A NEW YEAR'S BENEDICTION
NO. 3387

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 1, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1868.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have, for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."
Hebrews 13:5.

OBSERVE the way in which the Apostles were accustomed to incite Believers in Christ to the performance of their duties. They did not tell them, "You must do this or that, or you will be punished. You must do this and then you shall obtain a reward for it." They never cracked the whip of the Law in the ears of the child of God. They knew the difference between the man who was actuated by sordid motives and the fear of punishment—and the newborn man who is moved by more sublime motives, namely, motives that touch his heart, that move his regenerated nature and that compel him, out of affection, to do the will of Him that sent him. Hence the address, here, is not, "Be content, or else God will take away what you have," but, "Be content and have nothing to do with covetousness, for He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

The promise is made the argument for the precept! Obedience is enforced by a Covenant blessing. He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." What then? Shall I be discontented and covetous? No! But for the very reason that He has made, by His promise, my very safety absolute and unconditional, assuring me, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"—for that reason I will keep covetousness and every other evil thing out of my conversation and will seek to walk contentedly and happy in the Presence of my God! See, Brothers and Sisters, this Gospel motive. It is a Free Grace argument. It is not a weapon taken from the arsenal of Mount Sinai, but taken from the region of the Cross and from the council chamber of the Covenant of Love!

Another thing in the text to which I would call your notice is this—that an Inspired Apostle who might very well have used his own original words, nevertheless, in this case, as indeed in many others, quotes the Old Testament. "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Behold, then, the value of Holy Scripture! If an Inspired man quotes the text as of Divine authority, much more should we so regard it, who are with-

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opponent, it would always be well for us to take our weapon from the grand old book and come down with, "He has said." Oh, there is nothing like this for force and power! *We* may think a thing, but what of that? Our opinions are but of little worth. General authority and universal opinion may sustain it, but what of that? The world has been more frequently wrong than right and public opinion is a fickle thing. But "*He* has said," that is to say, God has said—immutable truth and eternal fidelity have said God, who made heaven and earth, and who changes not, though nations melt like the hoar frost of the morning—God who always lives when hills, mountains and this round world and everything upon it shall have passed away—"*He* has said!" Oh, the power there is in this, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you"! So, then, let us be much in searching the Scriptures, much in feeding upon them, much in diving into their innermost depths—and then afterwards much in the habit of quoting them, using them as arguments for the defense of the truths of God, as weapons against error and as reasons to call us to the path of duty and to pursue it!

But now to come to the promise, itself, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." I shall call your attention, first of all, to—

I. THE REMARKABLE CHARACTER OF THIS PROMISE.

Is it not an amazing fact that while *others leave us and forsake us, that God never does?* It is to each one of His redeemed people that He says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." How often do men play false and forsake those whom they call their friends when those friends fall into *poverty*? Ah, the tragedies of some of these cruel forsakings! May you never know them! These so-called friends knew their friends when that suit of black was new, but how sadly their eyesight fails them, now it is turned to a rusty brown! They knew them extremely well when once a week they sat with their legs under their table and shared their generous hospitality—but they know them not, now that they knock at their door and crave help in a time of need!

Matters have changed altogether and friends that once were cherished are now forgotten. In fact, the man almost pities himself to think that he should have been so unfortunate to have a friend who has come down so and he has no pity for his friend because he is so much occupied in pitying himself! In hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of cases, as soon as the gold has gone, the pretended love has gone! And when the dwelling has been changed from the mansion to the cottage, the friendship, which once promised to last forever, has suddenly disappeared!

But, brothers and sisters, God will never leave us on account of poverty! However low we may be brought, there it always stands—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Scant may be your board. You may have hard work to provide things honest in the sight of all men. You may

sometimes have to look and look again—and wonder by what straits you will be enabled to escape out of your present difficulty. But when all friends have turned their backs and when acquaintances have fallen from you like leaves in autumn, He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Then beneath His bounty you shall find a shelter! And when these other hands are shut, His hands shall still be outstretched in loving-kindness and tender mercy to help and deliver the soul of the needy!

