all their ideas and taught them that He came to suffer rather than to reign—and that His kingdom was not of this world—not a kingdom that would touch Caesar's kingdom, nor an empire that would interfere with the kings on the earth! He was not only free from treason, but was throughout His life such an opponent of it, such an abstainer from interfering with the politics of men at all, that to charge Him with this was a gross and wantonly wicked charge!

As for blasphemy, His reverence of God was supreme! He had laid aside His own glory as deity in order to honor His Father in man's redemption and was even now, when so vilely slandered, ready to be obedient even unto death! "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is God's witness to Him, and yet His enemies say that He blasphemed the Infinite Jehovah!

Now, dear friends, I can conceive that some of you have been pure and unblemished in your lives and yet suddenly you might find yourselves accused, not of a minor and trivial offense, and you say, "Oh, what a trial to be accused of this!" Well, consider Him who endured just such contradiction, who was accused of a capital crime and of blasphemy in the same breath! Who are we that we should not be called Beelzebub when the Master of the house has been so named? Consider the contradiction of Christ in this respect and it may give you comfort.

Let me say further, while speaking of this contradiction of sinners, that it was not only a very gross charge, but we are sometimes apt to think that a charge which is unfounded is very cruel to us. I have heard people say, sometimes, and I have laughed when I have heard them say it, "Sir, Mr. So-and-So has charged me with such and such a thing, but I am quite innocent. I should not have minded if I had been guilty." Then I have thought, Ah, then you ought to have minded it, but being innocent you have no cause to mind it at all! But is it not so that the more unfounded a charge is, the more deeply does it seem to cut us from the very wantonness of its cruelty? Well, then, you know how innocent the Savior was—the next time you feel innocent when you are thus accused—"consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," and who had to suffer both gross charges and unfounded ones!

Moreover, *these charges were sustained by words which had been deliberately twisted.* And sometimes a man has to say to himself, "Now, I never said anything of the kind, and my enemies know I did not! They have let a word out here, and put another word in there, and have cruelly

misrepresent me—they have made me say what I did not even *think*—and what I *did* think, and what I *did* say, they have so utterly altered that it is no longer mine." Now you are apt to grow very faint in your mind after such a thing as this occurs, but you will recollect that just such contradiction of sinners the Savior endured. The only grounds or pretense upon which they brought these charges against Him was that He had uttered certain words concerning His body which were construed to relate to the temple. So, dear friends, do not be greatly troubled, as though it were a strange thing what has happened to you. If your good words are taken out of your mouth and mischief is made of them, bear it without bitterness or retaliation, for so He also suffered the "contradiction of sinners against Himself."

There certainly was, too, a sting about these contradictions arising from *the place where they were brought.* They were brought before the court of judicature. It is not likely that any of us have had to smart in this direction, but we may have had to feel this—"I should not have minded if this contradiction had come against me at home in the family, but it has come in my business where it will injure me." Or it may have been the reverse. Perhaps you have had to say, "I would not care if this man had said such and such in the outward world, but he has poisoned the very home of my joy and my peace." Well, dear friends, it seems to me the Savior had His contradiction brought against Him in a worse place than home, or any of the resorts of commerce, for He was actually brought before the courts of His own native land as well as before the courts of the foreign invader who was then dominating the country!

It is not likely that this will come to you in these times as God's people, but in the olden times the saints had often to stand before kings and princes for Christ's sake. But if ever this should be your lot, you will then fall back upon this and become energized and consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself!

Above and beyond all this, however, in the contradiction which Christ endured was *the malice which suggested it.* They did not falsely accuse Him out of mere error, but it was out of malice that had determined on the destruction of this innocent man. "Whether we can accuse Him rightly or not," they said, "it is not fit that such a fellow should live." It was malice against one who had never done them a wrong! Against one who had healed their sick and raised their dead! Against one who had scattered bounties with both His hands along their streets and who had made their wilderness like Eden and their desert like the garden of the Lord! Against one who had gathered together the sheep without a shepherd that were scattered on every hill! Against one who had fed the hungry, had comforted the mourner, had proclaimed liberty to the captive! Against one who had shone upon the Holy Land and made it truly whole—had shone upon Palestine like a newly-risen sun, the Sun of Righteousness with healing beneath His wings! He might well say, "For which of these works do you stone Me? You have hated Me without a cause." Well, now, suppose that to be your case? Suppose you have to

say, "I should not mind this charge, but I can see deliberate malice in it. My enemies seek to destroy me and to pervert my way out of a diabolical hatred to my soul. They come upon me to eat up my flesh. They compass me like dogs to devour me. Oh, how hard is my lot!" Come, Christian, come, consider Him! Consider Him! You are in the same plight as your Master! It always gives comfort to a common soldier to see the officers in the same position and enduring the same hardships as himself—with the shots flying everywhere round about them. And when I see the darts of wicked contradiction flying around our blessed Lord and King, I feel it would be a shame for me to have an easier or safer position than He knew!

I might thus dwell, for it is a very tempting subject, upon the contradiction of sinners which the Savior endured. And I think a consideration of this would save us from being weary and faint in our minds. But we must pass on to the second point. We have now to consider—

II. THE SAVIOR'S ENDURANCE of the contradiction of sin against Himself. How did He endure this sore trouble? Brothers and sisters, He endured it with singular courage and holy equanimity. It is wonderful to see Him in the first contradictions with which He met during His ministry—how calm He is. If we are made warm in temper, we are off our guard and are but half men. The Savior was never so taken. You observe Him. They spin their webs like spiders and they think to entangle Him. So they would such poor flies as we are—but He looks on and sees it all—and then sweeps every cobweb away before Him! And yet no angry word He answers.

Sometimes He makes them answer themselves, but then He turns it against themselves. Sometimes He makes them confess themselves defeated and then, with a solemn emphasis, as on the occasion when He said, "He that is without fault among you, let him cast the first stone." And they, being condemned by their own consciences, went out, beginning at the eldest even to the youngest. All left and went their way! At the last, however, you perceive that the contradiction of sinners is borne by the Savior after this fashion—*with entire silence!* Never was there such silence as that—the grandest silence ever known! It is an amazing silence! It seems to have in it something of contempt, but yet more of omnipotent patience. He will not answer. Why should He answer such as they are? He will not answer! If He answered, it might be their doom! And therefore He spares them! "He is led as lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth!" Brothers and sisters, we are generally too fast with our tongues when anybody accuses us! I am afraid we are not always so quick to defend our Master as we are to defend ourselves. If there is a false accusation in the newspapers, one's finger wants to be at the pen to answer it, which of all things is the most foolish. Let them write! Let them write who will, till they have used up their ink, but the wise man answers them not a word! But we are always so ready if anybody brings a false accusation against us to say, "It is not so! You lie!" Or to make some

sharp reply like that. Oh, that we could consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, and endured it with the holy patience of silence! There was a crest and motto which some of the old Reformers used to use, and which I commend to any of you who are under this trial of slander. It was an anvil with a number of hammers, all broken, lying around. And this was the motto when translated, "*The anvil breaks many hammers.*" And how does it do this? Not by striking again! Oh, no! The anvil simply endures the blows—just keeps its place and lets the hammers fall, fall, fall until they are broken upon their handles! And this is exactly what the Savior did. They, the accusers, were the hammers, He was the anvil. And who shall say that the anvil did not break the hammers in pieces, that the silence of the Savior was not far more eloquent than all the clamor of the evil multitude? "He held His peace," it is said of Him. May it also be said of you and of me, and when we have to suffer similar trials, may we bear them, like the Savior, in silence.

Yet the silence of the Savior is not all. We ought to admire the patient serenity with which He so beautifully held His peace, but ought we not also to admire the way in which He *unswervingly kept His course?* Many a man would have turned either to the right hand or to the left, but the heroic Savior keeps right on. Ah, beloved, how many of us would have given up the work altogether! We might have said, "I came to bless these men, but they reject me. They despise me. They treat me badly. Let them go, then, unblessed! These graceless people shall receive no blessing at my hands." But not so, our brave Lord! He came into the world to save sinners and He kept on just at that one thing—and let no rebuffs turn Him aside. The zeal of God's house had eaten Him up and He kept straight on in the saving of sinners! He never turned back; let sinners do what they would in the way of contradicting Him! He never wavered for one moment from His one life objective—the saving of their souls!

Now, let it be so with you so that you may be kept from growing weary. If in the Sunday school a class seems unmanageable. If the boys cannot be taught. If the girls seem so giddy. If in the little village station the hearers seem so dull, so inattentive, so careless and so forgetful—if in any other sphere of labor you do not seem to be appreciated, but instead meet with very serious rebuffs, never mind! These are nothing compared with the contradictions which the Savior endured and yet He never swerved! And therefore swerve you not. Let the divine life that is in you urge you constantly onwards. Make no provision for the flesh nor for the ease thereof. If, indeed, it is your life work—go and complete it! If you feel that God has called you to be the stern advocate of the right, go onward and vow to go onward by the love of Christ—and let nothing stop you! If hunger can break through stone walls, much more shall a hunger to do the Master's will! To a man who can dare and do because he feels that he is consecrated and destined to work, nothing is impossible! You, too, shall break through a wall. You, too, shall dash through a host. A man who believes that God has called him to work would tunnel through the

globe, itself, before he would be turned from his purpose! He would thread the stars on strings before he would be disappointed of his great life work! Do you but feel this, and never turn aside, but remember how Christ endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself!

And, once more, I think it is worthwhile to notice that while the Savior did not swerve, *He did not even seem to pause.* He did not stop to take a breath. All these persons came rushing round Him and tried to push Him out of His course, but He did not even stop, I say, to take a breath! All that they did, did but rather quicken His pace, if possible, and made Him still more set upon His great purpose. So let it be with us. We take far too much notice, I think, of some of our troubles and oppositions. I sometimes quote in your hearing those brave lines of Anne Askew. Poor soul! After having been racked to torture many times, you still hear her singing—

"I am not she to lie,
My anchor to let fall:
For every drizzling mist
My ship's substantial."

Such a substantial vessel did she seem to ride in that she was not going to let her anchor out! The being racked, as she cruelly was, was no "drizzling mist," I think, but a very horrible tempest which might well make some of us afraid, even unto death, but then, we make so much of little things! Our fathers plucked up sycamore trees by the roots, but we are afraid if only one or two sere leaves blow wildly across our path! They spoke unto mountains and said, "Be you moved hence, and cast into the midst of the sea." But we sit down and murmur over molehills as though they were Alps, the summits of which we should never to able to reach! We are a puny race, I fear, but may the Lord feed us and we shall then grow stronger—and though it adds not a cubit to our stature, yet we shall grow *spiritually*! And we shall grow in this way if we consider how Christ bore the mighty trials which came upon Him. He was bowed down. He did stagger and did sweat great drops of blood when He was under the deep depression of His own spirit—caused by our sins being laid upon Him. Even a strong man may quail there, but before Herod or Pilate, or His Jewish accusers, or ribald and mocking men, He never showed a sign of faltering! No, not He! But He "*endured* such contradiction of sinners against Himself."

Consider Christ thus, then, and you need not be and never will be, weary! But now, lastly, the great thing is—

III. TO CONSIDER HIM.

There is the point of the text. We are not only to consider the contradiction and His endurance of it, but to consider Him. To consider His endurance is well, but the striking point should be to consider the dignity of Him who did thus endure. We are told by the historians of Alexander the Great that it very much cheered and assisted the troops in their long and weary marches from Persia, sometimes without water and without food for many hours under a burning sun, that they always saw Alexander walking on foot, too. The Persian monarch would have been riding in some dainty chariot, or in the royal palanquin, reclining upon

beds of down, fanned by unknown hands and attended by his many fair damsels. But there was Alexander, covered with dust and splashed with mire, going through the ditches, climbing the hills with his face all bronzed and browned. He would suffer hunger and thirst like the rest of them—and when the bowl of water is brought to the mighty monarch, he passes it on to some common soldier who is even yet thirstier than himself. It was said that one Macedonian was worth ten thousand Persians because the king was with them and they would dash to battle and to death for such a monarch as that! Now consider Christ—your King—the King of the earth, before whom all other kings should renounce their diadems! Consider Him; the King of heaven, whom to serve is the seraph's highest glory! The King of hell, before whom the fiends and dragons of the pit gnash their teeth in fear! He, even He, "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself!"—

"Christ leads us through no darker rooms
Than He went through before."

The dignity of the Savior has invested suffering and especially brave endurance with great honor and glory. There is a halo round about our griefs since Jesus Christ endured them first!

It is not only in His greatness that I think He should impress us, but also in *the perfection of His nature.* He endured, and yet He was perfect. How, then, ought I to endure, who am so imperfect? He without a fault smarts! A Son without sin, but not without the scourge! Consider *Him*, then, you imperfect one. When the coals are hot, you mass of ore with so much of alloy about you, consider that the pure gold felt the fire and how much more should you? Consider, you vessel defiled and filthy, the alabaster vase was washed in a sea of trouble, and how much more shall such one as you are be washed? If He who was all gold must go through the flame, how much more shall you?

Now, there is yet a further point out of which the apostle, I think, would have us dig some delight, namely, that we are to consider Him not only in His character, but now, *in His present position.* It is true He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. It is true He was delivered to be crucified. It is true, sorrowfully true, that He was despised and rejected of men. But what of it now? What of it now? Oh, see Him yonder! But your poor eyes cannot bear this dazzling sight! Brighter than the sun is His glory! Grander than heaven, itself, is His splendor! There He sits, King of kings and Lord of lords! Where is the mockery now? The shame and the spittle—where are they now? The crown of thorns, the vinegar, the sponge, the nails—where are they now? Our Lord is all over glorious! Now crowns become the victor's brow and on His head are many crowns. Christian, as He was, so are you also in this world! And as He is, so shall you also be. Christ's triumph is the triumph of every true and right principle. It is the triumph of every true and right heart. You will have to suffer for it. There is no victory to be achieved nowadays except in the same way as the Savior achieved it, namely, by suffering. Is not Christ's greatest triumph which He achieved on Golgotha? The triumphal chariot in which He subdued sin and death, and hell, was

none other than His own cross! So, beloved, we must expect to conquer, but it must be by shame. You must expect to triumph, but it must be by being made to suffer and by being despised. But you shall triumph after all. In the day when the trumpet sounds, when—

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

every obscure and despised child of God shall awaken—then shall it be seen whom God delights to honor! You are in the minority now. You stand alone. You are mocked by cruel enemies, and the ribald world asks you, "Where is your God?"

You are by yourself, now, a solitary protester in the midst of a multitude who are going astray. But the tables shall be turned soon. You shall not then be in a minority, but in a great majority—in the day when shouts of triumph shall be heard for the truth and for the right, and when shame and confusion of face shall be the portion of those who are now the despisers! They shall then wonder and perish and ask the rocks to hide them and the hills to cover their confusion. He endured, and yet He mounted to His throne amidst the shouts of angels and acclamations of heaven! So also shall you! Therefore consider Him in this light lest you be weary and faint in your minds.

And then, last of all, you must consider that He who went through this to get to His crown *is very man akin to us all.* He loves us tenderly. He considers us now. He knows all the sorrows that tempt men, for He has felt the same. You are not alone—He is with you. Are there three of you in the furnace? No, there is a fourth, and that fourth is the Son of God! Into your griefs He enters, for His own griefs have put into His hand a master key to fit the locks of every human grief that ever can be known. He can comfort us with all consolation seeing that He, Himself, has passed through all tribulation. He is never forgetful of you. He is with you now. If you smart, He smarts. If you are despised, He suffers. "Paul, Paul, why do you persecute Me?" He cried. Why, it was but a few poor men and women being hauled away to prison or to be scourged in the synagogue, but Christ takes it as being done to Himself! "Why do you persecute Me?" Oh Christian, with such nearness to Christ, and such sympathy flowing from Him, be of good courage! Then hear Him say, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them." So may you lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees and go on your way rejoicing in Him!

I would to God you could all take home this text, but some of you cannot, and here is the sorrow of it, that you should live and die with such rare comforts at your door, but you cannot take them! Oh, sinners, flee to Christ! Put your trust in Him, and you shall soon be able to find consolation in every part of His life, and in every trait of His death pangs. God bless you very graciously, for His name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 12:1-17.

Verses 1, 2. *Therefore seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* We can have no doubt about the great truths of God which we believe, for we are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses. The former chapter gives us the names of many of these glorious bearers of testimony, who all by faith achieved great wonders and so bore witness to the truth of God. Having, therefore, no room for doubt, let us throw our whole strength into our high calling and run with patience having our eyes always fixed upon Him, the beginner and finisher of our faith, who has run the race, Himself, and won the prize—and now sits down at the right hand on the throne of God.

3, 4. *For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* It has never come to a bloody sweat with you as with Him, nor to death upon a cross as in His case. Shall the disciple be above his Master or the servant above his Lord?

5, 6. *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 scourges every son whom He receives.* With doting parents it is not so—often he whom his mother loves is allowed to do as he pleases and to escape chastening, but this is folly! The love of God is higher and wiser than the partialities of parents. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens." It is a token of His favor to us that He takes the trouble to remove our love of sin by sharp and bitter pain.

7-10. *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you illegitimate, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which 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 pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.* What a bright light this sheds upon all affliction—that it is for our profit—that it is, thereby, we are made partakers of the holiness of God! Oh, blessed result from a little smart and bitter.

11-13. *Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* Look at chastisement, then, in the divine light of God

and be comforted, be strengthened, be healed of the infirmity of your weakness! Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." A man's god is like himself and until he become like God we cannot see God! We misunderstand God until we have been trained to imitate Him.

15-17. *Looking diligently lest any man fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up troubles you and, thereby, many are defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For you know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* It was done and could not be undone. Does it not seem strange that after speaking to us about being God's sons and favored with His love, yet even then, in that clear blaze of light, there comes in this caution against fornication and profanity? Ah me, how near a foul spot may be to lily like whiteness! How Judas may sit side by side with favored and true hearted apostles, yes, and may be near the Master, too! "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." And, oh, friends, if at any time the pottage should seem very sweet and we should be very hungry—if the world's gain should be almost necessary to our livelihood and we are tempted to do an unrighteous thing to get it—let us take care, for Esau could not undo the terrible act of selling his birthright and neither could we if we were permitted to do so! God grant we may be spared from such a dreadful crime!

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GUESTS FOR THE ROYAL FEAST
NO. 3328

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1912,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then said He to His servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were invited were not worthy. Go you therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, invite to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."
Matthew 22:8-10.

IN the previous verses of this striking parable, we see that the great king had been ungraciously treated by his subjects, and had in his wrath swept the rebels away. But there was the feast still waiting for guests and the time had arrived to celebrate the nuptials of his son. The terror of the royal power had been proven, but it still remained to display the splendor of the imperial hospitality. Therefore, while yet the clash of arms is in our ears, we hear the voice of royal clemency! The din of war and the tramp of warriors have not caused the wedding or its feast to be forgotten, neither has wrath obliterated mercy! We read that "he sent forth his armies, and slew those murderers, and burned up their city," but in the next line we find the record, "then said he to his servants, go you into the highways, and as many as you shall find, invite to the marriage." In wrath he remembers mercy. On the heels of his men at arms he dispatches the ambassadors of peace. His power went forth to destroy his enemies, but it also went with his messengers to gather the needy from the streets. Judgment is the Lord's strange work, but He delights in mercy! Once He smites, but not till He has thrice invited the rebels come to Him. And when at last He overthrows the incorrigible, He takes occasion from it to extend His bounty to many others. Truly, God is love!

In the present portion of the parable, we are allowed to behold the king engaged with his servants in—

I. A CONTEMPLATION OF THE REFUSAL given to his bounty. The royal host appears, as it were, to be in consultation with his servants. What a conception! The eternal Father considers the position of affairs occasioned by the infamous conduct of those who rejected the gospel of His Son! It is clearly no small matter to Him. The glory of the only begotten lies near His heart. He is set forth as a king surveying the preparations made and considering the lack of guests. "The wedding is ready, but they which were invited were not worthy." The divine mind is pictured after the manner of men, as greatly moved and agitated with the

dilemma before it. There could be no banquet without guests, and yet guests there were none—and in such a case there would be waste, disappointment, dishonor and the lack of that joyous element so befitting the celebration of a marriage! In vain the fatted kine, the choice flour, the wine and the oil if none came to partake thereof. For lack of a better word, we described the condition as one of embarrassment to the host! And so, indeed, it would have been had not the host been God, Himself, of whose understanding there is no searching! Nothing is dark to Him, but from the human point of view it did seem to be a dilemma, indeed, when Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not—when the hands of mercy were stretched out in vain all the daylong to a disobedient and gainsaying generation! Perhaps you may yourself have been at much cost to prepare a feast, have exercised much thought to please your company and have counted upon the fellowship of the entertainment—and then through some untoward circumstances no one has come at the expected time! It was a great trouble to you and dampened your joy. Had it been a marriage it would have been far worse.

Now it was not possible in this parable to teach the doctrines of foreknowledge and omniscience, or else the figure would have broken down. No one metaphor can teach all the truths of God, or all the sides of truth. We have here the *human aspect* of the matter, and should carefully note it. The parable is meant to let us see what the thoughts of God are when He sees sinners refuse to come to Him and partake in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. With wonder, behold the divine mind as it contemplates the scene. All things are ready, there is nothing more for God to do in the work of our salvation. In order to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing remains but that men believe on Him and receive His grace! The Lord has fulfilled His promises! His Son has been incarnate. The active life of holiness, Christ has lived. The passive obedience to the law, Christ has rendered. If the soul needs spiritual meat, Christ is that meat. If the soul needs spiritual drink, Christ is that drink—and of both meat and drink there is good store in Him. If men, before they can come and honor Christ at the marriage feast, need washing, there is a fountain filled with blood! If they require clothing, there is a robe of matchless righteousness! If they desire adornment, there are jewels of great price. “All things are ready,” nothing is lacking—nothing but hearts to receive the blessing!

As the case stood in the parable, *a certain number of men had been invited.* It seems to be the theory of some theologians that none ought to have been invited but those who were sure to come. They hold, as we rejoice to hold, that there is an election of grace. In holding the doctrines of grace with a firm grasp, they do well, but they err when they teach that the invitation is to be restricted to the chosen, for here it is as clear as daylight that the first invitation was given to those who never were in the election of grace at all! They which were invited proved to be “not worthy,” and yet they were invited, over and over again, honestly and in

good faith. The king said they were invited, and this means that God Himself willed that the rejecters of His grace should be invited! His servants did not do wrong in inviting them, for the king bade them do so. It has been said, "It is useless to bid sinners come to Christ who are dead and will not come." It is useless as far as *we* can see—useless as to the bringing of them in—but we do not know all God's ends and designs and some things, in which we see no use, may, nevertheless, be necessary to His purpose! We imagine that flowers "waste their sweetness on the desert air," but there is no wastefulness in the great householder's arrangements—and the divine economy will one day be justified! There are parts of God's plan in which we see the evident utility, and it remains for our faith to believe that all the rest will turn out to be equally filled with wisdom. The preacher of the gospel is "a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish—to the one he is a savor of death unto death—and to the other the savor of life unto life." But he is still a sweet savor! We are still to preach the gospel to sinners and to invite them come—invite them come even though they will not come! We are to continue to invite those who go their way to their farm and to their merchandise. Nor must we fail to call even those who despitefully use us. Far wider than the acceptance is the invitation, for, "many are called, but few are chosen." The divine arrangement foreknew it would be so!

All things are ready, then, and men are invited, but it is said that *they were not worthy*. What is meant by that? Surely the gospel is not a matter of worthiness, for "in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and He has "come to seek and to save that which was lost." So far as any worthiness of personal righteousness is concerned, there certainly is no worthiness in any son of Adam—and the expression must not be so understood. We need no worthiness of merit in order to come to the gospel feast—but this is a mode of expression used to denote the fitness of things. It was not fit that men who preferred their paltry possessions to the king's favor, and were traitors at heart, should unite in the festivities of the princely marriage. They thought themselves too good and *this* was their unworthiness! They were too proud, too self-sufficient, too high-minded to be a worthy recipient of bounty and favor. He is the worthy receiver under the gospel who comes feeling his unworthiness and accepts the gospel provision as a gift of divine grace—but he who will not come because he thinks the gospel unworthy of him, shows himself to be unworthy of it!

When we determine to forgive an offender, we do not count him unworthy to be restored to our favor until he denies his fault and in defiance of our love insults us again and again. Even then mercy feels that he must be left to himself. He who continues to reject the pardon which the gospel proclaims and hardens his neck after many reproofs, dying as he now is, will have proved his utter unworthiness of grace. If a royal alms were to be given away to the poor without regard to their character; if a poor person came and gratefully received it, his previous

life would not disqualify him. But if another should mock at the almoners and ridicule the gift, he would prove that he was not worthy. Not his poverty, but his proud behavior would disqualify him! Dear friend, are you willing to be saved in God's way, through faith in Christ Jesus? Then rest assured you have all the worthiness that is needed! Stand not back, therefore, because you are sinful! Say not, "I am unworthy," because you have no good works, for self-righteousness would not prove you to be a fit object for grace, but the reverse, since grace is for sinners—for the undeserving and the lost!

See you, then, in what position the royal host was placed? There was the good cheer for the wedding. The dainties were not only at hand, but actually ready. The oxen were not fattening in the stalls, but already killed, cooked and ready for serving. In the East the heat is such that animal food must be eaten at once—and in this case it was already upon the table. More than this, the wedding was ready, the appointed day had dawned. What was to be done? There was one alternative and that was to annul the wedding and let the matter drop. This neither the king nor his son could think of. An invitation had been sent and those who were invited would not come! Wrath in hot haste might have said, "Close the door forever!" But no, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are His ways as our ways. The Lord might have said when the gospel was rejected by the Jews, "These are like unto others of the sons of men, they are all reprobate. I will not have mercy upon them, but will ease me of My adversaries." When Jesus came to His own and met so unhandsome a reception, He might have said, "I will return to My place from where I came. If I come here to die for men and men yield Me no better reception in My infancy than a manger; if they give Me no better occupation than a carpenter; if they call Me by no better name than that of a Galilean; if they afford Me no better entertainment than to be homeless, without a place to lay My head—then will I go back and let them see what will come of it. Let the covenant be annulled, let the gospel be revoked, let mercy end and let the ungrateful race go down to eternal misery!"

But Jehovah is God and changes not and, therefore, we are not consumed! It was not in the heart of the king to go back from his purpose, or cease from his bounty. His son's wedding must go on. The feast must be eaten and the banquet must be such as to display his magnificence. To honor his son was the motive which swayed the king in the parable, and such a master motive reigns in the heart of God. "No," said the king, "the wedding shall be furnished with guests. There shall be no disappointment for my son on this happy day. I will yet make my kingdom ring with the fame of his marriage festival! Behold the plan which I had kept back, but which this day I reveal to my servants. My first invitation, as I knew of old, has revealed the insincerity and treachery of those who were invited. I now unveil another method which shall assuredly display my grace and sovereign favor. I will bring in whomever I will to eat bread at this wedding! I will take the base things of

the earth to confound the mighty, and things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are." Now, observe this, you who have heard the gospel so long, but have rejected it—God will not, therefore, recall the gospel or disannul His covenant of love, or call back the provisions of His grace because not for your sake, but for His Son's sake and for His own honor's sake, He has resolved to go through with this matter! Jesus shall not be incarnate in vain! The oxen and the fatlings of the covenant shall not be slain for nothing—good shall conquer evil, mercy shall rejoice over judgment—Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied! The Redeemer's union with His church shall not be unattended by those rich displays of divine grace which shall make it the wonder of all the ages!

Though *those who were first invited, refused.* Though they thought to dishonor the Lord by so doing, *His purpose shall stand* and His chosen shall be saved. Has the Lord been foiled yet in anything that He has attempted? Who has ever restrained the everlasting one? Or who has said unto Him, "what are you doing?" Did chaos by its wild confusion prevent the ordering of the world? Did not the Spirit move upon the water and bring forth life and order there? When darkness was on the face of the deep, could that resist Him? Did not the words, "light be," scatter the darkness at once? And it shall be so now, in the world of mind as well as in the world of matter, for Jehovah is Lord of spirits and does as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world! Though some think not so, yet full surely is it a sort of atheism to deny the almightiness of God in the realm of mind! In both He rules supremely without violating the nature of either, except it is for His glory to work unusual miracles. Many cannot understand how this can be unless we reduce mind to the bondage of matter—and conceive of men as machines, destitute of free agency—but in this they lose the glory of the truth of God! The *omnipotence* of God is glorified in the fact that while man has a will, yet God governs him as a free agent. He does not violate the will, and yet knows how, by spiritual forces, to work His own purposes, so that man does as *He* wills. That God rules man as a builder rules his stones and timber is the idea of idiots, but that He leaves them men, in full possession of their freedom, and yet achieves the purposes of His grace is the truth of God! He has mysterious cords of love and bands of a man with which to draw men—they are compelled to come in, but yet "the people willingly offer themselves." It is a paradox, and so is every truth of God, if we are willing to see it all. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it and, therefore, I accept it as all the more clearly in harmony with the attributes of Him whose ways are past finding out. You see, then, that God's great determination is to go on with His gospel festival. He condescendingly seems *to His servants,* to turn it over in His mind, but it had all been in His plan from old eternity and He now unveils it. The words of the parable lay bare to spiritual minds the mysteries of God's dealings with

Israel and the Gentiles—and bring us down to the period when the great gospel mystery, which had been hidden from kings and prophets, was brought to light, and the nations were made to see the salvation of God in Christ Jesus, His Son!

Let us pass on to another consideration and observe—

II. THE COMMISSION ENLARGED. "They that were invited were not worthy. Go you therefore" (for that very reason) "into the highways, and as many as you shall find invite to the marriage."

It was a disappointment to the servants that the often invited guests would not come, but they were to have an abundant recompense in seeing a far more grateful company assembled—and *a far more remarkable assembly than could have gathered at the palace had the invited ones come at their call.* To the servants it must have appeared little short of a catastrophe that guests should be lacking. No feast, especially a royal one, would be complete without willing guests! To force men by violence would not answer the purpose—they must be cheerful, joyful, delighted feasters, or they would turn the wedding into slavery! The problem was how to get these willing and joyful guests—where could they be found? The king knew well where they were and pointed out the method of wisdom when he said, "Go out into the highways where the poor are wandering and where the hungry faint by the way; go out where the many are and invite them come and feast to the full; as many as you find invite to the marriage." Ah, how did these vagrants of the highways, these tramps, these hawkers, tinkers and beggars who so little expected ever to be invited—who, according to all human calculations were quite uninvitable and unpresentable at court—how did they rejoice to be invited to the marriage? The gospel which is despised by the proud is sweet to those who are in spiritual destitution! Know, then, that in order to bring in welcome guests to the feast of mercy, the old commission of the prophets was enlarged in the delivery to the apostles—they were not restrained to the Jews who were invited, but to every creature! They were sent out into all the world as itinerant commissioners with unlimited power to bid men believe in Jesus! Ministers of Christ, yes, and all Christians are now sent on the same errand—and to all of you is the word of this salvation sent!

Who were to go? "Then said he unto *his servants*." You see, then, that those went who had gone before and had been rejected, or even despitefully used. And we gather from this that disappointments in our former labors are not reasons for retirement, but arguments for increased activity and that the servants whose messages have been refused should, nevertheless, spring forward and say, "Here are we, send us!" I hear these neglected messengers pleading after this fashion, "Gracious king, permit us to go again. We stood astonished and we wept bitterly as we heard the refusal of Your enemies, but now grant us the joy of conducting others of our fellow subjects into Your royal halls." If any among us have hitherto spent our strength for nothing, let us beg

leave to proclaim the gospel again in hope of better success! Those who have had large success are the very last to dream of being excused from further service—they are wedded to the work forever! I would to God that you who have been unsuccessful may be equally so.

To whom were the messengers to go? Their path lay straight before them. Out of doors was their road and the common thoroughfare their field—they were to invite all that they found! I do not understand these words if they do not mean just this—that we are to tell the gospel to everybody with whom we meet. "As many as you shall find, invite to the marriage." That is, everybody you see, pass, live with, deal with, know or hear of—everybody that providence and effort will enable you to reach! Perhaps one of the servants, as he went out, ran into his own brother. "Brother," said he, "I pray you come to the prince's wedding! There is a lack of guests and you will be welcome." Perhaps he went a little farther and met with his sister, or his mother, or his father and at once he cried, "Come, dear ones! Come to the wedding! the king has bid me invite all I meet with, and I have met you—come at once." Then as he went farther out he saw a beggar in his rags, limping on crutches. He knew him to be a strange character, and not at all in his face, or his limbs, or his garments, fitted to adorn a royal feast—but he said to him, "There is a great feast ready and it is open to you. The king told me to invite all I found." "Shouldn't I like it!" said the beggar, "but may I go?" "Yes, beyond all doubt, for he who bade me invite all will not refuse any who come." The messenger ran on and joined himself to a chariot in which there rode a great nobleman—having invited his lordship, he hastened on to call a thief and a woman that was a sinner, nor did he pause until the time was come to return to him that sent him. Those servants, I should imagine, had an odd experience of many singular characters, outcasts, eccentrics and good for nothings! But they did as they were told and it was a great pleasure to them to do so. The singular benevolence of their errand gave it a great charm. They gathered, before long, a motley group—bad and good, rich and poor, high and low, lame, blind, sick and sorry! It was Noah's ark over again, for clean and unclean were fetched in, and there were guests enough, though there was quite room for all. They had no fear of calling too many or of inviting the wrong people—their commission from their master gave them ample room and space enough, and they were not slow in carrying it out to the letter. O for grace to follow their blessed example! Let all believers try to do so!

It is not ours alone to instruct these who come to us, but to go after men to press instruction upon them. Granted that in this climate we need the shelter of a roof as a rule, yet let it be accepted as a necessary evil and never regarded as a religious requirement, much less as a jail wherein the preaching of the gospel must be confined! Leave church, chapel, tabernacle, meetinghouse at once, if the masses are not reached by you, and go out into the public hall, the market, or the field if there an audience can be secured. The gospel message is not, "Wait within," but,

"Go you out!" What says that grand old missionary text? "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Out of your pulpit, sir! Do not believe in the virtue of that cushion and tassel. Out, I say, into the public places! No, it is not I, but your Lord that bids you! Make the gospel to be known *in the highways, in the public places—invite as many as you find.* This is the ordained way of furnishing the wedding with guests. The old way of only inviting those to come who have been invited many times before has become a failure—henceforth use the generous gospel way—seek out the strangers, the hitherto uninvited, the unevangelized, the ignorant, the irreligious! And to them proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord! Some of us must prophesy in public places to the crowds who need a trumpet voice. And others of us must run along the byways and invite men come in little groups or one by one. Away there at the street corners, where the idlers lounge whom no man has hired, go and find guests for your Master! Yonder where a giddy company dance to a defiling song, or where others listen to an idle tale—there bear your message of life! Press the good news upon the hungry at the workhouse door and the felon in his cell! And pass not by the fallen woman, or even her seducer, whose filthy eyes are searching for fresh objects for his lust! Tell the drunk, when you find him sober, of heaven's wines on the lees well refined, and the beggar, of an alms most rich and free!

All sorts of persons, bad and good, as many as you find, without exception, you must invite! You need not fear that you will invite an unwelcome guest, nor that too large a company will come. You will never exhaust your Master's provision or His patience. Go and do as He tells you and find as many as you can, for those you bring, He will receive. If there is one whom you, in your unbelief, would pass over, the probabilities are that he is one whom God decrees to bless, for He sees not as man sees and chooses not after man's preferences. You would forget, perhaps, the poor, but, "God has chosen the poor of this world." You might, perhaps, overlook the abject, but, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The discrimination lies with God—not with you! Who are elect He knows, but you know not, nor should you wish to know till He reveals them—it is enough for you that He has much people in this city. Other sheep the Savior has who are not yet of His visible fold, whom also He must bring in. Go you and be His instruments in the matter! No, pause not, wish not to make a difference. God reveals His discriminating grace by an universal indiscriminate preaching of the gospel! He often works by seeking contraries and achieves His purpose by that which man counts foolishness. He is the best judge of fitness and consistency—it is not yours to judge His methods, but to obey His commands.

Thus we have contemplated the enlargement of the gospel commission. Now let us see—

III. THE COMMISSION FULFILLED. The servants were commanded to go and they went. O for the same ready obedience on our parts. No servant said, "I am not fit to go," or, "I dare not," but it is written, "*So those servants went out.*" Will that be the case in this church? The pastor must lead the way—will you go, you deacons and elders, one and all? Who among you will be so base as to withhold? You members of the church, will you go? Dare you refuse the divine call? Sister, will you go? You need not travel far with your feet—your household duties are your highway. Speak to those in it tonight! You, my friend, yonder, are employed in a workroom where many hands are busy—use, I pray you, your opportunities. Perhaps they find opportunities of ridiculing your religion—make a courageous return by telling them what religion has done for you. Whenever the day of God's power is come, His people are made willing for His service! Before the 3,000 were called at Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. There are two sorts of inquirers and the one always comes before the other—inquiring saints lead on inquiring sinners—"For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." When God's servants go after sinners, sinners come after Christ! That is God's usual rule. "By the foolishness of preaching," which there includes all sorts of Christian teaching, the Lord ordains to save them that believe.

No doubt *every servant went his own way,* for if you observe, the word, "highways," is in the plural. If they had all gone together they would have wasted their strength, but when one went one road and one another, many more would be met with. I think I see them outside the door as they rush out at their master's command! One of the elder servants cries, "Brethren, stop a minute! Let us arrange ourselves and agree to scour the city. You run along the north road, and you traverse the south. You take the east, and I will go the west." No doubt same irregular brother would say, "I cannot be fettered with rules, I shall go where I can." "Very well," they would say, "go, brother, but mind you do not loiter." Probably those would be the better sort who accepted the brotherly agreement and so carried it out that the whole city was canvassed and the entire district traversed. See how pleased they all are, how earnest and how swift! How I could wish to have been one of them! Have you such a wish? Well, we can be! We may go at once. It fills my soul with pleasure to think that I am sent to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to poor lost souls! There is no joy like it, except that of seeing them actually saved! These good servants, when they found that the king was so surprisingly generous, that since the nobility and aristocracy would not come, he intended to bring in the beggars and the highwaymen, and those that slept under the hedges—must have felt such joy in spirit that they leaped along and cried aloud, "Whoever will, let him come to the royal wedding, for the king has bid us to invite as many as we find, both good and bad."

So all those servants went forth, but though they went different ways they all found guests, for *they gathered together all as many as they found*, and there was enough to completely furnish the chamber with guests! When God sends His servants, they go on no fruitless errand! When He makes them willing to go here and there, declaring His mercy, there are sure to be chosen ones in their road! The Lord puts sinners in our way on purpose that we may do them good—and if we are awake to seize all opportunities—God will bless our endeavors.

Though the servants went different ways you will observe they all pointed those they found to one central place. They "*gathered together* all as many as they found." They all said as they were told, "Come to the wedding," and to each one as he inquired the way, they said, "Behold the feast." Wherever the servants were, their fingers pointed to the royal palace. What a mercy it is when an earnest Christian church has no theme but Christ. When the pastor is set upon bringing sinners to Jesus and all the brotherhood are filled with the same longing! Happy is it when all the testimonies are one! If you step into the Sunday school, the teachers are not preaching up salvation by good works to the little ones, but Jesus only! And if you go into the Bible class, they are not teaching ceremonialism, but cleansing by the precious blood! There are many agents, but they are all working with one design— their spheres vary but not their doctrines—their talents differ but not their messages!

As a result of this agency all kinds of individuals came to the banquet, "*both bad and good.*" In any genuine work of grace the converts will never be of one class—there will be the rich, glory be to God when they are brought! There will be the poor and the Lord's name be praised for it! We may expect to see the children of godly parents converted, but we may also hope to welcome those who never heard the name of God! We have been rejoiced to hear during the last few days of the infidel being converted! It has been a great joy to mark the tears of a woman that was a sinner, and to hear the cries of those who had been accustomed to the drunkard's settle, while many have come who were aforetime excellent in character and outwardly religious. When the gospel is preached to every creature, it gathers together those who in the judgment of men are both good and bad!

But how was it that so many people who were in the highways when the servants rushed out and told them so hurriedly to come, were found willing to accept the invitation? They had received no previous invitation, yet they came—while those who had timely notice would not come. How strange are the ways of men! How stranger, still, the ways of God! We have seen it—seen it to our joy and our grief—to our joy that some who never heard the gospel before have come to Jesus the very first time they have heard about Him! To our grief because those who have known the gospel from their youth up have still refused to obey its glorious message! Why was it that they came? They came because *the king who sent the*

servants, sent a secret power with them. He had prepared the people in the streets to come!

Our exposition and exhortation shall close with the sweetest word of all. Notwithstanding the first failure, the commission being enlarged and fulfilled, we now see—

IV. THE KING'S DESIGN ACCOMPLISHED—*"The wedding was furnished with guests."* It had before, everything else *but* guests. Now it has guests also. So, when the gospel is preached to all nations, the power of God works with it and His eternal purposes are fulfilled! Jesus sees of the travail of His soul. His union with manhood is graced with a joyful festival!

Observe this, that *the king's bounty was, after all, illustrated.* Those who were first invited would not come, they did not care to be receivers of his royal bounty. But now he shines in liberality more than if they *had* come, for everyone tells it—"This king made a feast for beggars, for streetwalkers, for highwaymen and for all sorts of people." His name was sounded abroad among the many through his condescending goodness! If moralists refuse the Savior, then when He converts the grossly guilty, He shall have a greater name for grace than ever! The refusal of Pharisees shall redound to His glory, inasmuch as He invites the publicans. He intended when he killed his oxen and his fatlings that all should be eaten, and he could not have secured this more certainly than by bringing in the famishing poor, for these brought with them ravenous appetites! All the mercy of God is meant to be used and when He converted such as we are, He chose the right way to have His mercy magnified, for we have been receiving of His fullness, grace for grace, and are still hungering for more! No part of the banquet of mercy shall go untouched! We need all that is stored in the covenant. There will be enough for us, but we shall have need of all.

The king intended his feast to promote happiness and *there was ten times more happiness produced by bringing in the poor and needy from the streets, than if the great ones, who were first invited, had come.* What happiness to the hungry to feed on the bread of heaven! Never had such a meal been set before them in all their lives! They had not even in their *dreams* thought of sitting at an imperial table! How they looked at each other as they enjoyed the fat things full of marrow! How one smiled at the other and said, "what a feast is this for a hungry soul! I was never filled like this before!" And, oh, since God has brought in some of us, such great sinners, I am sure there are none so happy as we are! None can rejoice so much in pardoning love and adopting grace and all the riches of the covenant. Instead of the Lord being defeated in His design of making men happy, He has won a glorious victory through the refusal of His enemies. The Jews refused, but the Gentiles glorify Him more! The regular religionists reject Christ, but the sinners accept Him and are glad.

He intended also that his son should have honor, and surely, if he desired shouts of praise for his son, he found the right men to do it heartily and lustily. If the very respectable people had come, they would have taken everything very quietly after a mild lukewarm fashion, but the rough men of the streets were all enthusiasm and fervor, and when they had well eaten, how they shouted for joy! What cheers they gave for the king and for his son. Even thus, when grace brings in the outcasts, they feel that none shall sing more loudly in heaven than they! None shall love more or praise more. How rapturously ought we to praise the Lord, that passing by the great and noble, He has chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are!

If the king desired love for his son, he went the sure way to accomplish it when he raked the highways for guests, for they would be sure to love the condescending prince now that they had feasted with him. They would prize so much that day's festival that they would henceforth look at themselves as the prince's own—and be his loyal subjects, his devout admirers forever! They would reverently and joyfully say, "What a king is ours! What a royal word it was to say, 'Go into the highways and bring in as many as you find!'" O how they would love him! If he destroyed a seditious city, he made up for the loss by creating a new band of loyal citizens! Here were men who would serve him with their lives, or die for him in his battles. Such hearts has Jesus won! Now that we have been brought to receive salvation, we would live for Jesus, we would die for Him—

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours."

You who have done so much for me, help me to do all I can for You. God bless every such a lover of the Prince Immanuel!

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GOODNESS GOING BEFORE
NO. 3329

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"You prevent Him with the blessings of goodness."
Psalm 21:3.

OUR text is one of many instances of the way in which words change their meanings. The word, "prevent," as we now use it, has a very different meaning from that which it had when our translators used it. It now signifies to get before one, to stop up his path, to prevent his going a certain way, just as the angel "prevented" Balaam, standing with his sword drawn in his hand that he might not pass that way. This is only the modern use of the word, but the real and ancient use of it was simply, "to go before." "You go before Him with the blessings of goodness." That is the real meaning of the word—and when we speak of, "preventing grace," we do not intend to describe the grace that keeps us from sin, but the grace which goes before our actually believing in Christ—**"**prevenient grace," as we are accustomed to call it theologically—grace which comes to us while as yet we are not conscious of its power, or have no desire towards it.

The meaning of the text, then, is *not* that Christ was prevented, or hindered from doing anything that He wished to do, by God's goodness, but that God's goodness went before, preceded, and heralded Him. That word, "preceded," has taken in our language in the present age the force and meaning which the word, "prevent," had at the time of the translation of our authorized version of the Bible, so that now we should say, instead, "You precede Him, got before Him with the blessings of Your goodness."

I shall take the text on this occasion, then, in two ways. First, noticing *its application to our Lord Jesus Christ, personally,* and *then its application to Him mystically*—that is to say, to *every believing soul that is truly in Him.*

First, then—

I. ITS APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST PERSONALLY. It is quite certain that God did precede Him with the blessings of goodness. That is to say, before our Lord Jesus Christ actually came into the world and bowed His head in death, multitudes of spirits were given to Him as His reward—that tens of thousands entered into God's redemption by virtue of an atonement that was not as yet offered—and washed away their sins in a fountain filled with blood which had not been literally

opened, but which was opened in the purpose of God and in its divine operation from before the foundation of the world, for is He not called, "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world"? Brothers and sisters, see the wondrous power of the death of our Savior! His blood not only cries from the ground when it is spilt, but it cried all down the ages which preceded the actual blood-shedding! It opened the gates of heaven to sinners, it was sprinkled on the consciences of believers and made sinful men to be "accepted in the Beloved" even before it had dropped in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, or had been made to flow in streams under the lash in Gabbatha, or had been poured forth from the five sacred wounds upon the cross of Calvary! "You precede Him with the blessings of goodness."

Just as some mighty conquerors, when they entered in triumph into Rome not only had behind them the trophies of their victory, but before them the streets were strewn with flowers and made sweet with the perfumes rained upon them before they came, so was it with the Savior. Before He came, the world was blessed by His coming! Before He, Himself, appeared, I may say that death and hell were defeated in anticipation. Just as in our own land there is a brightness that covers the sky before the sun has actually risen above the horizon, so was it with the world—there was the light of God in it before Christ came. It was light, however, which came from Him, for He is the light of the world, the light that lights every man that comes into the world—but it came before He, Himself, appeared! In this verse, then, it must be said of King Jesus, "You precede Him with the blessings of goodness."

And to ponder another phase of this same thought, our Lord Jesus Christ was *honored among the sons of men before He had performed His great work.*

We honor our Lord because He has redeemed us, and it is this that makes them sing before the eternal throne of God, "He has loved us, and redeemed us unto God by His blood." But long before the redemption price had been paid, I doubt not that Christ was honored by the saints in heaven, for they knew that their coming there was on the same ground and footing as the saints do now! I believe, therefore, that long before He lived and died on earth, they cast their crowns at His feet and said, "You are worthy." I have frequently heard it said that there was no faith in heaven, but I have never been able to receive that idea. At any rate, there must have been faith in heaven before Christ died! The celestial spirits must have had a firm conviction that Christ would come upon the earth and must have felt that their security depended upon the infallible oath and promise that in the fullness of time He would offer Himself as a sacrifice. Indeed, it seems to me that there is still faith in heaven as to that matter, for they have to believe as we do in the Second Advent, in the resurrection of the dead and in many wondrous promises which as yet have not been fulfilled. Certainly, beloved, we may say of the Master that His head was crowned with the glory of the crown of thorns before it

was crowned with the shame! And in this sense He was preceded with the blessings of goodness. Abraham saw His day. He saw it and was glad—and in that gladness of Abraham, Jesus Christ rejoiced! David sang of Him and rested upon Him with such faith that in that faith the Savior found a solace. All those who were able to look through that smoke of the types and ceremonies—and to see the substance of the true redemption—all gave honor and glory to Him, and this I say was before He had actually won that glory by His death—"You precede Him with the blessings of goodness."