Sometimes, and very often, too, men lose all their friends if they fall into any *temporary disgrace*. They may really have done no wrong—they may even have done right— but public opinion may condemn the course they took, or slander may be propagated which casts them into the shade! And then men suddenly grow forgetful. They do not know the man—how should they? He is not the same man—to them at any rate—and as the world gives him the cold shoulder, his friends serve him the same. The old proverb, "The devil take the hindmost," seems to be generally the custom with our friends when we get into seeming disgrace! They are all off, seeing who can run away first, for they fear that they shall be left to share in our dishonor. But it is never so with our God. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." You may be put into the dungeon, like Paul and Silas, but God will make you sing there, even at midnight! You may be set in the stocks, but even there God will cause you to greatly rejoice! You may be cast into the fiery furnace, but He will tread the flames with you! You may be so dishonored that men shall treat you as they did God's only Son—and lift you up upon the cross of shame and put you to death—but you shall never ask, "Why have You forsaken me?" Your Lord said it when He bore your guilt, but *you* shall never need to say it, for your guilt is put away forever and Jehovah will stand by you in all your dishonor! And let me say here that there is never a child in the family that is dearer to the great Father than the child that is suffering shame and contempt from others! He loves them dearest when they suffer reproach for His sake! These are nearer to His heart than any other and He bids them rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be their reward in heaven if thus they bear and endure for His name! "I will never leave you, My persecuted one! I will pour such joy into your heart that you shall forget all the dishonor. I will send an angel to minister to you. Yes, I will, Myself, be with you and you shall rejoice in My salvation while your heart is glad and calm in the midst of the tumult and the strife around."

Blessed be God, all the shame and spitting that men can put upon us can never put our God away, for, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Alas, sad is it for human nature that we must say it—how many have been forsaken when they have been no longer able to *minister*

to the pleasure and comfort of those who admired them while they profited by them! Some are thus thrown aside just as men throw away household stuff that is worn out and is of no further use. Depend upon it, men will not forsake us while they can get anything out of us! But when there is no longer anything to profit by, when the poor woman becomes so decrepit that she can scarcely move from her bed to her chair, when the man becomes so laid aside by accident or is so weak that he cannot take his place in the great march of life—then he is like the soldiers in Napoleon's march—he drops out of the line to die and thousands either march over him, or if they are a little more merciful, march by and around him! But few are those who will stop to care for such and attend to them. How often are the incurable forsaken and left! But He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." If we should get so old that we cannot serve the Church of God, even by a single word. If we should become so sick that we are only a burden to those of our house who have to nurse us. If we should grow so feeble that we could not lift our hand to our lip, yet the eternal love of Jehovah would not have diminished, no, not so much as by a single jot towards the souls whom He had loved from before the foundation of the world! However low your condition, you shall find God's love is always underneath for your uplifting! However weak you are, His strength shall be revealed in the everlasting arms that will not permit you to sink into disaster and your soul into hell. This, then, is a very precious text! Others may forsake us for different reasons—too many to be mentioned now—but He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Well, then, let the rest go! If the Lord Jehovah stands at our right hand, we can well afford to see the backs of all our friends, for we shall find friends enough in the triune God whom we delight to serve!

Again, this is a very remarkable promise if we *think of our own conduct towards God*. "He has said, I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you*." And have not we often said the same to Him? We were like Peter—we felt we did love our Savior—we were sure we did and we did not, could not believe that *we* could ever be so false or so faithless as to forsake *Him*. We almost longed for some temptation to prove how true we would be! We felt very vexed with other professors, that they should prove so untrue! We felt in our heart that we could not do like that and that we would stand firm under any imaginable pressure! But what became of us, my brothers and sisters? Charge your memories a moment. Did the rooster that accused Peter never accuse you? Did you never deny your Lord and Master and, at last, hearing the warning voice, go out and weep bitterly because you had forgotten Him—He whom you had declared so solemnly you would never forsake? Oh, yes, I fear we, many and many a time, have said, "I will never leave You, nor forsake You," and yet under some sarcasm, some ridicule, or some pressing trial, we have been like

the children of Ephraim and, though armed and carrying bows, we have turned our back in the day of battle! If your voice has never denied Christ, has your heart ever done so? If your tongue has remained silent, has not your soul sometimes gone back to the old flesh-pots of Egypt and said, "I would gladly find comfort once again where I did find it with my old companions and in the old ways"? Ah, well, as you think of this—how unkindly and ungenerously you have treated your Lord—let this text stand out in bold relief, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Although you have often forgotten Him, yet, His loving-kindness changes not! Though you have been fickle, He has been firm! Though you have sometimes believed Him not, yet He has remained faithful—glory be to His name!