It seems to me, however, that the text need not be read literally, or interpreted exactly according to its words, but the spirit of it is more to be observed. That spirit appears to be this—that Christ does not tardily obtain from His father the blessings of goodness, but *they come from God with freeness and divine liberality*, so that it may truly be said, "You precede Him with the blessings of goodness." Take an instance. Our Savior says, "I will not pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, for you have loved Me." It was as if He put it in these words and had said, "I should not have to wait pleading at the throne, for the Father, Himself, is so willing to give, that He will precede me with the blessings of goodness." Ah, my dear friends, if it is a promise which belongs to us poor pleaders that before we call, He will answer, and while we are speaking He will hear, do you not think that this blessing emphatically belongs to the great intercessor—the Lord Jesus—so that the Father precedes Him with "the blessings of goodness"? We are accustomed to sing to Him as pleading before the eternal throne, but we must forever banish from our minds all idea of His needing to plead because God is unwilling to hear! No, what the Son desires, the Father desires—that which He seeks at the divine throne is flowing from that throne—but His intercession it not the *cause* of it, but the *channel* through which it comes to us! We know that God's goodness was not caused by the death of Christ—

"'Twas not to make the Father's love
Towards His people known
That Jesus, from the realms above,
On His kind errand came!
'Twas not the pangs that He endured,
Nor all the woes He bore
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before!"

God loved His people with a love that surpassed all thought *before the Savior came.* And now that that Savior pleads for us, His plea is not the *cause* of the blessing, but the *channel* through which the blessing comes down to us "You precede Him with the blessings of goodness."

But then, beloved, what a sweet thought this is, that wherever the Savior comes, *God's blessings come with Him, come behind Him, no, even come before Him!* Sometimes when a man walks, his shadow goes before

him. The shadow of Peter healed the sick, and so the shadow of the Savior, when He is coming to a soul, begins to heal it. Why, I have known some who have been blessed by the very shadow of Christ—I mean that before they were actually converted, before the new heart and the right spirit were given to them, the very shadow of Christ, at least more or less, made them desire to change their ways. The very shadow of Christ, I say, falling before them had somewhat of a healing effect upon their souls even before they had put their fingers into the print of the nails or thrust their hands into His side! You, brothers and sisters, who have had communion with Christ, will know that before you are actually conscious of the love of Christ being shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will often have some notion of it, for a calm suddenly comes upon you before He, Himself, comes.

He makes all things ready just as He did at the Passover, when He sent His disciples to prepare the upper room. His Holy Spirit often comes to make ready your heart to receive Him so that when He comes you may be ready to open the door because He has been preceded by the "blessings of goodness." Even before He comes, comes a blessing from Him! Beloved, what must be the treasures that are in Him? What the troops of angelic mercies that surround Him? What the heavenly blessings, what the waves upon waves of celestial benedictions that must be in Himself, in His own person! If His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, where did they get the sweet odor from but from Himself? They smell of the cassia, but He is the cassia! "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-Beloved unto me." As a cluster of camphor in the vineyards of Engedi, is He to those who know His fragrance and delight in His sweetness! We may say of Him, "You precede Him with the blessings of goodness," but as for Himself, He is goodness itself! Do you not think that Bernard of Clairvaux had the right idea when he penned that ancient hymn which has been so sweetly translated—

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast!
But sweeter far Your face to see,
And in Your presence rest."

Then he goes on—

"To those who fall how kind You are!
How good to those that 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."

So, then, we leave this point as it refers to our Lord, personally, reminding ourselves that all the blessings of God's goodness are, "Yes, and Amen, in Christ Jesus to the glory of God," to us, and they all come to us through Him. We now turn to our second point—

II. ITS APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST MYSTICALLY, that is, TO EVERY BELIEVING SOUL IN HIM. We too, can say to God, "You have preceded us with the blessings of goodness."

I want you to go back a little in your own histories. Just take out your diaries and turn back to the book of His mercies. I want you to think of *prevenient providences.* You may open your children's hymnbook if you like, and you may sing—

"I thank the goodness and the grace,
Which on my birth have smiled
That in this land I passed my days,
A happy English child.
I was not born a little slave,
To labor in the sun,
Wishing I were put in my grave,
And all my labor done.
I was not born as thousands are,
Where God was never known
And taught to pray a senseless prayer
To blocks of wood and stone.
My God, I thank You who have planned,
A better lot for me!
And placed me in this happy land,
Where I can hear of Thee."

I remember hearing it once said that this was a hymn for little Pharisees, but the man who said that did not know any better and was, therefore, to be pitied. It is a hymn which a child may very gratefully sing and which we may all join in when we thank God for the providence which caused us to be born where the gospel is preached!

Let us be thankful, too, many of us, that *we were born in households where the name of Jesus was among the earliest sounds that caught our ears!* We were rocked in our cradles to the hymns of Zion and the name of the Savior mingled with the very hush of the lullaby. With some here, alas, it was oaths and curses and the first sounds they heard were drunken brawls and profanity and blasphemy! If, dear friends—as many of you have been—you were born into Christian families, I want you to think of it and then say, "You precede me with the blessings of goodness." Then after your birth, but long before your conversion, what wonderful providences fell to our lot! Our conversion may even have been brought about by the most trifling circumstances. When you were a bound apprentice, young man, perhaps you were from an ungodly family and it was a remarkable providence which put you under a Christian master! And you, my young friend, when you first went out to service, or as nursery governess, it was a great mercy that you had a Christian fellow servant, or met with someone to speak with you concerning the things of God! How many chances, as we say, there were that you would *not* go to such a place and make them into strong helpers to your highest good! And since then, just think over the preserving providences that you had even before you were converted. If you had died before conversion,

where would you have been? Think, too, of the providences which tended to bring you to the place where you live and where you first heard the Word of God, and the providences which prepared your soul to be saved.

I have no doubt that sometimes a man who has been afflicted is more likely to be blessed by a sermon than he would be if he had not been so afflicted. And so, the loss of a child, or having a sick wife, or a serious injury to property are all plows which God uses in providence to make a man ready to receive the gospel. "I would never have seen," said one man, "if I had not lost my eyes." "Ah," said another, "I would never have been able to run if I had not broken my legs." Our so called misfortunes are sometimes our greatest benedictions and are often overruled by the Lord to be the means by which we are brought into the way of being blessed—and where He may afterwards meet with us with the blessings of goodness! You have been praying for prosperity, my friend, but God has not heard you. And you now say that God does not hear prayer. You have asked for a certain position and He has not given it to you, for it is a position, perhaps, in which you would be ruined. Perhaps you are of such a spirit that if you were not afflicted in providence you would be running into all manner of mischief, but God loves you well and, therefore, He will not let you rush blindly down to destruction, but puts a clog upon you to keep you back! Let us think, then, brothers and sisters, of the providence which came to us before our quickening.

But a wider field opens up to us when we come to think not merely of preventing providence, but of *preventing grace,* the grace that came to us before we knew Christ at all. First, brothers and sisters, there was *the grace of restraint* which kept some of us back from committing sins which might have placed us out of the world, out of society, or out of the reach of the ordinary means of grace. It is something to have been kept from drunkenness—it will be a theme for perpetual gratitude if we have been kept from the grosser vices by which the body, as well as the soul, may become defiled and polluted! It is no small blessing to have preserved in social life an untarnished reputation among men. Had such a woman fallen, she might never have dared to go where the gospel was preached and was blessed to her. Had such a young man really put his hand into the till when he was severely tempted to do it, he might have lost his standing and never have been at Sunday school or in the Bible class where God met with him. Perhaps you have been strongly tempted to do a certain thing, but something came upon you—you did not know what it was—which told you, you must not do it. Preventing grace has come and prevented you from knowing the depths of your carnal nature, because providence has put you into a position where you cannot do as you would!

I do not doubt, brothers and sisters, that there is a grace which precedes quickening; a grace for which theology has no name, which prepares the soul for the reception of the divine word, which makes the soul ready before the living seed comes. It is a kind of grace, at any rate,

which educates the man, which makes him candid, casts out his prejudice, makes him live honestly and keeps him from falling into conceit. We know some who are unconverted whom we are very thankful to know, for we have great hopes for them. If they have not received the truth of God in the love of it, yet they have a great love for the truth and do not, by their outward actions, lead others into sin. I trust, in some cases at least, that these are not mere Pharisees, but that of many of them we may truly say, "You precede him with the blessings of goodness."

Now I shall leave this point and go on to remark that the text is true of us who are believers in the following senses—God *has preceded us in the order of merit.* If He had stopped until we *deserved* His grace, He would never have come! We had never known salvation if He had waited until we were worthy to receive it, for we are not worthy now! For years some of us have been serving Him, either by preaching the gospel or in some other way, but we have no merit even now! Our poor merits have broken their legs and cannot travel. No, our merit has been waterlogged. It has gone down and foundered at sea. We have done with all thought of our own merit! And yet let us recollect that when we come to God, if we are never so guilty, He precedes us with the blessings of goodness! Though our vileness would seem to be upon our forehead, like the leprosy of old, yet we have access with boldness unto this grace whereby we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed. Truly, "His ways are not as our ways, neither are His thoughts as our thoughts, for so high as the heavens are above the earth even so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." I have not run an inch in the road of merit! But He has run ten thousand leagues, for in the road of merit, He precedes us with the blessings of His goodness!

And it is not only true in the sense of merit, but it is equally true *in the sense of desire.* God did not wait to save us until we desired to be saved. Let me not be misunderstood, however, in the assertion. Did not Christ die to save us before we were born? Was not the gospel sent to us before we desired to hear it? Although we sat in the house of God indifferent and did not care about it, yet it was ringing in our ears all the while! And even if we had desires, yet where did those desires come from? Were they our own desires, or were they given to us by Christ?

Those of my brothers who choose to take the alternative, may do so, but as far as I am concerned, I must say—

"'Twas not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be!
This heart would still refuse Thee,
But You have chosen me!"

I cannot take any credit to myself for coming to Christ! I did come, but I am persuaded it was a secret whisper of His love that attracted my soul. And because of that text which Jeremiah gives us so blessedly, "I have

loved you with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Or as the poet sings—

"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to obey the voice divine."

God, in this, preceded us with the blessings of goodness! He taught us to desire when we neither willed nor ran, and so fulfilled the text, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."

Then, besides this, God also precedes us in *endeavor*. Brothers and sisters, you and I have been endeavoring to grow in grace and, notwithstanding the little progress we have made, yet, on the whole, God has given us a great deal more than our exertions might have led us to expect. When I look on the little zeal which some of us exhibit in private prayer and upon the little diligence which some of us have in studying the Word of God, it is amazing that we should have been enabled to have so much joy and to have so much knowledge of divine things as we have! We have sown but little and reaped but little compared with what we might have done, but our harvest has been of infinitely greater value than the sowing might have led us to expect. Christian, you are now more advanced in the divine life than you might have been, or would have been on the mere ground of your own exertions! You have not advanced far because you have strived with but little earnestness, but you have had a far greater result than you might have expected. Sometimes I have found in my own soul that I have longed to have communion with Christ. I have thought that if I could but get a whisper from Him, I would be content—and before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib! I heard no whisper fall on my outward ears, but His voice to my soul was clear and sweet! I had no vision of Christ granted to my bodily eyes, but before my faith, there stood my Beloved near to me and my heart was charmed by His presence long before I thought I could ever reach such a state! Christ came and seconded my endeavors, no, carried me far beyond all my endeavors! When, on the other hand, I lay like a dull, dead log, and my spirit seemed unable to move, suddenly the wheels of my soul began to whirl until the axles grew hot with speed!

Certainly, too, the Lord has preceded us in *the order of our experience as to time.* Mark tells us that when Christ fed the multitudes, they sat down on the green grass and that there was much grass in that place. God knew that Christ would need a banqueting hall and, therefore, He made a carpet for Him long before He came there! The pasture must come before the sheep, or else while the grass grows the flock will starve. Always notice the forestalling of God's providence and the forestalling of God's grace! He prepares before our actual necessity comes. Have you not observed this in your trials? You had a great trouble a little while ago. You had a death in the house—but a month or two before the death came, you had an unusual season of joy and you did not know why. Now you know it was sent to prepare you for your unexpected trouble! Or

perhaps it was another way—this last trouble of yours did not oppress you as you thought it would because you had had another trouble before, and another before that—so that you had, as it were, grown used to troubles. You had been in the fire till you had become like a sword blade that gets annealed in the heat! I am told that before army horses are taken into battle, they are trained to bear the noise of guns firing. Certainly God trains His own chargers and makes them bear all the din and tumult of battle. He prepares us by small trials to bear larger ones! He goes before us and leaves, thus, the blessings of goodness to our souls. He is our great sympathetic pioneer, going before us through the thick forest and jungle of trial and trouble, clearing a way for us through the brambles and thorns, and making straight in the wilderness a highway for His people, being to us as He was to Israel a cloudy fiery pillar and so, preceding us with the blessings of goodness!

Yet again He sometimes precedes us *in our labors.* Before our missionaries went to the South Seas, there was a peculiar preparation of the minds of the people. They had a tradition or legend that white men would come in ships and tell them of the true God. Their minds were ready! They were looking for the vessels, and when they arrived, the people were not only waiting, but willing to receive them! You, too, will perhaps find—some of you who may be going to sail to Australia, or change your position in life—that the people among whom you are going are prepared for you and you are especially prepared as God's witness for them! Believe that wherever you are going, that God who knows all about you and who orders your footsteps will prepare your way before you! He will not let you go an unknown path, but one that should be trodden by the foot of His love before it shall be trodden by you. He will precede you with the blessings of goodness.

And, lastly, my text has a very sweet meaning when we think that *God will precede even our expectations.* Some of us never expected the Christian life to be as happy as it has been. We have had—oh, how often!—some expectations about heaven. I do not care to read many books about heaven. If most of the books that have ever been written about heaven were destroyed, I think we should know nearly as much as we do now, with them! We know more about heaven, I believe, from our hymns than we do from our books. The hymn—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end
In joy, and peace, and thee!"

has more of heaven in it than half the books that have been written upon the subject, or that other hymn—

"Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest,
Beneath your contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed!
We know not, oh we know not, what joys await us there—
What radiance of glory, what bliss beyond compare."

Now these hymns take us up even into the pearly-gated city itself, and sometimes when we have been singing—

"On Jordan's stormy bank I stand,
And cast a wistful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."

We have almost seen the—

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Arrayed in living green,"

and we have been ready to ask to go to be with our Savior, with whom we shall dwell forever! We expect to meet a blessed company of the saints there. We expect to have wondrous nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are expecting, every one of us, to have a bright crown. We are expecting to have perfect freedom from every ill, from pain, from sin and from sorrow; and to have what the apostle calls "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

We are expecting to see such a place as imagination never pictured! To hear such music as has never ravished mortal ear! We are expecting to drink from such pure streams as never flowed from Lebanon's untrodden snows! We expect something beyond what eye, or ear, or heart can teach us! Well, brothers and sisters, when we get there we shall find, any of us who have had great thoughts about heaven, that our minds were too narrow and our thoughts too contracted! We shall be like the Queen of Sheba when she said, "I heard a good report in my own land, but the half has not been told me." We shall not be able to turn to the old book and say, "Ah, God, You have not fulfilled Your promise! I do not find this state of glory so wondrous as I had been led to think it was." No, beloved, but we shall have to say even there, "You precede my imagination, my expectancy with the blessings of goodness," and we shall have to add—

"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away!"

I like that verse which our friends sometimes sing which says that we shall—

"Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving-kindness in the skies,"

for so I doubt not, for a long time, at any rate, in heaven, surprise will be one of the most blessed of our emotions—surprise to think that heaven should be such as it is, that Christ should be so glorious and that we should be permitted to partake of His glory! We shall feel that God has exceeded His own word and outrun His own promise, and that it was not in human speech, even with God, Himself, using it, to convey to the human mind any adequate idea of this which surpasses all comprehension and imagination—the joys which God has for those who love Him!

My only regret in thinking on such a text as this is that *some of you have no part in it.* Oh, friends may God give you grace to look to Him! How can you live on the brink of a stream and never think of the

fountain? How can you receive daily mercies and yet so cruelly treat your God who gives you everything? Worse than the ox treats its owner, for the ox knows his owner and the donkey its master's crib, but you do not know, you do not consider!

Ah, He has indeed preceded you with the blessings of His goodness in keeping you alive, in permitting you to hear the gospel and, above all, in this one respect, that this very night He invites you to turn to Him! The Father's heart beats towards you and He says to you, "My erring one, come to Me, come to Me! He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. Turn you, turn you, why will you die?"—

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

If you come to Him, there shall be no rejection, but a warm reception, and you shall be blessed forever in Jesus Christ!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 138:1-6.

A Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.* Before the heathen gods, however highly exalted—I will sing Your praises as in their very teeth! And the magistrates and princes and kings who think themselves gods on earth—I will not fear them or be silenced by them!

2. *I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your loving-kindness and for Your truth: for You have magnified Your word above all Your name.* For You were far more glorious in revelation than in creation—Your promise did greatly transcend every other display of Yourself above all we have ever known or conceived of You! You have magnified Yourself by Your covenant of grace and Your works of grace toward Your people. For this worship and praise are forever due!

3. *In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.* That is a thing to make a man sing—when in the day of trouble God comes to him, hears his prayer, and works his deliverance when none else can help! God's rescues demand our grateful songs—His deliverances our new anthems of exultant praise!

4. *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O LORD, when they hear the words of Your mouth.* When Your gospel is preached and they know it, they shall count it their honor to honor You. It is ignorance of its glory and grace that makes silence possible, but to hear it as God's word of caring love is to be compelled to extol!

5. *Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.* David was a king and he danced before the ark. And he anticipated the time when other kings should not be ashamed of exuberant rejoicing in the King of kings. Oh, that it were come! May the Lord hasten it in His own time, and the choral hosts of heaven be swelled by the presence of the crowned monarchs of earth!

6. *Though the LORD is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.* That is a sweet text! One who was a scoffer met a humble child of God one morning and he said to him, "Tell me, is Your God a great God or a little God," and the poor man said, "Sir, He is both, for, though He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He makes Himself so little that He condescends to dwell in my poor heart." Ah, it was sweetly said. He who fills the heavens, no, fills all things, will be our abiding guest and friend if we will but welcome Him.

6. *But the proud He knows afar off.* He has enough of them. He does not want them to come near Him. When they are miles away He knows all about them. They make a fair show, but He sees that it is all a fable and pretense. He knows them—afar off!

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TWO CHOICE ASSURANCES
NO. 3330

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Fear not, Abram: I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward."
Genesis 15:1.

"And He said, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.'"
Exodus 33:14.

IN the splendid Psalm that sets forth the divine glory of the matchless Word of God as compared even with the greatest wonders of God's visible creation—that is in the 19th Psalm—we read in the 10th verse, "Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." This is applied to "the judgments of the Lord" which are "true and righteous altogether." Of course, this expression sets forth David's esteem of the law of God as he knew it—a very small volume compared with our complete Bible—and yet we may surely apply it to the whole of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments! The Hebrew original has it, "Sweeter than the dropping of honeycombs." Whereupon gracious Thomas Brookes, the Puritan divine, observes, "it is sweeter than those drops which fall naturally and instantly from the comb without any force or act, and which are counted as being the purest, choicest and richest honey." How true is this! There are some texts of Scripture that may yield their treasures of instruction, comfort, or direction after deep study and holy meditation—but there are others which are marvelously free in the giving forth of their sweetness, calling for little else than a heart that loves and longs to hear God speak!

As little children have their own confections that need no vigorous chewing, but will melt in the mouth, so some passages of Scriptures are prepared as choice morsels for the Lord's children—they have only to receive them by transparent faith and unaffected love—and their enjoyment is great.

I know that some of the words of the Lord are as nuts that need breaking open to secure their nourishment, or as grapes that must be trod in the winepress, for their richest meaning lies not upon the surface and plain to all. But these others of which we speak—as the droppings of the honeycomb—are simple sweetnesses, prepared pleasures; plain, unmistakable, choice delicacies for God's loved ones!

To enjoy these, one needs not to be a deep theologian, a learned grammarian, or even much less, a profound philosopher or baffling mystic! The honey of the meaning flows easily and sweetly out of the comb of the words as liquid love, pure joy, choice consolation and perfect truths of God! The student does not require poring over his books, or the preacher to search his library, or the hearer to gather up all his

knowledge to receive and enjoy these. The dainty comfort offers itself at once to the soul's receiving and, without effort; the sweetness and savor pervade the whole inner being.

So as the Holy Spirit shall open up the word to me, I hope to be able to give you, beloved, some honey out of the rock by dwelling on one or two choice, plain texts that speak their sweetness direct to the heart. Not so much for intellectual gratifying—though that is included—as for spiritual satisfying and stimulating. Some preachers seem to make their main business to be the leading of people among the thorns, to be torn with perplexities, or into the fog to tantalize with uncertainties. Be it ours on this occasion to run as did Ahimahaz by way of the plain—along the level road of gracious and comforting teaching! We do well, sometimes, to let the heart have undivided play and gain, thereby, the solace and joy that we so much need!

The droppings of the honeycomb are not so much for labor and toil as for renewal and delight—that the mere student and man of affairs may for a while come and sit and indulge in holy pleasures!

Let this suffice for introduction to our first word of sacred assurance as given to Abram.

"Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward."

"Fear not, Abram." No more necessary or practical word could be spoken to the great Father of the Faithful than this. Fear, alas, is malaria which haunts all the marshlands of earth! It can beset the king on his throne, the peasant in his cottage, the statesman in his lofty office and the poor old mother who dreads the pauper's lot and fare. It is the shadow that follows us when the sun is shining brightly before—how to escape it is the problem that perplexes thousands of the saints of God. We might be sure that it was so, when so mighty a believer as Abram was in great peril of it! Does he need a, "fear not," from Jehovah's lips? Then we may be sure that we shall require it, too. I am afraid that wherever there is faith there will also be a measure of fear, though the less of it, the better. How tenderly the Lord quiets the fears of His children and lulls their forebodings to rest! "Fear not, Abram." As much as if He had said "You are all alone, but fear not, for I am with you. You are in much labor, needing great strength, but fear not, I will help you. You have no portion, but are a stranger and sojourner in this land, but fear not, for I am your God. Do not fear concerning the past, or the present, or the future. Fear neither the fury of foes, nor the worse trial—the failure of friends. Be brave, calm, trustful, hopeful, and joyful. Fear not, Abram." "You have just been fighting the kings—you desired to be a man of peace and were not, indeed, accustomed to the deadly strife. But I have given the marauders and plunderers like driven stubble to your bow—and you have brought back Lot and all his train of servants that were taken prisoners. You need not fear even for your relatives! I will bless and keep them for your sake. Besides, since you have borne yourself in a right royal fashion and not touched a thread or a shoe lace of the king of Sodom's goods, do not fear to enjoy your success, for you shall be safe

from all attacks and shall command the respect of the great ones around you." This blessed "fear not" was a quietus to every form of alarm and misgiving which might come near and threaten this man of God!

Is not this our Lord's own message to His children everywhere today? He has scattered His, "fear nots," all over His blessed word as some riverbanks are all spread with sweet forget-me-nots! And these "fear nots," cover every emergency of our life and answer to them with the assurance that His love will never forget or fail us! And if we will but remember this, we shall have no cause whatever to fear.