Again, this promise is a very remarkable one if we notice how *it overrides all the suggestions that might arise from a mere view of strict and severe justice*. It might be said, "Surely a child of God might justly be forsaken. He might so sin against God that it would only be just to leave him utterly to himself." Now, I am free to grant that a child of God might do so, no, that *all* the children of God do so and that God would be just if He acted upon the stern principle of His law to forsake His children as soon as ever they were converted, for it is not long after their conversion that they sin! And that sin is a special kind of treason against God. He would be just even if He cast them away! But what I desire to enforce is this—that the promise is remarkable because it makes no kind of provision for this in any sort of degree and under no imaginable circumstances! It does not say, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you if"—as certain brethren are prone to put it—"if—you do not forsake Me." Nor does it say, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you if you do such-and-such and such-and-such." It is an absolute promise without any perhapses, ifs, buts, conditions, or promises! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

He that believes in Jesus shall never be so left of God as to fall finally from grace! He shall never be so deserted as to give up his God, for his God will never give him up so far as to let him give up his confidence, or his hope, or his love, or his trust! The Lord, even our God, holds us with His strong right hand and we shall not be moved! And even if we sin—sweet thought!—"If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Over the heads of all our sins and iniquities, this promise sounds like a sweet silver bell, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Now, there are some that would make licentiousness out of this and go into sin, but in doing so they prove themselves not to be the children of God! They show at once that they know nothing of the matter, for the genuine child of God, when he has a promise which is unconditional,

finds holiness in it. Being moved by gratitude, he needs no buts, ifs, conditions, racks and scourges in order to do right. He is ruled by love, not by fear! He is governed by a holy gratitude which becomes a stronger bond to sacred obedience than any other bond that could be invented! Hence to the child of God, the knowledge that God will not leave nor forsake him, never suggests the thought of plunging into sin! He were an awful monster, indeed, if he did any such thing, but he hates it and he says—

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

Observe, then, how remarkable is the promise—so contrary to the manner of men, so contrary to our own conduct and so absolute and unconditional, that it is, indeed, marvelous that such a word should be on record. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I cannot leave this part of the subject without remarking that such a promise as this seems to me that *it makes a clean sweep of every suggestion to the child of God to be depressed in mind*. You tell me you do not feel, just now, as you did some time ago—you are not anything like so earnest and lively in the divine ways.

When a believer is in this state, it is sometimes suggested to him that doubtless he is not a Christian at all—and that he must go back altogether to Egypt in order to get gospel liberty. This is foolishness! But this promise comes in and says to him, "God has not left you, nor forsaken you." Whatever may be your present state of thought and feeling, however low you may have fallen, the eternal God is still faithful! He has not forgotten you! Go to Him now—ask for reviving and refreshing, for He will surely give them to you. Conscience will, perhaps, say to some child of God tonight—indeed, I hope it will—"There has been much today in business that has not been what it should have been, and as you look back upon the day, you will see much to mourn over." And then, perhaps, conscience will add, "Therefore God will leave you." Now, if you come to believe that, you will live worse tomorrow than today! And the next day still worse! But if you can answer, "No, He has said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you,'" and can go with child-like confidence to your God and confess the sins of the day and begin again washing once more in the precious fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, tomorrow there will be a better day! The joy of the Lord will be your strength against the sin and your confidence in your Father's immutable affection will inspire you with zeal to trample down your temptations! Perhaps the devil may be injecting into your soul tonight all sorts of strange things—that God has quite forsaken you and that He will be gracious no more to you and other lies of that kind. But

He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," and if you can get hold of this, it will be a sufficient refutation of all the suggestions of your own fear and of the infernal power! No, Satan! I will cast myself upon the precious blood of Jesus! And if God should take all my property away, yet He has not left me, nor forsaken me! I am sure of that! And if my spirit sinks so low that I dare not look up, yet still He has said He has not left me, and He never will! If my sins should roll over me like a big billow and my conscience should cry out against me—and I should feel no rest and no peace—yet still I will hold on to Jesus, sink or swim, for He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And let God be true and every man and every devil—and even my own conscience—prove a liar sooner than God's Word should for a moment be placed in doubt!