But the Lord appears to teach Abram that after his conflict and signal victory he might begin to sink. Such is often the case with the bravest men. The natural reaction, unless special divine grace is given, is very great. It was so with Elijah, the prophet of fire. Men have little time or space to dread while the fierce conflict is raging—their spirit of dash and enterprise is awakened and equal to the struggle and the danger! But when all is over and strained body and brain and nerves begin to assert themselves, then they greatly need the Lord's reviving and fortifying, "fear not."

Beloved, have you never felt yourself strangely supported under the direst afflictions, so that they seemed not afflictions at all? And yet when pressure has been removed you have been ready to faint like Samson after he had slain the Philistines! Fear is a strange contradiction, a grim inconsistency, for it is apt to be greatest when the reason for it is least and smallest.

We are often quiet in a storm and distracted in a calm. We are mysteries to ourselves and riddles to our neighbors. Our constitutions and dispositions sometimes appear to be made up of odds and ends and gatherings from all manner of beasts, and birds, and fishes— and none can understand us but the Lord who made us! But, blessed be His name, He knows us altogether and therefore He can and does bring forth at the right moment the exact consolation and the precise heartening that we need, saying, "Fear not," in the *instant* wherein we are most likely to fear!

"Fear not, Abram." Were there not mainly two things about which the patriarch might have feared? First, about his own safety. This was met by the assurance, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield." When he had no other guard, Abram was garrisoned in God. He was like a sheep in the midst of wolves, a lone stranger surrounded by hostile nations! But a strange divine spell had fallen upon the Canaanites, for the Lord had made them hear Him saying, "Touch not My anointed and do My prophet no harm." The protected of the Lord needed not to wear armor, nor bear a sword, nor have any human panoply, for Jehovah had said, "I am your shield." Abram possessed no fortress, commanded no army but his few servants. He had not even a permanent house in which to dwell. His tents were frail and undefended and yet so guarded by heaven, that no one ever broke into them or dared molest or threaten those who dwelt within! No assassin waylaid him, no marauder attacked him—he dwelt at ease, for was he not under the broad shield of the Almighty? He was as

safe as if he had been enclosed within walls that reached to the skies! The armor of God covered him from head to foot!

So, dear friends, when we seem to have nothing, certainly nothing visible, to protect us, what a blessing it is to know that we are nevertheless completely guarded by the omnipotent though invisible God!

The visible is necessarily the limited and finite, but the invisible God is infinite and there is no searching of His understanding, or resistance to His power. You are infinitely safe if you really trust the living God—your beginning and ending, your waking and sleeping, your resting and journeying, your work and suffering, your honor or your reproach, your poverty or wealth, your success or failure, your life or death—your all forever and ever is most secure when the Lord is your keeper and your shield upon your right hand. Be it ours in truest wisdom and sincerest trust to give up our hearts to the repose of simple faith in Him!

Come, sing with me that verse of the beloved singer Toplady—

"Inquirer and hearer of prayer,
You Shepherd and Guardian of Thine,
My all to Your covenant care,
I sleeping and waking resign!
If You are my shield and my sun,
The night is no darkness to me—
And fast as the moments roll on,
They bring me but nearer to Thee!"

We are invulnerable and invincible if God is with us! We may be in the very midst of cruel adversaries, but no weapon that is formed against us can prosper if God is our shield. Our Lord did not say to Abram, and does not say to us, "I will shield you," but that I, that am the Almighty, I am your shield: it is not alone My power, My wisdom, My love which will protect you, but I, Myself, will be your shield!

Then Abram may have thought, "I shall be protected, but shall I not spend my life in vain?" *He might have feared for his success.* He led the life of a gypsy, roaming through a land in which he owned no foot of ground. Therefore the Lord added, "I am your reward." Do you see? He does not say, "I will reward you," but "I *am* your reward." If we who work for Christ see souls saved, how we rejoice, for they are a kind of reward to us—but nevertheless we will not rejoice so much but rather rejoice that our names are written in heaven! I have in these words quoted an old text, first spoken to chosen men who had healed the sick and cast out devils in Christ's name. And if many receive our word it is a joy to us, but still we may be disappointed even in professed conversions and, at best, our success will not equal our desires. The only reward that a Christian can fully rejoice in—and without any reservation—is this assurance of his Master and Lord, "I am your reward." Did not the father in the parable say to the elder son, when he growled and grumbled at the reception given to his brother, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours"? That was reward enough, was it not? It is wealth enough to a believer to possess his God, honor enough to please his God, happiness enough to enjoy his God. My heart's best treasure lies here—

"This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

"Oh, but," you say, "people have been so ungrateful to me." True, but God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith and labor of love. "Ah, sir, but I am dreadfully poor." Yet you have God all sufficient, and all things are yours! "Alas! I am so ill." But Jehovah-Rophi is the Lord that heals you! "Alas! I have no friends left." Yet this best of friends changes not and dies not. Is He not better to you than a host of other friends?

How great is your God? Does He not fill all things? Then what more can you seek? Would you have two persons occupying the same place? If God fills all, what room is there left for another? Is not God's grace sufficient for you? Do you bemoan a cup of water that has been spilled at your feet? A well is near! Did I hear you cry, "I have not a drop in my bucket?" A river flows hard by—the river of God which is full of water! Oh, mournful soul, why are you disquieted? What ails you that you should fret your life into rags?

Very fitly does the Lord say to Abram, "I am your *exceedingly great reward."* He is infinitely more as a reward than we could ever have desired, expected, or deserved! There is no measuring such a reward as God Himself. If we were to pine away into poverty or sickness, it would still be joy enough to know that God gives Himself to be our portion. The tried people of God will always confess that in their sharpest time of sorrow, their joys have reached their floodtide when they knew and felt that the Lord is their covenant God, their Father, their all! Our cup runs over when faith receives Jehovah, Himself, as the crown of the race, the wages of the service! What more can even God bestow, than Himself?

Now you see what I meant at the beginning by droppings from the honeycomb. I have not strained after novel thoughts or choice words, but have persuaded you to taste the natural sweetness of this fine Scripture promise. Receive it as God gives it and go your way—and let the flavor of it fill your souls all the week! Fear not, Mary! Fear not, William! Fear not, Sarah! Fear not, John! The Lord says to you, even as to Abram, "I am your shield and exceedingly great reward." No Scripture is of private interpretation—you may take out the name of Abram and put your own name into the promise if you are of Abram's spiritual seed—and do not stagger at the promise by reason of unbelief. "If children, then heirs" applies to all the spiritual family and to the pledging of all the promises to them!

The ground whereon you lie, the Lord your God has given you. If you can rest on this Word of God, it is truly yours to rest upon. The Lord is your defender and rewarder and by the double title He designs to shut out all fear and so make your rest and safety to be doubly sure! Therefore, cease you from all anxiety! Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him! This day He bids you dwell at ease and delight yourself in Him!

But we turn from Abram to Moses and we find this sweetly solacing assurance given also to him in time of special need and strain.

"And He said, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.'"

It was not a pleasure trip that Moses was taking—it was a journey through the wilderness on most important business—and with a great pressure of burden on his heart. He took his case to his God and earnestly appealed to Him, "See, You say unto me, Bring up this people, and You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight. Now, therefore, I pray You, if I have found grace in your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You, that I may find grace in Your sight: and consider that this nation is Your people."

It is very beautiful to notice the argument that Moses uses. He says, "Lord, You have set me to take care of this people. How can I do it? But they are Your people." Therefore he appeals to Jehovah, Himself, for assistance. "You have not let me know whom You will send with me" is his complaint, but he seems to always have before him the fact that He, whose people they were, who had put him into commission to guide them, and to bear all their provocations, must intend to give him some very superior help! The answer to that is, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." What more could Moses need, and what more can we need? We are so foolish that we look about for strength away from God—but there is none except in Him! For all preachers and evangelists, how precious is this promise! They need divine help in journeying from place to place—and that help lies in the constant fellowship of heart with their Lord—the continual presence of God consciously enjoyed! They have a great burden of souls lying upon them—their only strength to bear it bravely and triumphantly is that each hears for himself the promise from God's own lips, "My presence shall go with you." It may not appear to some that the quarter of an hour in the morning spent in looking into the face of God with ecstatic joy can fill us with strength, but we know from blessed experience that there is no strength like it! If the eternal overshadows us, then omnipotence comes streaming into us! Jehovah in infinite, condescending liberality gives forth His might to us!

Notice, beloved, that Moses was not informed that God would send Hobab, his father-in-law, to go with him. Nor that Joshua, his successor, should accompany him. Nothing either was said about the 70 elders who were by-and-by, to share the burden of responsibility with him. Moses was, indeed, to have their presence and help, but his true power was to lie in this—"My presence shall go with you." The journey upon which he was to start was one of great importance foreseen by God to be a journey of great trial and great provocation—a journey that was to last for 40 years—but this is all the provision that he needs and God, Himself, could give him no more.

And then He adds, "*And I will give you rest.*" Little as we sometimes imagine it, yet it is still true, that the most important possession of any Christian worker is rest—deep rest of soul in God—"A heart at leisure from itself." "I do not expect any rest," says one, "while I am here." Do you not? Then you will not do much mighty and effective work for the Lord! Those who work most must learn the holy art of resting in the

Lord. Indeed, it cannot be done well at all unless they have plenty of rest. You will notice how people that get greatly excited often talk sad nonsense—and people who are very fretful or fearful do not speak or act as they should. If we are to move others, we must have both feet firmly fixed—there is nothing like having a good grip of the ground if you are to wrestle with and throw your antagonist! My restfulness in God enables me to wrestle and conquer all sorts of difficulty and hard toil that is to be overcome.

"Do you think Moses had this rest?" someone will ask. Yes, I am sure he had because of the meekness of his spirit. You remember how the Lord Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." It is true that meekness of heart produces rest. And yet it is a still deeper truth of God that rest produces meekness of heart! You can very well afford to be quiet with your fellows when you, yourself, are perfectly restful in the living God. I remember a man being run over in the street one day. Somebody rushed off, post haste, for the nearest doctor. And when the medical man heard of the accident, he went calmly into his surgery, turned over his case of instruments, selected those he thought he might need and then walked quietly to the spot where the injured man lay. The messenger tried to hurry him, but it was of no use. "Be quick, Doctor," he cried, "the man's leg is broken, every moment is precious." Now the surgeon knew that he was doing the very best thing that he could do, and he was far wiser than he would have been if he had rushed off in wild haste, perhaps forgetting the very instrument he most needed, and arriving out of breath and quite unfit for the delicate duty required of him! The doctor's composure was not the result of coldness of heart, but of the resolve to do the best possible thing in the best possible fashion.

If you are conscious of the Lord's presence, you will do the best thing possible by being very calm, deliberate and quiet in His service. "He that believes," in that sense, "shall not make haste," but he shall go about the business in a restful spirit.

Mark, too, the kind of rest that is here mentioned. "I will give you rest." All the rest that God gives we may safely take! No man ever rested too long on the bosom of Jesus. I believe many Christian workers would be better if they enjoyed more. I was speaking to a large gathering of preachers the other day upon this very matter, my subject being the Savior asleep during the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He knew there was a storm coming on, but He felt so happy and restful in His Father's love and care that He went into the back part of the boat—the best place for sleep—and taking the steersman's cushion for a pillow, lay down and went to sleep! It was the very best thing He could do. He had been busy all day, teaching and feeding the multitudes, and He felt that it was His duty to go to sleep that He might be ready and fit for the next day's toil. When *you* get very weary and perhaps worried as well, the best thing you can do is to go to sleep. Go to bed, brother, and go to sleep!

It is astonishing what a difference a night's rest makes with our troubles. I would say this literally to fidgeting, worrying people like myself, "Go to bed, brother, go to bed!" But I would also say it spiritually to all sorts of people: when you are feeling weak and disturbed, and you do not know what to do for the best, "Go into the presence of Lord and there get rest." "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." I will give you a little bit of worldly wisdom, which is also of divine inspiring. Whenever you do not know what to do, do not do it! But some people, when they do not know what to do, go and do it, directly, and get themselves into all sorts of trouble. Many of us, like Moses, need to be taught to rest. Moses has to bear two millions of people on his heart—he needs rest. He has to put up with them for 40 years—he needs rest. Never had another man such a family as that! Never was another so likely to be fluttered and worried! And he was a meek-spirited man, too, who could not make a dash as others might have done. This is his strength—that he dwells in the divine presence and is, therefore, restful, calm and strong! It is only now and then that he let the human meekness be for a moment clouded. Thus was he enabled to march along, like a king in Jeshurun, as he was—and his soul dwelt in the eternity of God, ever singing amidst ten thousand graves, for he had 40 of his people dying every day!

Shall not we who love the Savior hear this same gracious promise sounding clear and sweet in our souls and trusting in the abiding presence of God find that He gives the unparalleled rest, the rest that endures? And if, on the other hand, we are strangers to that brave, strong peace, shall we not listen as He calls, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest"? And answering to it, enter into that rest that always follows true believing! The Lord grant it may be so, with each one, for His name's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 10:1-30; HEBREWS 1:1-14.

Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you.* Now we may be absolutely certain that there is something of the utmost importance wherever Christ uses the solemn phrase, "Verily, verily"—the same word is, "Amen, amen" and it has been well observed that if it were not for Christ's, "Amens," our "Amens" would be of little value. It is because He who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, pleads in heaven that our, "Amens," are accepted there. If, dear friends, Christ pays an earnest attention to our, "Amens," how much more ought we to attend to His, especially when He doubles them—**"**Amen, amen, I say unto you."

1-3. *He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.* Here the people of God are compared to sheep. Their harmlessness and gentle character, their feebleness and quiet in the fold, their

profitable uses, their defenseless state—requiring someone to always watch over them—the patience with which they are led to the shearer or to the slaughter and the constancy with which they are associated with sacrifice—render sheep a most excellent symbol of the people of God! Doubtless the fold is the church and within this fold all the saints of God are gathered, not always in the visible, but always in the invisible and indivisible church of Christ. None may set up to be shepherds of this fold except those who come in a proper and fitting way—and that is not by a pretended apostolic descent, that is, not by a commission which they have received from their own assumption, but by a commission direct from Christ—coming in through Him as by the door. The great true shepherd, the antitype of all shepherds, is Christ, Himself. To Him the porter opens. All the prophecies, which, like porters, kept the gates, opened at once to Christ! All godly hearts, which, like the porters of the gate, were watching for the coming of the true shepherd, opened at once to Jesus! Whether it would be Anna or Simeon, they at once confessed Him. The sheep hear His voice and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.

We are told by Eastern travelers that in the large district folds into which the sheep herders put their different flocks, while they are all assembled in one common flock, the shepherd of any one flock has but to make his appearance and begin to speak and his sheep at once recognize him. Though another person should dress up in his garments, they would take no notice of him—they know their shepherd by his voice.

4. *And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.* The genius of the law is driving—the spirit of the gospel is leading! And the joyful imitation follows.

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Heretics attract their companies, but the faithful followers of Christ never go after them. They cleave to the truth of God, which is the voice of Christ—and they will not be persuaded by the most marvelous lying wonders, nor by the greatest arrogance, to depart from Him who is their All!

6-8. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.* They made loud professions of being the true Messiah, and some of them gathered great multitudes and rebelled against the Roman power, but the true sheep who waited for the true shepherd did not hear them!

9-14. *I am the door: by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and*

leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known by My own. This good shepherd proves Himself to be so by His actions. Remember, brothers and sisters, how carefully He watches His sheep from the tower of the flock, not one of them ever being absent from His eyes for a single moment! How graciously He guides those sheep, leading them always by a right way that He may bring them to safety at the last. How plentifully does He pasture His flock, making them to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters. And oh, how gloriously does He defend His flock, dashing into the thickest of their foes, snatching the lamb out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear! And we must not conclude this list of His deeds without remembering how readily He has bought that flock, and how well He has washed that flock in blood flowing from His own veins, that He might present them all at the last, not one of them being lacking, nor one of them impure, but each of them like sheep that come up fresh from the washing! "I know My sheep." It is not as if salvation was left to haphazard. He knew them before they were created! Having foreordained, He did foreknow. He knew them when they did not know themselves—when they were wallowing in the mire like swine, He still knew them! He knows them now—unknown to fame, unregistered, perhaps, in the books of the visible church—"I know My sheep wherever they may be." Then notice the next sentence, for this is the practical way by which you may judge whether you are His or not—"I am known of My own." They know Him as their only hope and trust. They know the sweetness of fellowship with Him. They know the power of His arm, the efficacy of His blood, the faithfulness of His heart. They know the preciousness of His cross and the glory of His crown.

15-16. *As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* No recognition of free will here. Christ speaks as one who has the hearts of men in His control. He knows who are His that as yet are not called. He does not say He hopes they will yield to hear His voice, but they shall. Oh, irresistible grace, what can stand against you? The blood bought shall all be blood washed; the foreordained and foreknown shall yet know Him who has saved them by His blood. In this we ought constantly to rejoice. The feebleness of the minister is no barrier to the carrying out of God's purpose, nor is the hardness of the human heart any impediment to the completion of the divine decree. "Them also must I bring." There is a heavenly necessity that all the chosen should be saved.

17-26. *Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. There was a division, therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He has a devil and is mad, why hear you Him? Others said, These*

are not the words of him that has a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the Temple on Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, How long do You make us to doubt? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and you believed not: the work that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. Believing does not make them sheep, but being sheep by divine election proves them to be such.

27-30. *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* Happy are they, then, who have received the character of sheep, for thus they prove themselves to be the chosen of God! And in the hand of Christ, and in His Father's grasp, they are eternally secure—

"If in my Father's love
I share a filial part,
Send down your Spirit like a dove
To rest upon my heart."

Hebrews 1. In this chapter our Savior's glorious person is very plainly set before us. And it is made the ground of our faith and a reason why we should give the more earnest heed to His words, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Verses 1:1, 2. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.* The best last is always God's rule. "You have kept the best wine until now." Prophets are a very blessed means of communication, but how much more sure, how much more condescending is it for God to speak to us by His Son!

2, 3. *Whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He Had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* You see, dear friends, how glorious was His original—the "express Image" of His Father's person. How lowly did He become to purge away our sins and that by Himself, too, using His own body to be the means, by His sufferings, of taking away our guilt! Not by proxy did He serve us, but by Himself. Oh, this is wondrous love! And then see the glory which followed after the shame. He has now ascended up on high and sits down at the right hand of God's great Majesty. Follow Him, believer, follow Him with the eyes of your faith! Let your soul lovingly track Him in His upward march, and as you see Him, say—**"**He is my Lord and my God," and know that all that He did and all that He is, He is—and He did for you!

4, 5. *Being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of*

the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? They are servants, but they are not sons! They are created, but they are not begotten! You see what He says to the Son—**"**I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.

6-8. *And again, when He brings in the first begotten into the world, He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He says, Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire? But unto the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.* So you perceive that Christ is no created angel! He is sometimes compared to an angel. He is sometimes called the angel of the covenant, but He is not a *created* angel. He is higher in nature, higher in rank, higher in intellect and higher in power than they. He is nothing less than very God of very God! The very man who suffered on Calvary—

"This is the man, the exalted man,
Whom we unseen adore."

9. *You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness, above Your fellows.* As man, Christ claims all men as His fellows, but as God, He counts it no robbery to be thought equal to God. As man, He is most truly man, and only superior to man by reason of the purity of His birth and the perfection of His nature, and the exaltation of His manhood by God. As God, He is nothing less than God, though He took upon Himself the nature of men.

10-12. *And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Your hands: they shall perish; but You remain, and they all shall grow old as does a garment; and as a vesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail.* Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever!

13, 14. *But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

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KNOWING AND BELIEVING
NO. 3331

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"I know whom I have believed."
2 Timothy 1:12.

THE text is wholly taken up with three things—with knowing, with believing and with the person who is known and believed. And upon both the knowing and the believing, Paul is very decided. He puts in no, "if," no word of change. He does not say, "I hope so," or, "I trust so," but, "I know I have believed and I know whom I have believed." It is all assurance and not a shadow of doubt! Let us imitate the apostle, or ask for grace to be able to imitate him, that we may shake off the dubious phraseology which is so common among Christians, nowadays, and may be able to speak with apostolic confidence upon a matter upon which we ought to be confident if anywhere at all, namely—our own salvation!

As the text is thus taken up with knowing and believing, these two matters will be the subject of our meditation at this time. My first remark drawn from the text shall be—

I. THE ONLY RELIGIOUS KNOWING AND BELIEVING WHICH ARE OF A SAVING CHARACTER CONCERN THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "I know," says the apostle—not, "what"—but, "*whom* I have believed." He does not say, "I know the catechism which I have believed," nor, "I know the Institutes of Calvin," nor, "I know the body and system of theology," but, "I know *whom* I have believed." Both the knowing and the believing center around the wondrous person who for our sakes left His starry throne and became a man. Knowing whom is a saving knowledge and trusting whom is a saving trust—of which all other knowing and believing fall short!

Observe, then, that all other knowledge may be useful enough in itself, but if it does not concern Christ, it cannot be called *saving knowledge*. Some persons *know a great deal about doctrine.* Perhaps they have taken up with the Calvinistic theology, or even with the hyper-Calvinistic and they really understand the system thoroughly well—and they certainly hold it with quite enough tenacity, if not too much. We know some who we believe would very cheerfully go to the stake in defense of some points of doctrine so convinced are they of the orthodoxy of what they have received! Others take up another theory and go upon the Arminian principle—and they, too, know their set of doctrines and know them well. But, dear friends, I may know all the doctrines in the Bible, but unless I know Christ, there is not one of them that can save me! I may know

election, but if I cannot see myself as chosen in Christ Jesus, election will do me no good. I may know the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, but if I am not in Christ, I would only persevere in my sins—and such a final perseverance will be dreadful, indeed! It is one thing to know the doctrine of justification by faith, but it is quite another thing to be justified by faith and to have peace with God! You may stand up for imputed righteousness and fight for it, and yet the righteousness of Christ may never be imputed to you! It is not *knowing* the creed, though that is well, that can save the soul—the knowledge that is needed is to know *Him* whom Paul believed!

And, again, a man may know something more than doctrine. He *may know a great deal about experience.* There is a class of persons who sneer at doctrine. They call the doctrinal preacher a mere "letterman." As for themselves, they talk about deep *experience*. They have a consciousness of having a corrupt heart. They have discovered that they have evil tempers (by the way, other people, too, have discovered it)! They have discovered that they have defiled natures and everybody can see that they are not perfectly free from sin. But, strange delusion, because they *know the disease*, they fancy they have been healed! Because they have perception enough to see they are spiritually bankrupt, they, therefore, imagine that their debts are paid! Because they *feel* themselves to be in the Slough of Despond, they dream they are on the rock!

But there is a vast difference between the two things. A man may think he has an experience of his own emptiness—no, he may truly possess it—but if it does not drive him to Christ, if he does not come and rest on the Lord Jesus, all his experiences are of no saving value! The foundation of the soul's salvation is not experience of any or every kind, but the finished work, the meritorious blood and righteousness of our Lord and Savior!

There are some, too, who not only know experience and doctrine, but who also *know how to talk of them*. They have mingled with Christian people until they can get up their phraseology and, as some Christians have cant expressions, these people can "cant" in any quantity and to any extent. They can talk about their "poor souls" and about, "the dear Lord," and use all those other precious phrases of hypocrisy which lard some religious publications and which are to be found in the conversation of some people who ought to know better. They use these expressions and then, when they get in among the people of God, they are received with open arms! And they fancy that because they can talk as Christians talk, it is all well with them! But, oh, remember that if a parrot could call you, "father," it would not, for all that, have become a child of yours! A foreigner may learn the language of an Englishman but never be an Englishman, but still remain a foreigner. So, too, you may take up the language of a Christian, but may never have within you the Spirit of God and, therefore, be none of His. You must know *Him*. "Know yourself," said the heathen philosopher. That is well, but that knowledge may only lead a man to hell. "Know *Christ*," says the Christian

philosopher, "know *Him* and then you shall know yourself"—and this shall certainly lead you to heaven, for the knowledge of Christ Jesus is *saving* knowledge—"whom to know is life eternal."

In addition to these valuable pieces of information, there are some *who know a great deal* ABOUT *Christ*, but here I must remind you that the text does not say, "I know *about* Christ," but, "I know *Him*." Ah, dear hearer, you may have heard the gospel from your youth up, so that the whole history of Christ is at your fingertips! But you may not know *Him*, for there is a deal of difference between knowing *about Him*, and *knowing Him*. You may know about a medicine, but still die of the disease which the medicine might have cured. The prisoner may know about liberty and yet lie and pine in his dungeon until, as John Bunyan put it, "the moss grows on his eyelids." The traveler may know about the home which he hopes to reach and yet may be left out at nightfall in the midst of the forest. Many a man of business knows about wealth, or even concerning the millions of the Bank of England, and yet is a bankrupt or on the verge of poverty. Many a sailor knows about the port, but his ship drifts upon the rocks and all hands go down. It is not enough to know *about* Christ, it is knowing Christ, *Himself,* that alone saves the soul!

And, over and above, and in addition to all this, you *may know the Scriptures from youth up*. I suppose I have some—perhaps many—before me who are well acquainted with almost every chapter in the Bible. You could not be questioned upon any part of it so as to be really nonplussed. You have read the book and you continue to read it—and I approve of your wise choice in so doing—and beg you to always continue in so excellent a practice! But remember, if you have not the Word of God *in your heart* it is of small use to have it merely in your head. Oh, to know Christ is our supreme and tragic need! Not to merely know texts and Scripture, for—"the letter kills, it is only the Spirit that quickens"—and unless you know Christ you do not know the vital Spirit of the Word of God! The only saving knowledge, then, is knowing Christ.

Well, now, so is it with the exercise of faith. You may *know a great deal about faith*, but the only saving faith is belief concerning Christ. "I know *whom* I have believed." To believe doctrine will not save a man. You may hold the entire creed and be orthodox—and then be no better than the devil, for I suppose that the devil is a very sound theologian. He surely knows the truth. He believes and trembles! But you may know it and *not* tremble—and so you may fall short of one virtue which even the devil possesses! A firm belief in what is preached to you is well enough in its way, but to believe a doctrine as such cannot save you. Some have a belief in their minister—and I suppose that is so flattering to us that you will hardly expect us to speak against it—but of all vices, it is one most surely to be dreaded because it is so very dangerous! We charge you in the sight of God, always weigh what we have to say to you—and if it is not according to Scripture, cast it away as you cast away refuse! Take nothing merely because we say it! Let nothing that we preach be received upon our *ipse dixit*, but let it be tried and tested by the Word of God, for

otherwise you may be led by the blind. And "if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." Ah, what multitudes of persons there are in England who are beginning to get their fellow man to perform their religion for them! They are too lazy to think! They are too idle to use whatever brains they have and so they get some mere simpleton who thinks that God is pleased with his putting on a white gown or a blue dress, or a black gown or green dress, a scarlet gown or mauve dress, is pleased with burning candles in the daylight and pleased with making a pungent odor in the church—they get such a creature as this to do their religion for them and then they lie down at night to rest, feeling perfectly satisfied that God is satisfied and they are all right! Oh, I charge you, believe not this delusion! It is not believing in a priest that will save you! Believing in the priest may be your ruin, but believing in Christ is the really vital point—the one thing that truly matters. He that believes in Christ is saved! But he that believes even the Pope of Rome shall find that he believes to his own eternal ruin!

Then again, it is not *believing in ourselves.* Many persons believe thoroughly in themselves. The doctrine of self-reliance is preached in many quarters now a days. I suppose that what is meant by the term is a good mercantile possession, a business virtue, but it is a Christian vice as towards spiritual things and emphatically towards the soul's salvation! Self-reliance in this matter always ruins those who practice it. Rely on self? Let night rely on her darkness to find a light! Let emptiness rely on its insufficiency to find its fullness! Let death rely on the worms to give it immortality! Let hell rely upon its fire to make it into heaven—such trusts as these would be equally strong with those of the sinner who relies upon himself for salvation! Your belief must not be that *you* can force your way to heaven, but you must believe Him, for anything else is an unsaving faith.

You see, then, that the knowledge which saves, and the belief which saves, both hang upon the cross. They both look to the wounds of that dear man, that blessed God who was there the propitiation for our sins and who suffered in our place. My hearer, are you trusting Christ? Are you hanging upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? Do you know Him as a man knows his friend? Do you seek to know more of Him? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? If not, take home this solemn warning—whatever else you know, you are still ignorant, and whatever else you believe, you are still an unbeliever—unless you know and believe in Him who is the Savior of men!

I pass on now to a second point, which is this—

II. THAT KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT FAITH IS VAIN.

This is to try to balance with but one scale—to run a chariot on one wheel. You have the double matter here. "I *know* whom I have *believed.*" It is good to know, but knowledge must be crowned with faith! It has been remarked that Paul does not say, "I know of whom I have heard." He does not say, "I know of whom I have read." He does not say, "I know of whom I have preached," but, "I know whom I have believed." Here he

hits the nail on the head. Knowledge is useful in the bud. Mere reading, preaching, too, are well as an exercise—but *believing* is the fruit which must grow upon the tree of knowledge or else the knowledge will be of little use to us!

Now, my dear friends, I know that I am addressing many of your class, many who know Christ in a certain sense. Know much about Him. You know of His nature, you believe Him to be true deity. You know Him to be human like yourselves and for man's sake made man. You know His life. You have often read it. You often like to dwell upon the incidents of it. It is a genuine and great pleasure to sing of Bethlehem and its manger, of Cana and its marriage. You have turned over the pages of that life of lives and felt enraptured with this matchless masterpiece of biography. You are well acquainted, too, with His death—it has often drawn tears to your eyes when you have thought of the shame and the spitting and the crown of thorns. You know something concerning His expiring cries. Your imagination has often pictured to you the wounded body of that dread sufferer. You have thought that if you had been there, you would have wet His feet with your tears, you did so sympathize with Him. You know of His burial and of His resurrection, too, and you have sweetly joined with us when we have been singing—

"Angels, roll the rock away,
Jesus Christ is risen today"

and you have not been lacking when we have been singing of His ascension! Your eyes have flushed with fire when you have heard the words—

"They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
'The glorious work is done.'"

You know that He reigns in heaven! You know that He has prepared mansions for His people. You know that He intercedes for sinners. You expect that He will come. You believe in His Second Advent and when the *Te Deum* has been sung in your hearing—**"**We believe that You shall come to be our Judge," you have said, "Yes! I do—I do—I believe it." Now, if you know all this, you know that which it is very important to be known, but if you stop short here, where are you? Why, I have no doubt there have been hundreds who knew this, but who have given their bodies and souls to the devil and have lived in open sin, day by day! If you could go to the condemned cell tonight, I would not wonder if the wretch confined there knows all this. If you were to go into the flaunting gin palaces which are scattered to our shame and curse all over London—where men and women are drinking liquid fire at this very moment—you would find that half of them know all this, but they do not drink any the less for it! If you were to go into the lairs of vice, you would find that the most abandoned know all this, but it does them no good! And I will add also this—that the lost spirits in hell went there knowing all this! And the devil himself, knows it all, but he still remains a devil!

Ah, my hearer, I charge you before God, do not sit down and say, "I know, I know, I know." Do you believe? Do you *BELIEVE*?

The common answer given very frequently to the city missionary is just this—men say to them, "There is no need for you to come here and tell me anything. I know all about it." Ah, but do you *believe in Jesus*? What is the good of your knowing unless you believe? I do not think that the most of you who go to places of worship need so much instruction in divine truth as you need an earnest appeal to your hearts not to stop short at instruction! You do know, and that, indeed, shall be, indeed, part of your damnation—that you had the light but you would not see! That Jesus came into your street and came near to you, but you would not have Him! The medicine was there, but you died because you would not take it! The food was on the table, but you would sooner perish with hunger than receive it as the free gift of heaven! Ah, my hearer, your knowing will not benefit you, but will be a plague to you! The poor savage in his kraal in Central Africa who never heard the name of Jesus shall die with at least this mitigating circumstance—that he never rejected the Savior's love! The million a month who die in China, for a million do die every month in China—the million who die every month in China die with this one solace, at any rate, that they never sinned against the light of Christianity, nor rejected the truth as it is in Jesus! This is more than you can say! This will never help to make a dainty couch for you, when you make your bed in hell! The responsibility of having known shall add remorse to the whips of accusing conscience and make hell still more terrible! Oh, may God grant that we may not stop short with knowledge, alone, but may know Christ as Him whom we have believed! But still we have in the next place—

III. FAITH WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE IS BUT A BIRD WITH ONE WING. The old faith of the fuller is coming back in some places today. You remember what the fuller said, "Yes, he believed" He believed—what did he believe? He believed, "What the church believed." And what did the church believe? "Well, the church believed—well, what *he* believed." And, pray tell, what did he and the church, together, believe? "Why, they both believed the same thing." Ah, how many there are of that sort today! They say, "We think he ought to be sincere, you know, and if he is sincere, it does not matter much whether it is absolutely true. He need not trouble greatly to enquire whether what he believes is Scriptural or not, or whether it is according to God's revelation—that will take up too much of his time and thought—and look too much like being obedient to God's will. Just be sincere, you know, and then, hit or miss, whatever your mother or father happened to be in religious character, go at it with all your might and it will be all right." Now, unfortunately, that does not happen to be the truth of God—and we do not find people in this world getting on in proportion to their sincerity. I suppose our friends who bought Overend and Gurney's shares were sincere enough in their belief that they were buying a good thing, but I should fancy that their opinions have undergone a change of late! No doubt there have been

persons who have taken prussic acid, sincerely believing that it would benefit them, but I suppose it has killed them, notwithstanding their sincerity. If a man should travel due south in order to get to the Orkney Islands, however sincere he might be, he would probably discover himself in the Bay of Biscay before long. The fact is, it is not sincerity, alone—it is the studious endeavor to find out what the right is and what the truth is—that is the only safe way for us! We do not, therefore, ask you to believe without knowing what you are to believe. It is impossible. Do not think a man can hold in his hands four or five doctrines and say to you, "Do you believe them?" "Well, but what are they?" "Never mind! You are a true believer and you must believe then without knowing them." A man who has no power of belief at all says, "Oh, yes, I believe. I will kiss your feet if necessary, or do anything you like to tell me." But the thoughtful man, the man who is likely to be saved, says at once, "I find it impossible to believe until I first know what I am to believe."

I have sometimes thought when I have heard addresses from some revival brothers who had kept on saying time after time, "Believe, believe, believe," that I would like to have known for myself what it was we were to believe in order to our salvation. There is, I fear, a great deal of vagueness and crudeness about this matter. I have heard it often asserted that if you believe that Jesus Christ died for you, you will be saved. My dear hearer, do not be deluded by such an idea! You may believe that Jesus Christ died for you and may believe what is not true! You may believe that which will bring you no sort of good whatever. That is not saving faith! The man who has saving faith attains to the conviction that Christ died for him afterwards, but it is not of the essence of saving faith. Do not get that into your head or it will ruin you! Do not say, "I believe that Jesus Christ died for me," and because of that feel that you are saved! I pray you to remember that the genuine faith that saves the soul has for its main element—trust—absolute rest of the whole soul—on the Lord Jesus Christ to save me, whether He died in particular or in special to save me or not and, relying as I am, wholly and alone on Him, I am saved! Afterwards I come to perceive that I have a special interest in the Savior's blood, but if I think I have perceived that before I have believed in Christ, then I have inverted the Scriptural order of things and I have taken as a fruit of my faith that which is only to be obtained by rights—by the man who absolutely trusts in Christ, and Christ alone, to save!

The matter, then, which saves is this—a man *trusts* Christ, but he trusts Christ because he *knows* Him. See! He knows Christ and, therefore, he trusts Him. How does he come to know Him? Well, he has heard of Him, he has read of Him, he seeks Him in prayer and when he has learned His character, he trusts Him. Occasionally young converts will say to us, "Sir, I cannot trust Christ." I never try to argue with them about it, but say, "Then you do not know Him, because to truly know Christ is sure to bring trust." I believe there are some men in the world whom you have only to know to trust because they are so transparently

honest, so clearly truthful that you must trust them! The Savior is such a person as that. Let me tell you, sinner, God was made flesh and dwelt among us—do you believe that? "Yes." He lived a holy life. He died a painful death. The merit of His life and death is set to the account of everyone who trusts in Him and He declares that if you trust in Him, He will save you. Now surely you can trust Him! You say, "No, I cannot." Why not? Is He not able? He is divine—therefore you cannot raise the question. Is He not willing? He died—that argues willingness surely to do a lesser thing, since He has done the greater! Surely you cannot doubt that! The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is an answer to every form of doubt. Do you know, I feel with regard to Christ, myself, that instead of its being any difficulty to trust Him, I find it very difficult *not* to trust Him if I cannot find any reason why I should distrust Him. I was turning over the other day some odds and ends of my own brain to see if I could find any reason why Christ should not receive my soul. Well, I could not find half a one, but I could think of 20,000 reasons why I should believe in Him to save me, even if I had a million souls! I feel as if His way of saving is so magnificent and the working of it out so divinely generous, that His offerings were so great, His person is so glorious, that I could not only cast my one soul on Him, but 50,000 souls if I had them! Why, I cannot find any reasonable ground for doubting Him! Soul, I would to God that you would think of Him in the same light!—

"He is able, He is willing—
Doubt no more!"

You know something of Him. Oh, may God give the grace to add to your knowledge, trust, and then shall you have true saving faith!

Let it be remarked here that in proportion as our genuine knowledge of Christ increases, so we shall find that our trust in Him will increase, too. The more we know Christ, the more we shall trust Him because every new piece of knowledge will give new arguments for immovable confidence in Him! Oh, if you have not seen Christ, I can understand your doubting Him, but if you have leaned your head upon His bosom, if He has ever kissed you with the kisses of His lips, if He has ever taken you into His banqueting house and waved His banner of love over you, I know you will feel, "Doubt You, Jesus, doubt You? Why, how can I? I know the power of Your arm. I know the love of Your heart. I know the efficacy of Your blood. I know the glory of Your person. I know the faithfulness of Your word. I know the immutability of Your oath and I can trust You and, either sink or swim, my soul casts herself upon You, You blessed Savior!"

But now there may be some present who are saying, "I cannot say I know whom I have believed."

IV. "HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I MAY BELIEVE IN HIM?" The answer is, search the Word of God with a desire to find Him. Seek out the most Christ exalting ministry in your neighborhood, in whatever denomination you can find it, and listen to it with all your ears and with all your heart. Get to your chamber and there seek the Lord to illuminate you in the matter of the Lord Jesus Christ! Ask Him to reveal His Son in you. I tell

you this—faith comes by hearing and by hearing the Word of God—and when to these is added earnest seeking, you shall not be long without finding Him! They who seek Christ are already being sought of Him. You who desire Him shall have Him! You who want Him shall not be long without Him. It is to have Christ to some degree, to hunger and to thirst after Him—and when you feel that you cannot be content without Him, He will not let you be, but will soon come to you! I believe there are some who will get peace with Christ tonight! Do you understand it, dear friend? You have nothing to *do*. You have nothing to *be.* You have not even anything to learn, except that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You know that. Now, trust Him, and if you do, it is all done and you are saved! If you have trusted in Him whom God has revealed as your Savior, it is not a matter of twenty minutes nor much less a matter of months, but you are saved at once!—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through Christ's blood."

When a man once gets into the lifeboat, if it were certain that the lifeboat would never sink, he is saved as soon as he gets in. Now, the act of faith does, as it were, put us into the lifeboat of Christ Jesus and we are saved immediately! You may have many a tossing, but you will get safely to land at last. If you want faith you must get it, as I have told you, by knowing Him, studying the Word of God, listening to it and seeking His face. But make use of what you know, or else what you know will be like the stale manna and will be of no use to you. Believe it as you know it. Use it up as you get it. And if you already know Christ to be a sinner's Savior, and know that you are a sinner, then come tonight and put your trust in Him! And be of good cheer, because He will never, never, never cast you away! And now, lastly, I should like to ask a question, and it is this—

V. HOW MANY ARE THERE WHO DO KNOW CHRIST?

We all know something of which we are a little proud, but, "I know, I know, I know," is a very poor thing to say when you do not know Christ! "I know," says my young friend over there who has been to Oxford or Cambridge University, "I know So-and-So." "I know," says another, "such and such a special line of distinguished thinking." But do you know Christ, my dear friend? "Ah, thank God," says one upstairs, and another good soul below, "we can hardly read, sir, but we do know Him." I would change places with you, friends, much sooner than I would with the most learned of men who do not know Christ, because when they come to the gates of death, you know, he who keeps the gate will not say, "Do you know the classics? Have you read Horace? Have you studied Homer? Do you know mathematics? Do you understand logarithms or conic sections?" No, but he will say, "Do you know Christ?" And if you scarcely

even know your own native tongue, yet if you know Christ, the gates of heaven shall fly open to let you in!

Now, do you know Christ? Do let the question go round to each one, "Do I know Christ?" Well, then, do you believe Christ? Do you trust Christ? "Yes, thank God!" says one, "with all my imperfections I can sing the hymn—

"On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand."

Oh, then, brothers and sisters, let us be of good cheer, for, trusting Him, He will never fail us! Believing Him, He will never leave us! We shall see His face in glory. Oh, that the day were come! But when it does, to His name shall be all the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 4:1-11.

Verses 1, 2. *I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, preach the word.* We are not to use such strong language as this unless there is some sufficient reason for it. We must not be too hot upon cold matters, but even this is better than to be cold upon matters that require heat. When John Calvin wished to leave Geneva to complete his studies elsewhere, that man of God, Farrell, knowing how necessary it was for the church that Calvin should remain at Geneva, charged him before God that he dared not go—and hoped that a curse might light upon all his studies, if for the sake of them he should forsake what he held to be his duty. So sometimes, like the apostle, we may before the judge of the quick and dead, charge men not to forsake their work and calling.

2. *Be instant in season and out of season.* The Greek word means, "Stand up to it," as when a man is determined to finish his work, he stands right up to it. Stand over your work, putting your whole strength into it—standing up over it. "In season and out of season," because the gospel is a fruit which is in season all the year round! Sometimes these "out of season" sermons, preached at night or at some unusual time, have been of more service than the regular ordinances of God's house. Mr. Grimshaw used to ride on horseback from village to village throughout the more desolate parts of Yorkshire and wherever he met with ten or a dozen people, he would preach on horseback to them, preaching sometimes as many as 24 sermons in a week! That was being instant "out of season" as well as "in season." So should God's Timothys be and, indeed, all of us!

2. *Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.* That is, do not exhort with mere declamation, but put some argument into your exhortation! Some men think it quite enough to appear to be in earnest, though they have nothing to say. Let such exhorters remember that they are to exhort with doctrine—with solid teaching!

2. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.* When men have not good preachers, they are sure to have a great many of them! Those nations which have the worst priests always have them in swarms. So let us be thankful if God sends us a glowing and zealous minister, for even those who count it an affliction to have a minister, would be more afflicted if they had not a good one! But how evil it is when men get itching ears, when they need someone to be perpetually tickling them, giving them some pretty things, some fine pretentious intellectualism! In all congregations there is good to be done, except in a congregation having itching ears. From this may God deliver us!

4. *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* When a man will not believe the truth of God, he is sure, before long, to be a greedy believer of lies! No persons are so credulous as skeptics. There is no absurdity so gross but what an unbeliever will very soon be brought to receive *it*, though he *rejects* the truth of God!

5, 6. *But watch you in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.* How complacently he talks about it! It is only a departure, though Caesar's sword might smite his head from his body! And truly death to the believer is no frightful thing. "Go up," said God to Moses, and the prophet went up, and God took away his soul to Him—and Moses was blessed! And so, "Come up," says God to the Christian, and the Christian goes up, first to his chamber and then from his chamber to Paradise!

7, 8. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give Me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.* This seems, then, to be a distinguishing mark of a true child of God—he loves the appearing of Christ! Now there are some professors who never think of the Second Advent at all. It never gives them the slightest joy to believe that—

"Jesus the King will come,
To take His people up
To their eternal home."

Truly they are mistaken and are surely wrong, for was not this the very comfort that Christ gave to His disciples? "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also." I trust, dear friends, we are among those "who love His appearing," and if we are, it is a sure prophecy that we shall have a crown of righteousness!

9, 10. *Do your diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.* Demas was once almost a martyr! He was upon the very edge of suffering, but now you see he goes back to the world—he is not

content to lie in the dungeon and rot with Paul, but will rather seek his own ease. Alas, Demas, how have you dishonored yourself forever, for every man who reads this passage, as he passes by flings another stone at the heap which is the memorial of one cowardly spirit who fled from Paul in danger!

10. *Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.* It is likely that Paul had sent Crescens and Titus away upon a mission, but now, from certain intimations, the apostle is sure that his time of death is coming on and so, indeed, it was, for his head was struck off by Nero's orders a few weeks after the writing of this Epistle—and now he somewhat laments that he had sent them away. And would not you and I want the consolation of kind faces round about us, and the sweet music of loving voices in our ears if we were about to be offered up?

11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* That is one of the prettiest verses in the Bible! You remember that the Apostle Paul quarreled with Barnabas about this very Mark, because John Mark would not go into Bythinia to preach the word, but left Paul and Barnabas. Therefore Paul would not have Mark with him anymore because he had turned in the day of trouble. But now Paul is about to die and he wishes to be perfectly at peace with everyone. He has quite forgiven poor John Mark for his former weakness. He sees divine grace in him and so he is afraid lest John Mark should be under some apprehensions of the apostle's anger. And so he puts in this very kind passage, without seeming to have any reference at all to the past, but he gives him this great praise—**"**for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

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THE DUMB BECOME SINGERS
NO. 3332

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Isaiah 35:6.

WHAT a difference divine grace makes whenever it enters the heart! We find here the blind, but they are not blind in one sense—grace has touched their eyes and the eyes of the blind are opened! Men are said to be deaf—but they are not deaf after grace has operated upon them—the ears of the deaf are unstopped! They have been lame before, but when once the omnipotent influence has come upon them, they leap like a hart! And the dumb, so far from being dumb, have a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising—the tongue of the dumb not simply speaks, but it sings! Grace makes a great difference in man when it enters into him. How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who assert themselves to be the children of God and yet live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct—they are just what they used to be before their pretended conversion. They are not changed in their actions, even in the least degree, and yet they do most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God! Let such know that their professions are lies, that falsehood is the only groundwork that they have for their hopes, for wherever the grace of God is, it makes a difference! A graceless man is not like a gracious man and a gracious man is not like a graceless one—we are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." When God looks upon us with the eyes of love in conversion and regeneration, He makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness—as heaven, itself, is from hell! God works in man a change so great that no reformation can even so much as thoroughly imitate it. It is an entire change—a change of the will, of the being, of the desires, of the hates, of the dislikes and of the likes. In every respect the man becomes new when divine grace enters into his heart. And yet you say of yourself, "I am converted," and remain what you were! I tell you once again to your face—you say an empty thing—you have no grounds for saying it! If grace permits you to sin as you were known to do, then that grace is no grace at all! That grace were not worth the having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before! No, we must always hold fast to the great doctrine of sanctification. Where God really justifies, He really sanctifies, too! And where there is a remission of sin, there is also the forsaking of it. Where

God has blotted out transgression, He also removes the love of it, and makes us seek after holiness and walk in the ways of the Lord. We think we might fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations we have to make concerning it.

And now we shall want you, first of all, to notice the sort of people God has chosen to sing His praises and to sing them eternally. Then, in the second place, I shall enter into a more full description of the dumb people here described. Then I shall try to notice certain special times and seasons when those dumb people sing more sweetly than at others.

First, then—**I.** THE TONGUE OF THE DUMB SHALL SING. We make this the first point.