We now pass on to ponder upon—

II. THE REMARKABLE COMFORT CONTAINED IN THIS PROMISE.

See how it abounds! I note, first, *its constancy*. "I will *never* leave you, nor forsake you." That is, not for a day, not for an hour, not for a minute! There are no breaks in the divine love. God does not depart from His people to return to them, by-and-by, but He assures, "I will never, no never, leave you." Perhaps that dear child of yours that is sick is soon to die. Well, God will not leave you in the moment when she is taken from you. Possibly that dear one who is now your comfort and delight, your husband, may get sick and it will be a terrible stroke for you to be visited with, but, "I will never leave you, not even for an instant! Then in that trying time you shall prove the power and solace of My presence."

Perhaps, businessman, that great commercial project, that great transaction of yours may prove to be a losing one—that bill may be dishonored, you may come to bankruptcy without any fault on your part but—"I will never leave you nor forsake you." Yes, you may have to go to Australia and you may greatly dread the leaving your native land, but even then, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It may be you may be so misrepresented as to become suspected by those whom you love best and you may be even put out of the Church of God without any fault but entirely through error. Well, but then, even then, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" not even for a minute! Oh, brothers and sisters, what would be the consequences if the Lord left us for one quarter of an hour? I solemnly believe that if God were to leave His people even on their knees for twenty minutes, they would be brought to the deepest hell! But He will not leave them, even there! And if it were dangerous to leave them on their knees alone, how much more so in the market or in business amidst enemies—seeking to catch them in their speech and deed! But He will never for a moment leave His people nor forsake them! He will be at all times, at all hours, at all seasons, in all days of emergency at their right hand and they shall not be moved!

I notice in the promise, next to constancy, *endurance*. As there shall be no breaks in God's love for His own, so there shall be no end to it. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Yes it may not be desirable to live to extreme old age when infirmities may abound and all strength may decay, but if you should reach it, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It certainly is a painful thing—that last stroke to pass to the throne of God—but, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." There shall never be a time when the Lord will cast away one of His people! He shall never grow weary of them. He has espoused them unto Himself—married them—taken them into eternal union with Himself! And let the ages revolve as they may and time change as it will, God will never leave or forsake His people! Comfort yourselves, therefore, with the confidence of the endurance as well as the constancy of this love!

We are most pleased, however, with *the fullness of the promise*. The text means, manifestly means, from its connection, a great deal more than it says. We are told not to be covetous. Why? Why should we be covetous? God has said He will never leave us and if we have Him, we possess all things! Who has need to be covetous when all things are his and God is his? We are told to be contented—not to seek to hoard up so much for the future—because God has provided for the future in the very promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." God guarantees to His servants that they shall have enough! Well, let that guarantee prevent both covetousness and discontent! How shall this promise apply to temporal things? "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" does not look, at first sight, as if it had anything to do with our ordinary expenses. But according to the text it has, for we are told not to be covetous, but to be content with such things as we have. So then, the text applies to the ordinary workingman, to the merchant, to every Christian even in his money matters as well as in his soul matters! "I will not leave you, even in these." He that does not let a sparrow fall to the ground without His permission, will not let His children want! If they should, for a little time, be in need, that shall work their lasting good—they shall dwell in the land and verily they shall be fed! The fullness that lies in the promise is perfectly unbounded. When God says He will be with His servants, He means this, "My wisdom shall be with them to guide them. My love shall be with them to cheer them. My Spirit shall be with them to sanctify them. My power shall be with them to defend them. My everlasting might shall be put forth on their behalf so that they may not fail nor be discouraged." To have God with you were better than to have an army of ten thousand men! And a host of friends were not equal to that one name—the name of Jehovah—for He is a host in Himself! When God is with a man, He is not there asleep, negligent, indifferent—regardless in his time of suffering—but He is there intensely sympathizing, bearing the trouble, helping and sustaining the sufferer and, in due time—His own

good time—delivering him in triumph! Oh, precious word of heartening promise! Plunge into it, for it is a sea without a bottom! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Better still, perhaps, in the promise is *the certain truth of it*. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you " has been proven by God's saints in all the ages that are past. Turn to the pages of your Bibles and see if ever a man was ashamed that put his trust in Christ! See if he that wrestled with the invisible God was ever confounded. Has not the Lord stayed with His people at all hazards—broken the necks of kings and scattered empires like chaff before the wind sooner than that one of His faithful ones should come to ruin?