Note the persons whom God has chosen to sing His songs forever. There is no difference, by nature, between the elect and others—those who are now glorified in heaven and who walk the golden streets clad with robes of purity were by nature as unholy and defiled—and as far from original righteousness as those who by their own rejection of Christ and by their love of sin, have brought themselves into the pit of eternal torment as a punishment for their sins. The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in heaven and those who are in hell rests with divine grace and with divine grace alone! Those in heaven would inevitably have been cast away had not everlasting mercy stretched out its hand and redeemed them. They were by nature not one whit superior to others. They would as certainly have rejected Christ and have trodden underfoot the blood of Jesus as did those who were cast away, if grace, free grace, had not prevented them from committing this sin! The reason why they are Christians is not because they did naturally will to be so, nor because they did by nature desire to know Christ, or to be found of Him—but they are now saints simply because Christ made them so! He gave them the desire to be saved! He put into them the will to seek after God! He helped them in their seeking and afterwards brought them to feel the peace of God which is the fruit of justification. But, by nature, they were just the same as others—and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference lies on the wrong side of the question. In very many cases, we who now "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," were the worst of men!

There are some here that now bless God for their redemption who once cursed Him. Who implored, as frequently as they dared to do, with oaths and swearing, that the curse of God might rest upon their fellows and upon themselves. Many of the Lord's anointed were once the very castaways of Satan, the sweepings of society, the refuse of the earth—those whom no man cared for, called outcasts, whom God has now called desired ones, seeing He has loved them! I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told, here, that those who sing were dumb. Their singing does not come naturally from themselves—they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones, those whom God would have to sing His praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of

him that blasphemed, or the tongue of him that misused his tongue, but the tongue of the dumb—of those who have gone farthest from any thought of singing—of those who have no power of will to sing. The tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God's praises! Strange choice that God has made; strange for its graciousness. Strangely manifesting the sovereignty of His will! God would build for Himself a palace in heaven of living stones. Where did He get them? Did He go to the quarries of Paros? Has He brought forth the richest and the purest marble from the quarries of perfection? No, you saints, look to "the hole of the pit from where you were dug," and to the quarry from which you were hewn! You were full of sin—so far from being stones that were white with purity, you were black with defilement, seemingly utterly unfit to be made stones in the spiritual temple which should be the dwelling place of the Most High! And yet He chose you to be trophies of His grace and of His power to save!

When Solomon built for himself a palace, he built it of cedar. But when God would build for Himself a dwelling forever, He cut not down the goodly cedars, but He dwelt in a bush and has preserved it as His memorial forever, "The God that dwelt in the bush." Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material. They fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold. God makes His precious things out of base material—from the black pebbles of the defiling brooks He has taken up stones which He has set in the golden ring of His immutable love, to make them gems to sparkle on His finger forever! He has not selected the best, but, apparently, the *worst of men* to be the monuments of His grace! And when He would have a choir in heaven that should with tongues harmoniously sing His praise. When He would have a chorus that should forever chant the hallelujahs louder than the sound of many waters and like great thunders, He did not send mercy down to seek earth's songsters and cull from us those who have the sweetest voices. He said, "Go, mercy, and find the dumb and touch their lips and make them sing! The virgin tongues that never sang My praise before, that have been silent up till now, shall break forth in sublime rhapsodies and they shall lead the song—even angels shall but attend behind and catch the notes from the lips of those who once were dumb!" "The tongue of the dumb shall sing" His praises hereafter!

Oh, what a fountain of consolation this opens for you and for me! Yes, beloved, if God did not choose the base things of this world, He would never have chosen us! If He had respect unto the countenance of men; if God were a respecter of persons, where had you and I been this day? We had never been instances of His love and mercy! No, as we look upon ourselves, now, and remember what we once were, we are often obliged to say—

"Depths of mercy can there be,
Mercy still reserved for me?"

How many times we have sung at the Lord's Table—the sacramental supper of our Master—

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room,
While others make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

And we have joined in singing—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That gently forced us in!
Else we had still refused to take,
And perished in our sin."

Grace is always grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. You are obliged to confess that it is of grace, then, and cast away the thoughts that it was of your foreseen faith, or of your foreseen good works, that the Lord chose you. We are obliged to come to this, to feel and know that it must have been of mercy, free mercy and of that alone—that we were not capable of doing good works without His grace preventing us before good works, and without His grace, also, in good works—enabling us to do them and, therefore, they never could have been the motive to divine love nor the reason why it flowed towards us! Oh, you unworthy ones, you saints that feel your deep natural depravity and mourn over your ruin by the fall of Adam, lift up your hearts to God! He has delivered you from all impediments which Adam cast upon you! Your tongue is loosed! It is loose now! Adam made it dumb, but God has loosened it! Your eyes that were blinded by Adam's fall are now opened. He has lifted you from the miry clay! What Adam lost for us, Christ has regained for us—He has plucked us out of the pit and "set us upon a rock, and established our goings, and has put a new song in our mouth, even praise forevermore." Yes, "the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

Just another hint here before I leave this point. How this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others! Why, my brothers and sisters, I can never think any man too far gone for divine mercy to save since I know that God saved me! Whenever I have felt desponding about any of my hearers who have for a long time persevered in guilt, I have only had to reach down my own biography from the shelves of my memory and just think what I, too, was till grace redeemed me and brought me to my Savior's feet! And then I have said, "It will be no wonder if that man is saved—after what He has done for me, I can believe anything of my Master! If He has blotted out *my* transgressions; if He has clean melted away *my* sin, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures! I may for myself, but I cannot for them." Remember, they may be dumb, now, but He can make them sing! Your son John is a sad reprobate—keep on praying for him, mother! God can change his heart. Your daughter's heart is hard as adamant—He who makes the dumb sing can make rocks melt! Believe in God for your children as well as for yourselves. Trust Him! Take their cases before the throne—rely

upon Him that He can do it—and believe that in answer to earnest prayer He also will do it. And if you have neighbors that are full of the pestilence of sin, whose vices come up before you as a stench in your nostrils, yet fear not to carry the gospel to them! Though they are harlots, drunkards, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Savior's dying love. He makes the dumb sing! He does not ask even a voice of them to begin with—they are dumb—and He does not ask of them even the power of speech, but He gives them the power! Oh if you have neighbors who are haters of the Sabbath, haters of God, unwilling to come to the house of God, despising Christ—if you find them as far gone as you can find them, remember He makes the dumb sing and, therefore, He can make them live! He needs no goodness in them to begin with—all He needs is just the rough, raw material—unhewn, uncut, unpolished. And He does not need even good material—bad as the material may be, He can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of the Savior's blood! Go on—fear not! If the dumb can sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be a castaway! Now I am to enter into some rather more clear description of these dumb people.

II. WHO ARE THESE DUMB ONES?

Well, sometimes I get a good thought out of old Master Cruden's concordance. I believe that is the best commentary to the Bible and I like to study it. I opened it at this passage and I found Master Cruden describing different kinds of dumb people. He says there are four or five different sorts, but I shall name only four of them. The first sort of dumb people he mentions are those that *cannot* speak. The second sort are those that *won't* speak. The third sort are those that *dare not* speak and the fourth sort are those that have got *nothing to say* and, therefore, are dumb.

The first sort of people who shall sing are those who *cannot* speak—that is the usual acceptation of the word, dumb—the others are, of course, only figurative applications of the term. We call a man dumb when he cannot speak. Now, spiritually, the man who is still in his trespasses and sins is dumb and I will prove that. He is dead and there is none as dumb as a dead man! "Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, or Your faithfulness in destruction?" The Word of God assures us that men are spiritually dead. It follows, then, that they must be spiritually dumb. They cannot sing God's praises. They know Him not and, therefore, they cannot exalt His glorious name. They cannot confess their sins. They can utter the mere words of confession, but they cannot really confess, for they do not know the evil of sin, nor have they been taught to feel what a bitter thing it is and to know themselves as sinners. But "no man can call Jesus, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit," and these people truly cannot do so. Perhaps it may be they can talk well of the doctrines, but they cannot speak them out of the fullness of their hearts, as living and vital

principles which they know in themselves. They cannot join in the songs, nor can they take part in the conversation of a Christian. If they sit down with the saints, perhaps they have culled a few phrases from the garden of the Lord which they use and apply to certain things of which they do not know anything. They talk a language, the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton's daughters reading a language to their father which they did not understand—still, so far as the essence of the matter is concerned, they are dumb. But, hail to sovereign grace! "The tongue of the dumb shall sing!" God will have His darlings made what they should be! They are dumb by nature, but He will not leave them so. They cannot now sing His praises, but they shall yet do it. They will not now confess their sins, but He will yet bring them to their knees and make them pour out their hearts before Him! They cannot now talk the speech of Canaan and utter the language of Zion, but they shall do it soon. Grace, omnipotent grace, will have its way with them! They shall be taught to pray! Their eyes shall be made to flow with tears of penitence and then, after that, their lips shall be made to sing to the praise of sovereign grace!

I need not dwell upon that point because I have many here who once were dumb ones, who can bless God that they can now sing. And does it not sometimes seem to you, beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be the strangest thing in the world for a dumb man to speak, because he has no idea how a man feels when he is speaking—he has no notion of the thing at all. Like a man blind from birth, he has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. We have heard of a blind man who supposed that the color scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet—he had no other way of comparing it. So the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk. Do you not think that it is a strange thing that you are what you are? You said once, "I will never be one of those canting Methodists. Do you think I shall ever make a profession of religion? What? I attend a prayer meeting? No." And you went along the streets in all your gaiety of mirth and said, "What? I become a little child and give up my mind to simple faith and not reason at all? What? Am I to give up all argument about things? And simply take them for granted because God has said them? No, that can never, be!" I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you as long as you are here, that you are the children of God! And even in heaven, itself, the greatest wonder you will know will be that you were brought to know the Savior!

But there is a sort of dumb *people that will not speak.* They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said of preachers in his day, they were "dumb dogs that would not bark." I bless God we are not now quite so much inundated by this kind of dumb people as we used to be. We have had to mourn, especially in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish and find nobody but a dumb dog in the church—and in the pulpits of Dissenters, too! And some men who might have spoken with a little earnestness if they liked, let the people slumber under them instead

of preaching the Word of God with true fidelity, as they would if they remembered that they would have to give an account to God at the last. My grandfather used to tell a story of a person who once resided near him and called himself a preacher of the gospel. He was visited by a poor woman who asked him what was the meaning of the "new birth." To which he replied, "My good woman, what do you come to me about that for? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, did not know! He was a wise man and how do you think I should know?" So she had to go away with only that answer. Time was when such an answer might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorized teachers of religion, but knew nothing at all about the matter. They understood a great deal more about fox-hunting than about preaching—and more about farming their land than about the spiritual farming of God's church! But we bless God that there are not so many of that sort, now, and we pray that the race may become thoroughly extinct—that every pulpit and every place of worship may be filled with a man who has a tongue of fire and a heart of flame, and shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, neither seeking the smile of men, nor dreading their frown! We have a promise that it shall be so—"The tongue of the dumb shall sing." And, ah, they do sing well, too, when God makes them sing!

You remember Rowland Hill's story in *The Village Dialogues* about Mr. Merriman? Mr. Merriman was a sad scapegrace of a preacher. He was to be seen at every fair and revel but used to be seldom found in his pulpit when he should have been. But when he was converted, he began to preach with tears running down his face—and how the church began to be crowded! The squire would not go and hear any of that stuff and locked up his pew—so Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break the door open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other—and that made twice as much room as there was before! No people make such good preachers as those who were once dumb! If the Lord opens their mouths, they will think they cannot preach often enough and earnestly enough to make up for the mischief they did before! Chalmers, himself, might never have been so eloquent a preacher had he not been for a long time a dumb dog! He preached morality—he said till he made his entire parish immoral! He kept on urging the people to keep God's law till he made them break it! But when he turned round and began to preach God's gospel, then the dumb began to sing! Oh, may God bring this about in every one of us! If we are dumb as professed ministers, may he open our mouths and force us to speak forth His word lest at the last day the blood of our hearers' souls should be found upon our skirt—and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards of the gospel of Christ!

I will now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are *dumb because they dare not speak*—and they are good people, blessed souls. Here is one of them—"I was dumb with silence. I opened not my mouth

because You did it." And it is so blessed to be dumb in that fashion. The Lord's servant will often have to be dumb under trial and troubles. When Satan tempts him to repine, he will put his finger to his lips and say, "Hush murmuring, be still! Shall a living man complain of the punishment of his sins?" Even the child of God will do like Job did, who sat down for seven days and nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was heavy and he could say nothing. It would have been as well if Job had kept his mouth shut for the next few days—he would not have said so much amiss as he did in many things that he uttered. Oh, there are times when you and I, beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongue, lest we should murmur against God! We are in evil company, perhaps. Our spirits are hot within us and we want to take vengeance for the Lord! We are like the friends of David who wanted to take away the head of Shimei. "Let us take this dead dog's head," we say—and then our Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard—"the servant of the Lord must not strive." How often have we been dumb! And sometimes when there have been slanders against our character and men have slandered us, oh how our fingers have itched to be at them! We have wanted to see who was the stronger of the two. But we have said, "No, our Master did not answer, and He left us an example that we should follow in His steps." The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He "answered them not a word." Well, we have sometimes found it hard to be dumb like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughterhouse—we could not keep quiet. And when we have been upon our beds in sickness, we have tried to quench every murmuring word. We have not let a sentence escape our lips when we could possibly avoid it, but notwithstanding all that, we have found it hard work to keep dumb—though it is blessed work when we are enabled to do it!

Now, you who have been dumb under great weights of sorrow; you whose songs have been suspended because you dare not open your lips lest sighs should usurp the place of praise—come, listen to this promise—"the tongue of the dumb shall sing." Yes, though you are in the deepest trouble, now, and are obliged to be silent, you shall yet sing! Though like Jonah you are in the whale's belly, carried down, as he called it, to the lowest hell—though the earth with her bars is about you forever and the weeds are wrapped about your head—yet you "shall look again towards His holy temple." Though you have laid your harp upon the willows—bless God you have not broken it—you will have use for it, by-and-by—you shall take it from its resting place and—

"Loud to the praise of sovereign grace
Bid every string awake."

If you have no "songs in the night," yet He shall "compass you about with songs of deliverance." If you cannot sing His praises now, yet you shall do so, by and by, when greater grace shall have come into your heart, or when delivering mercy shall be the subject of your song in better days

that are yet to come! But, blessed be God, we are not always to be silent with affliction—we are bound to sing. And I think we ought to sing even when we ought to be dumb! Though we are dumb as to murmuring, we ought to sing God's praises. An old Puritan said, "God's people are like birds—they sing best in cages." He said, "God's people sing best when in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was, the higher the ark went up to heaven." So it is with the child of God—the deeper his troubles, the nearer to heaven he goes, if he lives close to his Master. Troubles are called weights and a weight, you know, generally clogs and keeps down to the earth. But there are ways, by the use of the laws of mechanics, by which you can make a weight lift you! And so it is possible to make your troubles lift you nearer heaven instead of making them sink you! Ah, we thank our God He has sometimes opened our mouth when we were dumb, when we were ungrateful and did not praise Him. He has opened our mouth by a trial and though when we had a thousand mercies we did not bless Him, when He sent a sharp affliction, then we began to bless Him! He has thus made the tongue of the dumb to sing.

We have one more kind of dumb people. There are *those who have nothing to say, therefore they are dumb.* I will give you an instance. Solomon says in the Proverbs, "Open your mouth for the dumb," and he shows by the context that he means those who in the court of judgment have nothing to plead for themselves and have to stand dumb before the bar. Like that man of old, who, when the king came in to see the guests, had not on a wedding garment. And when the king said, "Friend, how came you in here?" he stood speechless—speechless not because he could not speak—but because he had nothing to say! Have not you and I been dumb and are we not now, when we stand on law terms with God, when we forget that Jesus Christ and His blood and righteousness were our full acquittal? Are we not obliged to be dumb when the commandments are made bare before us and when the law of God is brought home to the conscience? There was a time with each of us—and not long ago with some here present—when we stood before Moses' seat and heard the commandments read and we were asked, "Sinner can you claim to have kept those commandments?" And we were dumb. Then we were asked, sinner, can you give any atonement for the breach of these commandments?" And we were dumb. We were asked, "sinner, can you, by a future obedience, wipe out your past sin?" We knew it was impossible and we were dumb. Then we were asked, Can you endure the penalty? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings and abide with eternal fires?" And we were dumb. And then we were asked the question, "prisoner at the bar, have you any reason to plead why you should not be condemned?" And we were dumb. And we were asked, "prisoner, have you any helper? Have you anyone that can deliver you?" And we were dumb, for we had nothing to say. Yes, but, blessed be God, "the tongue

of the dumb shall now sing." And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why, we can sing this—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of the Lord's elect?" "Not God, for He has justified." "Who is he that condemns?" "Not Christ, He has died, yes, rather has risen again, who is also at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for us." We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now say everything!

If God has made you dumb. If He has taken away all your self-righteousness, as truly as ever He has shut your mouth, He will open it! If God has killed your self-righteousness, He will give you a better righteousness. If He has knocked down all your refuges of lies, He will build you up a good refuge. He has not come to destroy you, He has shut your mouth to fill it with His praise! Be of good cheer! Look to Jesus! Cast your eyes on the cross! Put your confidence in Him and then you who think yourself a castaway, even you, poor weeping Mary, shall yet sing of redeeming, undying love!

And now I have to conclude, by noticing—

III. THE OCCASIONS WHEN THE TONGUES OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE SING THE BEST.

When does the tongue of the dumb sing? Why, I think it sings always, little or much. If it is once set at liberty, it will never leave off singing. There are some of you people who say this world is a howling wilderness—well, you are the howlers who make all the howling! If you choose to howl, I cannot help it. I shall prefer the matter of my text, "Then shall the tongue of the dumb," not howl, but, "sing!" Yes, they sing always, little or much. Sometimes it is in a low note. Sometimes they have to go rather deep in the bass, but there are other times when they can mount to the highest notes of all. They have special times of singing. They first begin to sing *when they lose their burden at the foot of the cross*—that is a time of singing! You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim lost his burden at the cross; he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing! We have not forgotten those three great leaps—we have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude—but we think we never leaped so high as we did at the time when we saw our sins all gone and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Savior!

By the way, let me tell you a little story about John Bunyan. I am a great lover of John Bunyan, but I do not believe him infallible, for I met with a story the other day which I think is very good one. There was a young man in Edinburgh who wished to be a missionary. He was a wise young man. He thought, "Well, if I am to be a missionary, there is no need for me to transport myself far away from home—I may as well be a missionary in Edinburgh." (That's a hint to some of you ladies who give away tracts in your district and never give your servant, Mary, one!)

Well, this young man began determined to speak to the first person he met. He met one of those old fishwives. Those of us who have seen them, can never forget them—they are extraordinary women, indeed! So,

stepping up to her, he said, "Here you are, coming with your burden on your back. Let me ask you if you have got another burden—a spiritual burden?" "What?" she said, "Do you mean that burden in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress?* Because if you do, young man, I have got rid of that many years ago, before you were born! But I went a better way to work than the pilgrim did. The evangelist that John Bunyan talks about was one of your parsons that do not preach the gospel, for he said, Keep that light in your eye and run to the wicket gate. Why, man alive, that was not the place for him to run to! He should have said, 'Do you see that cross? Run there at once!' But instead of that, he sent the poor pilgrim to the wicket gate first. And much good he got by going there! He got tumbling into the slough, and was like to have been killed by it." "But did you," the young man asked, "go through any slough of despond?" "Yes, young man, I did. But I found it a great deal easier going through with my burden off, than with it on my back."

The old woman was quite right. We must not say to the sinner, "Now, sinner, if you will be saved, go to the baptismal pool—go to the wicket gate—go to the church—do this or that." No, the cross should be right in front of the wicket gate and we should say to the sinner, "Throw yourself there and you are safe! But you are not safe till you can cast off your burden and lie at the foot of the cross and find peace in Jesus." Well, that is a singing time with God's children!

And after that, do God's people sing? Yes, they have sweet *singing times in their hours of communion.* Oh, the music of that word, "communion," when it is heard in the soul—communion with Jesus, fellowship with Jesus, whether in His sufferings or in His glories! Those are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness to Christ and its vital union with Him—and is enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Have you not had some precious singing times, too, *at the Lord's Table?* Ah, when the bread has been broken and the wine poured out, how often have I had a song when the people have all joined in singing—

"Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there the conflict see,
Your agony and bloody sweet,
And not remember Thee?
When to the cross
I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
Oh, Lamb of God, my sacrifice,
I must remember Thee."

But lastly, my dear friends, the best singing time we shall have will be *when you and I come to die.* Ah, there are some of you that are like what is fabled of the swan. The ancients said the swan never sang in his lifetime, but always sang just when he died. Now, there are many of God's desponding children who seem to go all their life under a cloud, but they get a swan's song before they die. The river of your life comes

running down, perhaps black and miry with troubles, and when it begins to touch the white foam of the sea, there comes a little glistening in its waters. So, beloved, though we may have been very much dispirited by reason of the burden of the way, when we get to the last, we shall find swan songs! Are you afraid of dying? Oh, never be afraid of that—be afraid of living! Living is the only thing that can do any mischief! Dying never can hurt a Christian! Afraid of the grave? It is like the bath of Esther in which she lay for a time, to purify herself with spices that she might be fit for her lord. You are afraid of dying, you say, because of the pains of death. No, they are the pains of *life*—of life struggling to continue! Death has no pain—death itself is but one gentle sigh—the fetter is broken and the spirit fled. The best moment of a Christian's life is his last one, because it is the one that is nearest heaven! And then it is that he begins to strike the keynote of the song which he shall sing to all eternity. Oh, what a song will that be! It is a poor song we make now. When we join the song—perhaps we are almost ashamed to sing—but up there our voices shall be clear and good! And there—

"Loudest of the crowd we'll sing
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace!"

The thought struck me the other day that the Lord will have in heaven some of those very big sinners that have gone further astray than anybody that ever lived—the most extraordinary extravaganzas of vice—just to make the melody complete by singing some of those soprano notes which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter. I wonder whether one has stepped in here who God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here! Oh, how will such a one sing, if grace—free grace—shall have mercy upon him! May there be many such. Amen!

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A SERMON
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"His enemies will I clothe with shame:
but upon Himself shall His crown flourish."
Psalm 132:18.

THE Lord Jesus Christ communicates much to men with whom He comes in contact and has a mighty influence upon them. *He* is blessed and He is made a blessing. To those who love Him, Jesus Christ becomes a savor of life unto life. To those who are rebellious and continue to despise Him, He becomes a savor of death unto death. Our Savior, then, has an influence upon all those with whom He comes in contact and association. If I compare His human nature with clay, I must compare it with the scented clay which yields a perfume on all sides. You cannot hear of Jesus Christ without either getting a blessing or involving the responsibility of rejecting a blessing. I repeat it—He becomes a blessing to all those who are round about Him, or else, if that blessing is not received, it brings guilt upon the souls of those who reject Him. He is either the stone on which we build our hope and our trust, or else He becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who stumble at His word, being disobedient.

You see the text teaches very definitely this truth of God, for it not only speaks of Christ, Himself, but of what will become of those who are His enemies. No doubt we may also very properly draw from the text what shall become of His friends, for that same hand which is sure to clothe His enemies with confusion, will be certain yet to clothe His friends with honor and with glory. He who uses the left hand so powerfully to smite His foes, uses His right hand with equal force to bless His friends.

The text, therefore, divides itself very easily and naturally into the two great declarations. We see the clothing of the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ with shame, but then, again, the crowning of the Lord with a flourishing diadem of eternal glory. Let us look, then, at—

I. THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST WHOM GOD SAYS HE WILL CLOTHE WITH SHAME.

Who are these enemies of Christ? In the days of His flesh, you could very easily have discovered them. Some slandered Him, calling Him friend of sinners, gluttonous and a wine-bibber, having a devil and even being a blasphemer. Some took up stones to kill Him. Some cried,

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And others bribed the multitude that they might thus hound Him to His shameful and cruel death. Enemies He had on all sides! But there are many who think today that had they lived in that age they would have been numbered with His friends. If it is so, is it not strange that they are not among His friends now? If they would have behaved so well 1800 years ago, it is amazing they should behave so badly now. Our belief is—and the common actions of mankind justify it—that had the sinners of this present day who pretend to have so much affection for the person of Christ, lived in that age, they, too, alas, would have helped to crucify the Lord of life and glory, for they do, in effect, crucify Him now!