It has been so even in your own experience. You, too, have found the text to be true. You have gone through fire and through water, but He has never left you nor forsaken you! Your vessel scarcely had enough water to stay off the bottom, but though she had almost grated on the gravel, yet she has kept afloat and though, perhaps, you have been wrecked, yet you have come safely to shore. You have lost much, you say, but you have been a gainer by your loss and where you are today you are by eternal mercy and covenant grace—and you could not well be in a better position than God has put you goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life up till now and you are obliged to confess it and to say—

"Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise."

So fear not, now that at this particular season God is about to alter His previous dispensation! Out with them, poor Little-Faith! Away with your doubts! Put away those black suspicions! He is a God that changes not and, having helped you until now, He will help you even to the end! Why how true this must be! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." How can God forsake that which has cost Him so much already? He has given His Son's blood to redeem us and His Spirit's power to renew us—and if He were to leave undone the work which He has begun—why a tower has been commenced and He has not been able to finish it! A man who has spent much money upon one enterprise will spend yet more to finish it because of what he has already spent. Now God will not lose the work of Christ and the precious blood of His Son—having begun, He will certainly carry on even to the end! Besides this—God cannot leave His people because He calls them His children—and how could He leave His child? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you." Even when the son has dishonored his father's name and lost his own character, that father's love still holds on and still follows that child with tears of sorrow, but still with faithfulness and truth. And God will not cast away His own begotten sons whom He has begotten

again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Beloved, Christ is married to His people and, therefore, how can He leave them? He says, "As a young man rejoices over his bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." And will He leave them to whom He is knit by so near and dear, so tender and affectionate a union? It cannot be! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Now, if He did leave His people, what would it be? It would be giving up the whole quarrel between Himself and Satan! It is in His people's hearts that the great battle is being fought out between good and evil. To give them up would be to give up the battleground to His great enemy—and what laughter there would be in the vaults of hell! What mockery in the halls of pandemonium if it could be said, "God has forsaken His people! Given up His elect! Suffered His redeemed to perish! Cast away His regenerate and forsaken the souls that trusted Him!" The very thought of it is blasphemy! Far, far from us, let us put it away. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I cannot enlarge further upon the promise and need not do so because it opens up itself, or rather God the Holy Spirit will open it up to you if you sit awhile in your chamber and meditate upon it. I do not know of a richer text or one more full of consolation. It is a long skein of the truth of God—unwind it. It is a precious granary as full as Joseph crammed the granaries of Egypt! Open the door and feed to the fullest—there will be no fear of your ever exhausting it! "For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Now the third thing to be noticed concerning this promise is—

III. THE REMARKABLE EFFECTS THAT SUCH A PROMISE SHOULD PRODUCE.

Surely the first blessed fruit of such a glorious promise should be *perfect contentment*. It is said to be hard to be content. I have the pleasure of knowing some brothers and sisters who I am sure are perfectly content. They even say so and I think without the slightest mental reservation that they have not an unfulfilled wish or desire so far as this world goes. They have all that heart could wish. And yet these are not the richest people in the world and they are not persons who are much to be envied for their mere external circumstances—yet they are perfectly content. The fact is that the grace of God makes the people of God to sing sweetly where other people would murmur! They are satisfied where others would find easy ground for discontent. But how easy it is—how easy it must be for a man to be content when he knows that God has promised to be with him in all circumstances and at all times! Surely if anything could be a kind of conservatory—a hot-house in which to grow the delicate plant of contentment to perfection—it must be this full belief that high or low, rich or poor, well or sick, God has said, "I will never leave, nor forsake you." Surely it was this that made Bunyan's Pilgrim sing in the Valley of Humiliation—

"He that is down need fear no fall.
He that is low no pride—
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

Christian did thereby say that he was content whether he had little or much, and that he left everything in his lot to his God. Oh, get then, my friends, my text fully into your souls and keep it there as marrow and fatness—and you will be content!