Who are His enemies, then, today? We will not think about those Scribes and Pharisees, and so on, who are all dead and gone, but let us ask who are His enemies NOW? Of course, everybody says that open sinners *are the enemies of Christ.* Do they not, by their actions, say, "we will not have this man to reign over us?" His book they will not read. His day of rest they do not care to keep. To the messages of His ministers they will not listen. His word, "Believe and live," they cast behind their backs—and having done this; they destroy their own souls and do everything that must grieve His Holy Spirit. Are there any such here, now—lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God—some who would even use the word of blasphemy and indulge in the sins of the flesh? We are not harsh if we put you down among the enemies of Christ! You are evidently not with Him and He, Himself, has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." You are not on the Lord's side—there can be no "*betweenites*"—you are on the side of His enemies! He Himself declares that it must be so. "If God is God," said Elijah, "serve Him, but if Baal is God, serve him." You do in effect say, "The world is my god—myself, my own soul, my own pleasures, my own opinions—these are my gods! As for Jehovah and His Christ, I know nothing concerning them." Well, you must be put among His enemies and I would ask you, then, just to take this text and taste the bitterness of it. And I pray that may save you from knowing its bitterness in another world! "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

But Christ has other enemies, namely, *those who are outwardly moral and excellent in conversation and conduct, but who deny the Lord Jesus Christ.* There are some very excellent people in all other respects who doubt His deity, or say they do—who will even say hard things of Him as the Son of God. They say they much revere His character as a man, and conceive Him to be, in fact, a very model of what manhood should be, but they will not accept Him in His true character as the anointed Son of God and the Savior of the world! Now, the Lord Jesus Christ will most certainly consider such to be His enemies. It is no use for a man to say concerning a monarch, "I have a great respect for the monarch in his private character. I would not do anything to injure him—I would even hold him up to respect in his private character—but as a king I will never

yield him loyal homage, I will never obey him. Indeed, I will do all I can to pluck the crown from off his head." Could the king do otherwise than reckon such a person to be his enemy? It would be in vain for the man to say, "I am privately your friend." The king would say, "Oh, but I esteem my crown to be as precious as my life." So the Lord Jesus Christ cannot have the crown rights of His true deity touched. He "counts it not robbery to be equal with God," and He is called, "God over all, blessed forevermore." He who trod the waves of Galilee's lake, whose voice death heard and gave up its prey—He who opened the gates of Paradise to the dying robber—claims to be none other than equal with the Eternal Father, and like He, "God over all." And it is in vain for you to say you respect His character as a man, if you do not accept Him in His deity and accept Him in His official character as the Savior of sinners! You cannot be otherwise than numbered among His enemies! Well, now, if this should seem to be uncharitable, let me say that I cannot help telling you what I solemnly believe to be the truth and I must, therefore, my friend, leave with you this text, "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

But again, there are other persons who are sound enough in their doctrinal views concerning Christ and who are excellent in their moral character, too, but *who are trusting in themselves that they are righteous.* You will, perhaps, be startled when I class you among the enemies of Christ! My dear friend, Christ is the King of grace. He is in this world to vindicate the plan of salvation by grace. You, you see, instead of accepting this plan of salvation by grace, set up the opposite principle of salvation by *merit.* Merit is anti-Christ! The very essence of Popery, that which is so hateful in it to us and, we believe, so obnoxious to the Lord, is not so much its outward rites and ceremonies as its inward spirit of setting up human merit! There are two merits—your own merit and the merit of Christ. If you trust your own merit, you do in fact proclaim that you are opposed to Christ's way of saving by His merits! Christ claims to be the author and finisher of our faith, the Alpha and the Omega, but if you come in and say, "No, I will do this myself—my moral character, my private devotions, my outward attendance at the house of God will serve me in good place as a righteousness," you touch Christ in His most tender point, for He claims among all His glories this first and chief, that He is the Savior of sinners—and if you say that you can do without Him and if you profess to be your own savior—you shall most certainly, however excellent your life may be, be numbered with His enemies! Oh, it will be a sad case for you respectable people, you good, excellent people, when this text shall be fulfilled in you, "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

There is one other class I would gladly speak to—and I think they are the worst of all—those who acknowledge that salvation is by grace and profess to be saved by the blood and righteousness of Christ, who unite themselves with Christ's church, but *whose lives are so unhallowed as to*

dishonor Him. You know how the apostle, half-choked with his sobs as he speaks, says as he gazes upon such, "There are some of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." What a terribly sad reflection! Are they members of a Christian church, and yet an enemy of the cross of Christ? I can suggest no better question for each and all of us than this, "Lord is it, I? Lord, is it I?" Why may it not be you? The preacher may ask himself why may it not be he? But whoever it may be among us, this is certain—our church standing will, so far from excusing us, only increase our guilt—and so it shall be tragically and sadly true, "His enemies will I clothe with shame." They may clothe themselves with the garments of an outward profession and make broad their phylacteries, but they shall one day be stripped and their hypocrisy shall be discovered! "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

Having thus given you, then, a brief list of who are Christ's enemies and being anxious that you should ask yourselves, my dear hearers, whether you are among them, I want now to call your attention to the particular phraseology of the text in order to make out what is meant by this being clothed with shame. Do you see it? Shame! Nothing makes a man feel so cowardly and so mean as *shame*. There have been persons who would sooner die than be put to shame. Many a man would have been able to burn at the stake that has not been able to face public shame. It is a thing which cuts man's nature to the very quick! Now, if you and I have done anything that makes us ashamed, do you know what we do? Why, we put our shame into the hollow of our hand and we keep it there. We do not tell our wife, our children, and our neighbors—and if we can, we go and hide our shame and put it away! Now God seems to say to you and to me, "You have been hiding that shame of yours. You have been wearing the garb of an outward righteousness. Come here! You must put this shame on." "No, Lord," you say, "but I want to hide it." "No," He says, "you shall put it where it must be seen—where nobody shall be able to see you without seeing it! I will clothe you with it—it shall be all over you. You shall put it on as your outward array. You shall be wrapped in it—you shall sleep in it, awake in it and walk abroad in it—you shall be clothed with shame!" And it strikes me that the text may also bear this meaning—that when God comes to fulfill this threat, shame will be the sinner's *only* garment. He had the garment of a profession once—that is to be torn sharply from him and he is to be arrayed only with his scarlet, blushing shame! Once his filthy rags, bad as they were in the sight of God, gave him a sort of covering, but now they shall all be stripped from him and he will have nothing remaining but his shame. Shame shall be his garb from head to foot, nothing but shame in which to wrap himself! When shame only comes into the cheek, it turns it crimson, but here the man or woman shall be shame all over and this shame shall be conspicuous to all onlookers, for he or she shall be clothed with it as with a robe, from head to foot! This seems to be the

unmistakable meaning of the text. Now, when does this come true? And how is it true that God's enemies are clothed with shame?

Well, in the first place, *this threat is sometimes very graciously turned into a promise.* I cannot wish for some of you a better wish than that you may, in the first sense in which I am going to explain it, be clothed with shame, for when the Lord comes to a soul and says to it with a voice of love, "You have been My enemy, but I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you," then the soul is covered with shame. It cries out, "How could I be an enemy to so dear and true a friend?" I recollect one being converted to God by reading the hymn—

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

"Oh," said the man, "is He the lover of *my* soul? Then how is it that I have been an enemy to Him? Did He love *me* when on the tree of shame and death? Did He love *me* so as to pour out His heart's blood to redeem *me*? How can I have lived without honoring Him?" And the man was clothed with shame! Some of us have felt what it is to be thus clothed, so that when we went into the house of God we felt almost ashamed to sit with God's people. They did not know anything about what we were feeling, but we thought they did. And when we went to pray, we felt ashamed to pray, as though our sins would hide God from us and we could not expect to obtain a blessing. We were so clothed with shame that we could not get it away from our eyes! Our whole soul seemed covered with it. No pride, no self-righteousness was left. We could not say, "Lord, I thank You I am not as other men," but we began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, it is a mercy when, in a gracious sense, the soul is thus covered with shame—a hallowed shame on account of its many sins! I would pray that this terrible text may be fulfilled in the sweetest possible manner by your being covered with shame for sin!

But alas, dear friends, it bears on its front a very much more terrible meaning than this. *There are some persons who are clothed with shame in this world through disappointment.* There are some who think they should put an end to Christianity. They get a notion into their heads, for instance, that if the wife is converted, they will break her of it, or if a child shows some signs of divine grace, the man says, "I will laugh it out of him." Or perhaps they do it on a large scale. Like Voltaire, they boast that within another 20 years there will not be a Christian to be found anywhere. They say that the thing is absurd and is dying out. It is very strange that the very press with which Voltaire printed his works is now used in Geneva to print the Bible—and that while Voltaire, himself, is only remembered to be despised, Christianity seems never to have been so strong as it is at the present day! If all those men who have risen up, one after the other, to injure Christ's kingdom, could just now be called back to life and see what has happened, they would look at their

predictions and be clothed with shame to see how mistaken they have all been! Their theories have been exploded. They had their little day and have died out and are generally utterly forgotten. And so will all theories that oppose Christ today die out—and their systems of denial will be all clothed with shame!

In the case of those persecutors who have tried to drive religion out of individuals, they have always been disappointed. They have not succeeded, for the poor, trampled down one has borne it all with supernatural patience and triumphed by endurance—for the grace of God is not to be expelled from the heart! You know what stout old Martin Luther said. He declared that grace was like leaven—you put it into the meal and then you may boil it or bake it, fry it or freeze it—but you can never get out the leaven! Once the meal is leavened, nothing can unleaven it. And so is it with the grace of God! You may do what you will with the man who possesses it. Put him into a mortar and pound him with a pestle until there are not two atoms of him left together—and yet the immortal spirit leaving the anatomy and all its weaknesses behind it, would but the more clearly lay hold on Christ and more fully rejoice in Him! And so, when the disappointment which this brings, comes upon them, then Christ's enemies are clothed with shame!

Sometimes, again, in this world *the enemies of Christ are clothed with the shame of remorse.* Look at Judas Iscariot when he took the pieces of money and threw them down in the treasury and went out and hanged himself. There was the covering of shame. And there have been such men since, who, in life and in death, have been clothed with shame because they have apostatized from the faith and, after making a profession, have, Demas like, turned back again to the world! It is a blessed thing if that shame leads them to true repentance, but in many cases it is only a repentance that comes from a fear of punishment and is not the work of the grace of God! Oh, how many have gone down to hell with its fire burning in their hearts before they got there, feeling the guilt of sin upon them even before God began to handle them, having a foretaste of the flames, a foretaste of that eternal flame-shower which must descend upon their heads! God grant, dear hearers, that not one of you may know what it is to be clothed with the shame of remorse!

But the most terrible fulfillment of my text *is left for another world.* Then shall Christ's enemies be clothed with shame! Servants of Satan, here are your clothes! Do you say you will not put it on? Listen—"His enemies will I clothe with shame." *God* will put it on you! You would not wear the robe of righteousness—you shall not be able to decline to wear the robe of shame! God, Himself, stands here, as it were, and declares that He will dress His creature in the proper garment for him to wear. You must put it on, there is no escape! You must wear it. Here is your eternal convict's dress and, convicted of being an enemy of God, you must wear it—of all dresses the most terrible! To be clothed with pain would be far less dreadful than to be clothed with shame. I would sooner

at any time feel the acute pain that is possible in the body than feel shame, for a prick of the conscience is worse than the thrust of the surgeon's knife! To go crawling about God's world not able to look one's fellow creatures in the face? Why, I would sooner die! And then, in the next world, to be so ashamed that you will not be able to look even the devil in the face, because he never had a day of grace as you have had—never a Savior preached to him, never made any pretense of being converted to God and, therefore, though an enemy of Christ, has no such cause of shame as you will have! Clothed with shame! Why, they shall cry to the rocks to hide them and to the hills to cover them, for when a man is ashamed, he wants to get out of everybody's way and, most of all, out of his own! And you will be so ashamed that you, yourselves, will be ashamed of yourselves! You will be like the man of whom we read that when the king said to him, "How came you in here, not having a wedding garment?" He was speechless. Why speechless? Shame made his tongue refuse to do its office—and so will shame do with you. You will be ashamed.

Shall I tell you why, when you hear of the cross of Christ and yet reject it, you will be ashamed? You will be ashamed then of your sins. You are not able, perhaps, to boast of them, now, but you will be ashamed to think, then, that they shall be published. Men are afraid, now, to have some things put in the newspaper, but what will it be when God will gazette your private sins, when He shall publish to the whole assembled world of every age, to heaven, earth and hell, the sins which you have committed—when they shall be read out so that all shall hear and all your filth be discovered? What shame will this revelation of secret things produce! And what will be your shame when the hypocritical profession which you have made shall also be laid bare? Then shall those who were open sinners laugh you to scorn and say of you, as the prophet pictures the kings saying of the great monarch of Babylon, "Have you become like one of us? Have you also become weak as we, and covered with shame?" Most of all, perhaps, will you be ashamed when you see the very people you despised reigning in triumph—when you see the saints whom you laughed at sitting at the right hand of the Judge—those fools who disdain this world's pleasures now entering into everlasting pleasure! And you, the wise man, who took the bird in the hand and would not wait for the bird in the bush—now rewarded for it all by receiving the very worst things, inasmuch as you had your best things, first, and must now have your worst things, last!

It is a sad, sad text I have to preach upon. I would to God it would go into your souls that you may turn to the King and be no more His enemies! God, Himself, has said it—it is no word of mine, "His enemies will I clothe with shame." He Himself, who can do it, who can make you ashamed, however proud you are—who knows how to put His hand inside your heart and touch the strings, thereof, and loosen them, so

that your pride can no longer help you to bronze it out with Him—He has said it, "His enemies will I cloth with shame." I pray you, "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."

Now, we shall need a little time to take the second part of our subject—"Upon Himself shall His crown flourish." We are here very clearly taught that—

II. THE SAVIOR WILL WEAR A CROWN; THAT THE CROWN WILL FLOURISH, AND THAT IT WILL FLOURISH UPON HIM!

Brothers and sisters, I need not detain you long by mentioning to you the crowns which Jesus wears. He has the royal crown of the kingdoms of heaven, earth and hell, for "the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! But He has a crown which He especially now wears as head of the Church and in this He takes great delight—the crown which is called in the matchless song, "The crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals." That is the crown which the Church has put upon Him and which she still delights to put upon His head! Do you not all delight to crown the Savior, my brothers and sisters in Christ? What song wakes up your heart more completely than the one—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

Have we not sometimes seemed to make these walls echo again and again as we sang—

"Crown Him, crown Him
Crowns become the Victor's brow"?

I hope He has a crown from each of our hearts and we wait for the day when we shall be taken up to cast our crowns at His feet, and to ascribe unto Him honor and glory, and dominion and power forever and ever! Crowned once with thorns for us, He ought now to be crowned with the royal diadem! Every one of us must seek to spend and to be spent that we may add to the luster of that tiara, that He may be exalted above all principalities and powers in the estimation of men—and that He may have a kingdom in all men's hearts!

Christ is thus said to have a crown and it is added *that His crown shall flourish.* There are some crowns that are gradually diminishing in luster. The monarchy is growing weaker and weaker and still more *effete* and, by and by, shall be extinct, "but upon Himself shall His crown flourish." When does a crown flourish? You understand that the very term is metaphorical. Some think that to speak of a crown flourishing is to liken the king to an antlered stag whose horns flourish. Others suppose it to be an allusion to the primitive form of crowns, as Doddridge sings—

"Fair garments of immortal joy
Shall bloom on every head."

It is a metaphor expressive of joy, comfort, tranquility in a kingdom. Now, when does a crown flourish? Does it not flourish *when the sovereign is beloved by his subjects?* The foundations of a throne are always to be found in the love of the people. Christ's crown, then, indeed, flourishes, for the upright love Him! His name is as ointment poured forth! Therefore the virgins love Him. We can truly sing—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast."

We are not slaves who scarcely even talk of ourselves as being His subjects, for He has called us friends and not servants, seeing that His secret is with us. He is dear to our souls and His crown thus flourishes.

A crown flourishes when the power of the monarch is *victorious in war and acknowledged in peace.* It is so with Christ. Oh, that it were more publicly so! We are praying for revivals and may God send them! May this time of God's visitation of London in judgment be attended with a visitation in mercy! And oh, that Jesus Christ's crown may flourish in the conquest of innumerable hearts who shall add fresh territories to the dominion of the Savior—for a crown flourishes when a king's subjects increase and His numbers are multiplied.

It shall be so with Christ. Until the sun has gone down with age and the moon has quenched her nightly lamp and every star has, like a withered fig leaf, fallen from the sky, Christ's kingdom shall go on and on! First as a brook, it seemed to leap down Calvary's side. It has swollen to a river now. Still it deepens and widens. It becomes an ocean which shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea! Christ rose and it was twilight. Now He begins to climb the steep. And the day is coming and the full noontide draws near when He shall flood the whole earth with the splendor of His light and His glory—and when it shall be found that its going forth is from one end of the heavens to the other! May the long expected day fully come! May the realms of woe, of sin and death be filled with this great light of God! His crown shall flourish!

It is remarkable that while all sorts of dynasties have come and gone, the dynasty of Christ still exists! How many mighty monarchs have climbed, with great slaughter, to their thrones—but where are they now? Rome has gone, but the man of Nazareth is still King! And, besides Rome, how many empires have arisen? Earth has been shaken with the tramping of their legions, but where are their thrones and the men who filled them? They are gone, gone to the dust from which they came! But the name of Jesus shall endure forever—men shall always be blessed in Him and all generations shall call Him blessed! The day shall come, unless the Lord, Himself, appears, when the moss shall grow in the halls of the greatest kings, when the markets of commerce shall have shifted from their places. Perhaps the day may come when this modern Babylon, this emporium of all the riches of the earth, shall cease from her glory.

Perhaps to western climes—for everything moves westward—the greatness may yet go. We do not know. We must not expect that our island shall abide forever Mistress of the Sea any more than any other. Venice wedded the Adriatic in her golden days, but now her canals have heard for many a day the clanking of the prisoner's chains and long must it be before her glory can ever return. It may be so with England in days to come. But Zion shall never cease to be the city of the great King! "Those eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation." There is a river that shall not cease to flow, whereon shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby, but there the glorious Lord shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever! A scepter of righteousness is Your scepter. You love righteousness and hate wickedness and, therefore, God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." This, then, is the crown that flourishes!

But do notice, once more, and then we have done, it is said, "*But upon Himself* shall His crown flourish." Does it mean that the crown shall always be seen to have reference to Himself? Does it also mean that it shall be by His power and His own person that He shall sustain the dignity of His crown? Sometimes the crowns of monarchs seem to flourish upon the heads of their prime ministers or privy councilors. It seems as if the empire flourishes because of some admirable person at its back. But it is not so with Christ. "*Upon Himself* shall His crown flourish." He won it! He wears it. He sustains it. He throws down the gauntlet to every foe who would rob Him of it! Now, this seems to say to us when we preach His gospel, we must preach Christ, because it is upon truths of God concerning *Him* that His crown shall flourish! If we do not, therefore, preach up Christ, Himself; if He is not the great subject of our discourse; if He is not held up manifestly crucified among the people, we have kept back the mightiest theme! It is upon Himself that His crown must flourish! Brothers, suppose we give ourselves up to the preaching of doctrine, only? What comes of it? Well, those persons who always delight in doctrines may be, and some of them are, the very best of people, but, as a rule, there is bitterness of spirit engendered by it from which may the Lord deliver us. Even the constant preaching up of experience is pretty sure to bring such people into spiritual bondage and to make them rather care to grovel in the dust than to mount up towards the sun. But preach Christ! Make Him first and make Him last and there will be souls won and saints comforted, for, "upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

What is needed in the midst of His Church, then, is that the King Himself should appear in His glory! That He should once again make bare His arm and use that mighty sword of His which cuts through coats of mail and pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow! And when He comes, oh, when He comes, His crown, indeed, flourishes! We must pray for Him to be constantly with us by His Spirit.

We must watch, also, for His personal Advent, for He whom the disciples saw go up to heaven shall in like manner appear again. Then the glory! Then the manifestation of the hidden ones! Then the declaration of the love of God towards those who have been under reproach and under adversity! Be of good courage, brothers and sisters, for He comes, He comes and then, "upon Himself shall His crown flourish!"

I have thus tried to preach both to saint and sinner. Oh, that He would bring the sinner to Himself tonight! Oh, dear hearer, I cannot bear the thought that you should have to wear shame as your everlasting covering! Tomorrow morning, when you are putting on your clothes, just consider how you would like to be clothed with shame. Ah, fine lady, when you are decking yourself out in all your pretty things, remember that you shall have no waiting maid to dress you in that day, but another—even God, Himself, shall come into your robing room and clothe you with a dress you would gladly never wear!

"His enemies will I clothe with shame." See what your clothes are to be forever and ever? See what your everlasting garment is to be? God grant that you may, instead of being clothed with shame, breathe the prayer, "Lord, clothe me with Your righteousness. Wash me in Your precious blood. Make me Your friend, and allow me no longer to be among those of whom it is written, 'Shame shall be the promotion of fools.'" God bless you for Jesus' sake, Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 95.

Verses 1, 2. *O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.* There must be, there should be joy in our worship—it is the very juice, the wine that flows from the trodden grape. It is the cream of the soul when the heart takes delight in God and joys in Him. To worship as if it were mere duty would be but the reverence of slaves before one who is dreaded, but to worship with delight—this is the adoration of children who come to one whom they love! God grant us that joy while we adore the Lord. Let us, however, mingle great reverence with joy.

3. *For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* "For the LORD is a great God." Jehovah is a great God, "and a great King above all gods," above all that are ever called gods, whether they are kings or magistrates, or whatever they may be.

4. *In His hands are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also.* Low and high, mysterious, sublime, the dominion of God encompasses all nature!

5. *The sea is His, for He made it: and His hands formed the dry land.* Creation is the best ground for possession—what He made is His own, the great freeholder, the sovereign Lord of all!

6, 7. *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For He is our God.* "For He is our God." Oh, that is the sweetest of it all—"He is our God." Let lords and lands have what masters they will—let us obey and worship our own God!

7. *And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.* He is the shepherd leading, feeding, protecting, and guarding us every day.

7-10. *Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* Was not that enough? Is there any need to grieve Him again? Think with sympathy of what God endured from one generation and let not another generation follow in their evil footsteps!

10. *And said, It is a people that do err in their heart.* Not merely through ignorance, but "in their heart." They were not alone with their feet and their tongue, but in their hearts.

10. *And they have not known My way.* They have seen them but not understood them. He says, "They saw My work," but you may see and yet not know, for what is merely seen with the eyes but not understood by the heart is not known—they were a willful, erring people—and an ignorant people.

11. *Unto whom I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.* Ah me!

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LOVELY, BUT LACKING
NO. 3334

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1912,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"One thing you lack."
Mark 10:21.

THOUGH the gospel of Jesus Christ most certainly addresses itself to the vilest of the vile, it is not exclusively to such that the message of salvation is sent. There are, indeed, no characters so far gone in vice that the gospel does not speak to them. However abandoned they may be, still is this inviting voice sent to the very chief of sinners, "Come to Christ and live." But the gospel, with equal affection, addresses itself to those who are not upon any common estimation to be numbered with the chief of sinners—to those whose moral integrity has been unimpeachable, whose outward propriety has been scrupulous—whose lives in all their domestic and social relations have been commendable. There are always some such individuals in our congregation. We are very thankful that there are. We have an invitation for them as frank, as honest and as earnest as for wanton sinners, heinous transgressors and hardened criminals—and our sincere desire is that such may be saved, for we believe that they, also, will make illustrious trophies of divine grace when grace decides them to decide for Christ.

Among us we have a large number of most hopeful people, to whom it may be said, "One thing you lack." *A word of congratulation to you, that you only lack one thing!* Then I propose, therefore, to utter *a warning because you do lack one thing.* And after that *a few words of instruction to show how this one lack may be supplied.* May God grant that His power may rest upon His word, so that you may lack the one thing no longer.