Well, then, in the next place, *it will cure your covetousness*. A man does not need to go on scraping and to use that muck-rake forever when he knows, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It was not a bad argument which one used with Alexander when he said to him, "When are you going to enjoy yourself fully?" Alexander did not answer the question but the philosopher said, "What are you going to do next?" "First we shall conquer Greece." "Yes, and then will you rest?" "No, we shall then attack Asia Minor." "And when you have conquered that, I suppose you will rest?" "No, we shall then take Persia." "And when you have overcome Persia, what then?" "We shall march to India." "And when you have taken India, what then?" "Why, then we shall sit down and make ourselves merry." "Well " said the philosopher, "I think we had better begin before we go to Greece, or Persia, or Asia Minor, or any of them." And truly so it would be as well for us to be content with that moderate income which God gives us. Let us enjoy what God bestows upon us now in gratitude to Him and give ourselves up to His service lest, perhaps, in seeking more, we become spiritually poorer while literally richer—and become less content with the great load on our back than we have today, when we have enough and no more. It is a sweet quietus to covetousness when God says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

And, beloved, what a promise this is *to make a man confident in his God*. In his works, in his sufferings, in his enterprises—what a stay of soul is here!

I know what it is to fall back upon this promise, sometimes, to keep from depression of spirit and to find reviving in it. Perhaps you may suppose that those of us who are always before the public and are speaking concerning the blessed promises of God, never have any moments of downcastings and never any times of heart-breaking, but you are quite mistaken! We may have passed through all this, perhaps, that we may know how to say a word in season to any who are now passing through similar experiences. With many enterprises upon my hands, far too great for my own unaided strength, I am often driven to fall flat upon the promise of my God, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." If I feel that any scheme has been of my own devising and that I seek my own honor in it, I know it must come to the ground and rightly

so! But when I can prove that God has thrust it upon me and that I am moved by a divine impulse and not by my own monitions and wishes, then how can my God forsake me? How can He lie, however weak I may be? How is it possible for Him to send His servant out to battle and not succor him with reinforcements in the day when the battle goes bad? God is not David when he put Uriah in the front and then left him that he might die. He will never put any of His servants forward and then desert them! Dear brothers and sisters, if the Lord shall call some of you even to things you cannot do, He will give you strength enough to do them! And if He should push you still forward till your difficulties increase and your burdens become heavy as your days, your strength shall be and you shall go on with the tramp of soldiers with the indomitable spirit of men who have tried and trusted the naked arm of the eternal God! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Then what does it matter? Though all the world were against you, you could shake all the world as Samson shook the lion and tore him as a kid! If God is for you, who can be against you? Though earth and hell and all their crew come against you and should combine together, yet if the God of Jacob stood at your back, you would thresh them as though they were but wheat and winnow them as though they were but chaff—and the wind would carry them away! Oh, roll this promise under your tongue as a sweet morsel!

How I wish that it belonged to you all! Oh, that every one of you had a share in it! But some of you, alas, have never fled to Jesus. Oh that you would do so! Whoever trusts Him for pardon by His atoning sacrifice is saved! To look to the great Substitute and depend upon Him for salvation—this gives salvation—and then come the promises that belong to the saved!

The Lord in His infinite mercy bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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SOUL-THRESHING
NO. 3388

A SERMON
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"For the black cumin are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cumin, but the black cumin are beaten out with a stick and the cumin with a rod. Bread flour must be ground; therefore he does not thresh it forever, nor break it with his cartwheel, nor bruise it with his horsemen." Isaiah 28:27, 28.

THE art of farming was taught to man by God. He would have starved while he was discovering it, so the Lord, when He sent him out of the Garden of Eden, gave him a measure of elementary instruction in agriculture, even as the prophet puts it, "His God did instruct him to discretion and did teach him." God has taught man to plow, to break the clods, to sow the different kinds of grain and to thresh out the different orders of seeds.