I. First, then, this is A WORD OF CONGRATULATION.

Let us take this young man's case as descriptive of that of many here present. *He did not lack morality.* He could say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." Nor did the Savior tell him that he was uttering a lie—He looked upon him and *loved* him—which He would not have done if he had been a willful liar. No, he had been neither unchaste, nor dishonest, nor profane. He had been all that could be desired in these respects. I congratulate you if such is your case. It will save you from a thousand sorrows to have been kept from those grosser sins! You have not formed habits which will lead you in later years into temptation. You have not formed associations which it will be difficult to break. You have not learned words, phrases and sentiments which will defile your memory in later days, even though you should live to hate them. I thank

God that you have this privilege—that it cannot be said of you that you lack in morality!

Nor was this young man's lack *that of outward religion.* We are told—I think it is by Luke or Matthew—that he was a ruler. That is to say, as we read it, a ruler in the synagogue. He was one who had taken office among his coreligionists and had even presided in their religious assemblies. He was a young man, remember, and it is not often that young men attain to such a position, so that he must have been not only scrupulously excellent in his conduct, but he must have been regarded by all who knew him as remarkably religious at heart. Indeed, when he knelt down before the Savior, when he addressed Him as, "Good Master," he showed that his outward habits were of a religious cast. And so I congratulate some of you that you love the place where Christians meet, that in their sacred songs you take an interest, that their holy book is a book not altogether unread by you, that you would be grieved if you could not go up to the assembly of God's people. I am glad that as touching these things in your outward regularity, some of you might even put others to shame who are further advanced than you in spiritual things. You do not lack for morality—you do not lack for the outward part of religion!

Nor can I suppose that this young man lacked *a becoming respect for whatever was pure and lovely and of good report.* In addressing our Lord by that remarkable title which was not used by Jews even to their Rabbis, he showed how he looked upon the holy Christ with a profound awe. He did not perceive His deity, but what he did perceive of His matchless goodness he deferred to. And it is so with you, my friend. You never utter an opprobrious word against God's people. You would be very grieved to hear them evilly spoken of. You love the ministers of Christ. There is no company that pleases you better than the company of the people of God. You have religion—you have a respect for that part of religion which as yet you do not possess. You wish you had it. You envy those who have it and would wish to be the meanest of them all if you might but have a part among them. I congratulate you upon this! I thank God concerning you. Looking upon you, I feel as Jesus did, that my heart loves you and I gladly would that you had the necessary supply of that thing which you still lack.

This young man did not lack *orthodoxy*. He was no doubter, skeptic, or professed infidel. He said, "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He believed in eternal life. He was not one of those Sadducees who say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit. He venerated the grand old truths of his father's religion—he was a firm believer in the orthodox faith. And it is so with you. You have never yet dared to doubt the Word of God and as far as you have learned its meaning, you hold that meaning in the most solemn respect. You would not for the world be found a heretic! You would not willfully call in the existence of God, the deity of Christ, the atonement by blood, or any other of the essentials of our most holy faith. As far as your head is concerned, you are clear enough about these things. I thank God for this, for it is a grand escape

from a pestilent evil. It is hard to get a man's conscience sound who has gone through the great dismal swamps of infidelity. After once listening to the vile suggestions of ungodliness, or reading such infamies as come from the pen of a Tom Paine, the soul seems as if it never could get clean of the corruption! It is such pitch—it sticks to one's hands—and though one takes to himself sodium nitrate and much soap, yet shall he scarcely cleanse himself from the defilement! You have not acquired that taint of your moral constitution. Thank God for it! I bless God that in His abundant mercy, you do not lack for a knowledge of the faith and a degree of belief in it!

Nor yet, my dear friends, did this young man lack *sincerity*. I have noticed same expositors speaking of him as a hypocrite, but he was as far away from being a hypocrite as the North Pole is from the South! He was transparent in all he said. Even that little bit that looks like boasting—"All these have I kept from my youth up," shows how ingenuous the man was. A man who was not sincere would have minced a little and kept back an expression so complimentary to himself. He was the very mirror of candor and so are some of you. You have not learned the ways of craft. You do not assume to be what you are not. Though you mix with God's people, yet you have not ventured to proceed to baptism without faith, nor do you dare to come to the communion table because you fear you have not fellowship with Christ. You prove your sincerity in many ways and upon this, I again congratulate you and thank the God of mercy!

This young ruler, moreover, did not lack *for zeal.* The way in which he came to Christ showed his ardor. He came to Him *running* and fell down before Him, saying, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" You, too, have a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge. If the Holy Spirit shall but teach you what the one thing is that you are lacking, I believe you will seek after it. I trust you will. At any rate, up to the measure of your light you have been, up till now, quick, zealous and desirous to do what you could.

This young man also *was exceedingly thoughtful.* Half the battle with many men is to make them think, even if they think wrongly. It is almost better for them to think in the most crooked manner than not to think at all. The men least likely to be saved are they who go about their business or their pleasures and will not imagine that they have time for thought. But here was a thoughtful man. He had studied the law and had tried to keep it. He was now something more than thoughtful—he was anxious. "What lack I yet?" as if he felt there was something he did not know and he would gladly know what it was. He was not so self-righteous as some have fancied he was. He had a self-righteous head, but he had a seeking heart. His head made him think that he had kept the law, but his heart told him that he had not, for he said, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" which he would not have said if he had believed that he had religion enough to inherit it. He said, "What lack I yet?" which I think he

would not have said if he had not known that he did lack something, though he knew not what. I am thankful—I am again thankful to God and I congratulate you, my dear hearers, if you are somewhat in the same position, if you can honestly say, "I have tried to do what I can, I have sought to do as far as my light guides me. I do not believe I am saved, but I wish I were. What is it? What is that secret something which can fill the aching void within my heart? What is that which can give me rest? For rest as yet I do not possess."

Once more, this young man did not lack *for willingness*—at least *he thought he did not.* He believed himself willing to do anything, to give anything, to suffer anything if he might but be saved. So also do some of you. You would stand up in the congregation tonight and say, "The Lord knows there is nothing within my reach that I would not do. There is nothing under heaven that I would not bear if I might but inherit eternal life." But, perhaps like this young man, you do not know your own heart—and if Christ were to try you with some searching precept—you might, like he, go away sorrowing. But, at any rate, as far as you know, you are willing. And I am glad of this and thankful that all these points are in you. Though you do lack, yet you do not lack any of these, but lack something else.

The fact is, this young man *lacked knowledge.* He did not know the *spirituality* of the law. He had never been taught that the law concerns our glances, our thoughts and our imagination. He supposed he had kept the law because he had not committed any act of adultery, or of theft—nor had he spoken the thing that was not true. He did not know that an unchaste *glance*, or a causeless hatred, or a covetous desire breaks the law of God and betrays the sin that lurks in the breast. He did not know that and, perhaps, some of you do not know it. Oh, that you may be led to know it! May God not only make you know it as a matter of knowledge, but understand it as a matter of conviction deeply written in the conscience! And he did not know the plan of salvation. The question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" showed that he did not know that salvation is not by *doing*, but by *believing*—not by our works, but by a simple trust in Jesus. This was a great deficiency! Though he was a model of uprightness in a hundred interesting points which we cannot now stay to discuss, he was lacking in a matter of vital interest to his immortal welfare! In that he was just like many of you. With looks of love and pity, with feelings of tender regard, but deep anxiety, we turn to you, therefore, with this reflection, "One thing you lack."

II. And now we shall change the note. THIS TEXT HAS A WORD OF WARNING.

"One thing you lack." What was the one thing that this young man lacked? *It was the full surrender of his heart to God in Christ.* He had not done that. Our Savior gave him, therefore, a command which tested him. He bade him go, sell all that he had and distribute it to the poor. This is not a command which He gives to all men, but He gave that particular command to that particular young man according to his particular

circumstances—He saw that he was not the man that could endure to be poor. He saw, too, that he had made his riches his idol. He was a gentleman. He was a man of great possessions. He does not seem to have been a cheapskate. He could hardly have been a ruler of a synagogue, one would think, if he had been, but still, he had a great liking for position. He was a gentleman and there are a great many people who would sooner be gentlemen than they would be saints—and sooner be thought to belong to the upper and respectable circles of society than they would be thought to be devout and holy! This young man would have liked to have been both, but the Savior, seeing that his wealth was in his heart and that he had loved it better than he did his God, said to him, "Part with your wealth, for if you are decided for God and your heart is wholly His, you will prove it by the readiness of your obedience." Here, then, was the thing he lacked—he lacked the full surrender of his heart to God's will. And so he went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions.

This lack of the full surrender of his heart to God's will made him shun the reproach of being a follower of Christ. Hence, though he would call Christ, "Good Master," he would not turn and follow Him and learn of Him. So the Master said, after He had bid him sell his goods, "Take up the cross." That is to say, "Come out and confess Me. Having done as I bid you, then come and say I am a disciple of that man who is despised and rejected. I will follow Him to prison and to death, and I will preach His word though I be put to death for it. I will take up the cross. "

Christ knew that the one thing he lacked was the full giving up of his heart to God and, therefore, He said, "Follow Me, for if you really do love God, you will follow His Son. If your heart is fully given to God, you will be willing to be obedient to Christ, to take Him for your Leader, Master, Savior, Guide, Friend and Counselor." Now, in this the young man failed. He could not so give himself up wholly to God. He could not at that time, at any rate, so give himself up as to be completely Christ's servant. Now, no man who fails in this respect can enter heaven! Christ will save you, but a part of the agreement on your part must be this, "You are not your own, but are bought with a price." If you would have Christ's blood to redeem you, you must give yourself up to Christ—your body, your soul, your spirit, your substance, your talents, your time, your all! You must from this day be Christ's servant, come what may. If persecution should arise, you must be willing to part with all that you possess—with your liberty, with your life, itself, for Christ—or you cannot be His disciple. He may never call you literally to sell your goods and distribute all, but He does call you to acknowledge that your goods are not your own, but His. That you are only a steward and must be willing, therefore, to give to the poor and to dedicate to the honor of His kingdom, such part as shall be meet and right of all that you have, not as though you were bestowing anything of your own, but only as yielding up to God what belongs to Him! He claims that you now turn over, if you would be saved, yourself

and everything you have by an indefeasible title deed to the great Lord of all whose you must be. If you would be saved by the blood of Jesus, you are not from this day to choose your own pleasures, nor your own ways, nor your own thoughts, nor to serve yourselves, nor live for yourselves or your own aggrandizement. If you would be saved, you must believe what He tells you, do what He bids you and live only to serve and honor Him. I am ashamed to have to say that a great many Christian professors seem to be false to this, their agreement, but, as my Lord will take no less, I dare ask no less of you. It seems to me all too little. He has bought us, not with silver and gold, but with His own precious blood! Surely, then, we should be quite willing to say—

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

What you keep to yourselves you shall lose, but what you give to Him you save and gain; your treasure on earth, the moth shall eat, and the rust corrupt; but your treasure in His keeping no moth shall ever fret, nor canker ever devour. All is safe which is given up to Christ! That which is kept back from Him, whatever it may be, shall prove a curse to you. Say, then, my dear young friend, with all your excellences, do you lack the giving up of your heart, the full giving up of yourself to Christ? Oh, I am grieved that you should lack it! I am, indeed, grieved that you should lack it! I would like my Lord to have such a bright gem as you to glitter in His crown! I would like the Good Shepherd to have so dear a lamb to carry in His bosom! What? Shall so fair a flower shed its fragrance for His enemies? Let the Savior take it and wear it in His bosom—He is willing—may His grace take it tonight! One cannot bear that you, having so much, should lack but one thing. If you lacked all, that were grievous, but lacking but one thing, oh, why should not that lack be made up? God grant it at once! To miss heaven! I cannot bear to think that you should, when you really are so sincerely anxious about it; to have such desires, and to be so fervent, too, and yet not to give your whole heart to my Lord? Poor things are desires if they get no farther! Desire will not quench thirst, neither will it stay hunger. You must take Christ and live on Him or you shall die! To think, dear friends, that some of you should miss heaven through your wealth! Why need it be? And yet it is often so. The rich will not go to hear the gospel as the poor will—and when they hear it, there is often so much care about their extensive business, or, on the other hand, there is so much attraction in that circle of gay and thoughtless friends, that it is hard for them to be saved. Oh, what a pity that the mercies of God should lead you to hell—and that riches *here* should all but involve you, or altogether involve you, in eternal poverty *hereafter*! God in His mercy prevent it, that you may yet be saved!

The sad thing to remember is that *you who lack one thing, in lacking that one thing, lack all*, for though I congratulated you that you had morality that is poor stuff when it has no foundation in love to God. Your sincerity, I think I must suspect that it is exhausted if, after having been

told the way, which is simply to believe in Christ and give yourselves up to Him, you now refuse! Yes and all the good things which I have strung together with words of congratulation are but as the colors of a bubble that shall pass away unless you have this one thing. The one thing is like the unit set before many ciphers which will make them into a great amount, but without the one figure, first, all those ciphers will stand for nothing, many as they are! If by the grace of God in your heart and the exercise of a living faith in the dying Savior, you give yourself wholly up to God, then every good thing, lovely thing and thing of good repute shall be embalmed and preserved, but, without this, they shall be like faded flowers—fit only to be cast behind the wall or to perish on the dunghill!

III. Lastly, we shall give you A WORD OF DIRECTION.

If you would inherit eternal life, Christ's direction is, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor." Now, what did He mean by that? We shall read it three ways and very quickly. First, He meant in the young man's case, "*Give up your idol.*" His was wealth. He means the same kind of trial for you. Give up your idol. What is it? I pause. You may look, but I am sure that if you are not loving God you are loving something else—and whatever it is that you love better than God is your idol—and you are an idolater—and your idol must fall to the ground if Jesus is to be all in all. You cannot serve two masters—and whatever your present master is, it must be thrown out—that Christ may come in.

"Sell all that you have." Well, that means another thing as I read it, that is, consecrate your *all to God.* How can you expect, if you withhold and keep back part of the price from God, that He should accept you and save you by Jesus Christ. No, come, poor guilty sinner, and wash in the purple stream that flows from Jesus' heart and then say in return, "My Lord, since, You have thus redeemed me—

"All that I am, and all I have
Shall be forever Thine.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
And if I could make some reserve,
And duty did not call
I'd love my God with zeal so great
That I must give Him all."

The third reading of this passage will be—*give up your hindrances.* This young man's hindrance was his possessions, and it was better that he should relinquish his possessions and be saved, than be hindered by his wealth. What, my dear friend, is your hindrance? Give it up! Give it up! Give it up! Oh, I know some of you that are hindered by bad company. You are often imposed, but it is all blown away by those merry men whose merriment is tinged with lasciviousness. Give them up! Will you give them up, or give up Christ? Which shall it be? You remember in John Bunyan's *Life* he says that one Sunday when he was playing on the village green at a game of cat, he was just about to strike the cat when a voice came to him from heaven, and said, "Will you have your sins and

go to hell, or leave your sins and go to heaven?" And he stood there in the midst of his companions and paused, and they could not think what ailed the tinker while he was disputing in his mind which it should be—Christ and heaven—or his sins and hell! Now, whatever your hindrance is—if it is money, if it is anything—whatever it is, give it up! If it is your right hand, you had better cut it off and cast it from you, than having it enter into hell. If it is your right eye, it would be better for you to pluck it out than having two eyes to be cast into hell's fire! That is the cry of the text tonight—down with your idols! Give them all up! Cast away your hindrances and come to Christ and trust Him! That is the first word of instruction.

But the second instructive word is, *"Take up the cross."* That means, *profess Christ.* You have a notion, perhaps, some of you that you will sneak into heaven as secret Christians. Take care that if you try that you do not find yourselves at another gate than the gate of pearl! Christ came not to save those cowardly souls who will not acknowledge Him. His own words are, "He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven." Are you ashamed of Jesus? Ah, then, remember those words, "The fearful and unbelieving"—the fearful—that is those who are afraid to acknowledge Christ as their Master—"shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." I pray you, then, if you are Christ's, confess Him! Acknowledge Him! Confess that you are His—*take up the cross,* take up your cross—that is, *endure His reproach.* You would not like to be called a canting Methodist, or Presbyterian, or some other ugly name. Ah, but, my dear friend, if you would have Christ's crown, you must have Christ's cross—and he that is not willing to be sneered at with Christ cannot reign with Christ! And what if they do sneer at you? If that is your cross, take it up! What higher honor can a man need on this side of heaven than to be called a fool for Christ? I know the day shall come when angels shall envy the men that were permitted to have the privilege of suffering for Christ. You know the old story of Henry the Fifth, when, in view of a battle, it was said he needed more men, but he replied that he did not wish for more men, for—

"The fewer men, the greater share of honor,"

and he pictured the day when

"Gentlemen of England, now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here!"

Truly, if you could escape rebuke and persecution, you might well be grieved to think that you went to heaven by so mean a way! Be willing, then, like a brave spirit, to take up the cross and carry it, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Take up your cross—that is, *trust in the cross*—grasp it as your only hope! Let the atonement which Jesus made by His death be the delight of your soul and from this day always boast therein.

The last word of direction was—"*Follow Me.*" Christ said, "Follow Me." He meant, did He not, confide in Me? As a confiding sheep follows its

shepherd, so follow Me. He meant "*Obey me,* as the servant follows where the Master leads, so trace My footsteps and let My example be your rule." So Jesus says to you, also, "Persevere in following Me. Never cease so doing. Follow me right up to My throne and there rest with Me."

Listen, then, each of you here present, who have only one thing that you lack. Will you now—may His Holy Spirit make you—give up the world and all it offers you? Will you give up sin and all its fascinations and close in with God in Christ and give your whole heart to Him? Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision. There is a Valley of Decision to us all, when we are either left to our own wills to decide for evil, or the grace of God makes us decide for Christ! The cry is heard in this house tonight, "Divide, divide." Those who shall say "yes" within their hearts take their place with Christ! But those who say, "no"—those who give the negative to the command of Christ—let them at least know what they are doing! And if they will go the downward road, let it be with their eyes open that they may know where they go. But, oh, say not, "No!" Oh, Spirit of God, let them not say, "No!" Yield, man, yield woman, to the gentle impulse which now bids you say, "I will take His yoke upon me, for it is easy. I will follow Him." Yield to His love who round you now the bands of a man would cast—the cords of His love who was given for you—to His altar binding you fast. Pray this prayer—"Lord, bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar! Let me be Yours now, and Yours hereafter when You come in Your glory!"

There is a question that has often been asked, with feelings of curiosity, which I cannot answer. It is this—did the young man inherit eternal life after all? I think he did. I think he did because Jesus loved him. I like his character throughout, as the Savior evidently did, and He did not love because of outward appearances—He looked at the heart. I am not altogether displeased at his going away. It was a deal better than staying if he did not follow honestly the Good Master who had eternal life at His disposal. I even look hopefully at his pausing awhile before complying, if such was the case, for the man that flings all away in a moment may want it back again tomorrow. It was a great deal he had to part from and he went away—but he did not go away careless. I know I would be glad if my hearers went away sorrowing when they are not converted. I would think it was a hopeful sign. He went away sorrowing and though the Savior drew from that the moral that it was hard for a rich man to be saved, yet He said it was possible with God, and why, then, was it not possible with that young man? I do not know. There are some things to be said on either side, but where Scripture is silent, we must not decide.

But there is another question that I think is vastly more important—and to me, more interesting and to each one of you a deal more so—and that is will that young man that I have been talking to tonight, be saved? And the young woman I tried to describe just now—will she ultimately inherit eternal life? Oh, may God grant that the answer may be in each

case, "Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I trust You, that I love You, and whatever You tell me to give up, or to be, or to do for Your name's sake, even all things, I will do it." Then the Lord bless you, for you are saved and you shall be His in the day of His appearing!

God give His blessing for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MARK 9:2-21.*

Verses 2-7. *And after six days Jesus took with Him, Peter, and James, and John, and led them up into a high mountain apart by themselves. And He was transfigured before them and His raiment became shining, exceedingly white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here and let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were sorely afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.* You and I have sometimes wished that we could see Christ in His earthly glory. We need not, however, wish it, for if such a sight were permitted to us, in all probability we would be more full of fear than of joy. These three men, the elect out of the elect, the very choicest of the apostles—had little delight in what they saw at the time, for the glory was too bright for their overwhelmed natures—

"At the too transporting sight,
Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

We had better wait awhile until these eyes shall have been cleansed and our whole fabric shall be fit for such a weight of glory as the sight of our exalted Lord will be!

8. *And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man anymore, save Jesus only with themselves.* Unhappy, indeed, would they have been if they had looked about and seen none but Moses, for poor comfort could Moses bring! Or if, looking around, they had seen none but Elijah, for the stern prophet of fire would have been but a poor consolation to them in their life struggles. But Moses may go and Elijah may go. Lawgiver and prophet may vanish! As long as Jesus Christ remains, it is enough! Jesus only is enough for all our needs—for all our desires.

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean.* For they did not understand the Master's words—not even these apostles, for the Spirit of God was not yet fully given. Happy, indeed, is he upon whom the spirit of God rests—and in whom He dwells—for as John says, "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and know all

things," and these men without that measure of anointing did not know at that time even such a simple word as this—that the Son of man should rise again from the dead! Brothers, we must be taught of the Holy Spirit, or we shall never know anything profoundly. We might go to school to Christ, Himself—now, mark this word—we might go to school to Christ Himself and yet learn nothing until the Holy Spirit should come upon us to write the truth of God upon our heart which Christ has spoken to the ear. Oh, if you lack wisdom, ask of God, and He will give you of His Spirit!

11-13. *And they asked Him, saying, Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah verily comes first, and restores all things, and how it is written of the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at naught. But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come*—he was John the Baptist.

13. *And they have done unto him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.* It is rather singular that the disciples should begin to ask about the scribes, for this was, as it were, a sort of warning note for a battle into which they were about to plunge. They talked about the scribes, but the scribes were down below in conflict with the rest of the apostolic brotherhood, and now, while they are talking about them, they find themselves immediately in their presence.

14, 15. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning them. And immediately all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* The probability is that the face of Jesus Christ was shining like the face of Moses when he came down from the mount, and the people were amazed though not with that same amazement which seized upon Israel when they saw the face of Moses, for Moses had to cover his face with a veil. But they ran to Him and saluted Him. The glory of Christ attracts, whereas the glory of Moses repels. The glory of the law is terrible, but the glory of the gospel is cheering and attractive.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* Like some great commander stepping into the field when his under followers are being beaten, he comes right to the front and charges the foe boldly. Christ said, "What are you discussing with them?"—as much as to say, "Why did you not wait a bit and ask me? I could have answered you if they cannot."

17, 18. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, which has a dumb spirit, and wherever it seizes him, it throws him down: and he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid.* A case of dreadful epilepsy accompanied with satanic possession.

18, 19. *And I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear you? Bring him to Me.* That is a grand piece of advice, and a blessed word of permit—"Bring him to

Me." There is no case so bad but if you bring it to Jesus, He can meet it. "Bring him to Me." Now, good woman, bring your daughter's case to Christ tonight in prayer while you are sitting in the pew. Now, come, brother, bring the case of your son who seems utterly to be abandoned to vice. Bring the case before Christ tonight! "Bring him to Me." Oh, who would not bring his friend—his wife? Who would not bring her husband or her child unto Jesus Christ? "Bring him to Me."

20. *And they brought him unto Him.* Some came to help the father; probably the bringing of the young man was too much an effort for one alone. "They brought him unto Him." Two or three of you with united prayer can do what, perhaps, one man's prayer would not. Come, help one another! "Bear you one another's burdens" in prayer. I would suggest that if one of you should have an ungodly son or daughter who causes you trouble, you should commune with some of your brothers and sisters in Christ and say, "Let us together make this case a matter of prayer till God hears us." And then you must take up a case of theirs, you know, turn and turnabout, and see whether God does not in answer to prayer bless one after another that you thus bring to Christ! I know what the result will be—if it is honestly tried in simple confidence in the power of Jesus!

20, 21. *And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, how long is it since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.* A terrible case.

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