The Eastern farmer could not thresh by machinery as we do, but still, he was ingenious and discreet in that operation. Sometimes a heavy instrument was dragged over the corn to tear out the grain. This is what is intended in the first clause by the "threshing instrument," as also in that passage, "I have made you a sharp threshing instrument having teeth." When the corn-drag was not used, they often turned the heavy solid wheel of a country cart over the straw. This is alluded to in the next sentence—"Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin." They also had flails not very unlike our own, and then for still smaller seeds, such as dill and cummin, they used a simple staff or a slender switch. "The black cummin are beaten out with a stick and the cummin with a rod."

This is not the time or place to give a dissertation upon threshing. We find every information upon that subject in proper books, but the meaning of the illustration is this—that as God has taught farmers to distinguish between different kinds of grain in the threshing, so does He, in His infinite wisdom, deal discreetly with different sorts of men. He does not try us all alike, seeing we are differently constituted. He does not pass us all through the same agony of conviction—we are not all, to the same extent, threshed with terrors. He does not give us all to endure the same family or bodily affliction. One escapes with only being beaten with a rod, while another feels as it were the feet of horses in his heavy tribulations!

Our subject is just this: *Threshing.* All kinds of seeds need it. *All sorts of men need it.* Secondly, *the threshing is done with discretion.* And thirdly, *the threshing will not last forever,* for so the second verse of the

text says, "Bread flour must be ground and, therefore, he does not thresh it forever, nor break it with his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen." First, then—

I. WE ALL NEED THRESHING.

Some have a foolish conceit of themselves that they have no sin—but they deceive themselves and the truth of God is not in them. The best of men are men at the best and, being men, they are not perfect but are still compassed about with infirmity. What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff?

About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. All is not grain that lies upon the threshing floor. All is not grain even in those golden sheaves which have so joyfully been brought into our garner. Even the wheat is joined to the straw which was necessary to it at one time. About the kernel of the wheat, the husk is wrapped and this still clings to it even when it lies upon the threshing floor. About the holiest of men there is something superfluous, something which must be removed. We either sin by omission or by trespass. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion we are faulty. If we escape one error, we usually glide into its opposite. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it—or if not, we become proud after it is over. If sin is shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke. They are so thoroughly in the water that they do not know that is rains. So far as my own observation goes, I have found no man whom the old divines would have called perfectly perfect—the absolutely all-round man is a being whom I expect to see in heaven, but not in this poor fallen world! We all need such cleansing and purging as the threshing floor is intended to work for us.

Now, *threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk*. Of course, if it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. There would be no necessity for a staff or a rod, much less for the feet of horses or the wheel of a cart to separate it. But there's the rub—our soul not only lies in the dust, but "cleaves" to it. There is a fearful intimacy between fallen human nature and the evil which is in the world—and this compact is not soon broken. In our hearts we hate every false way and yet we sorrowfully confess, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Sometimes when our spirit cries out most ardently after God, a holy will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not! Flesh and blood have tendencies and weaknesses which if not sinful in themselves, yet run in that direction. Appetites need but slight excitement to germinate into lusts. It is not easy for us to forget our own kindred and our father's house even when the king does most greatly desire our beauty. Our alien nature remembers Egypt and the flesh-pots while yet the manna is in our mouths! We were all born in the house of evil and some of us were nursed upon the lap of iniquity so that our first companionships were among the heirs of wrath! That which was bred in the bone is hard to get out of the flesh. Threshing is used to loosen our hold of earthly things

and break us away from evil. This needs a divine hand and nothing but the grace of God can make the threshing effectual. Something is done by threshing when the soul ceases to be bound up with its sin and sin is no longer pleasurable or satisfactory. Still, as the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated together from the husk, so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil and abhor all iniquity. When we shake right out of the straw and have nothing further to do with sin, then the flail will lie quiet. It has taken a good deal of threshing to bring some of us anywhere near that mark! And I am afraid many more heavy blows will be struck before we shall reach the total separation! From a certain sort of sins we are very easily separated by the grace of God early in our spiritual life, but when those are gone, another layer of evils comes into sight and the work has to be repeated. The complete removal of our connection with sin is a work demanding the divine skill and power of the Holy Spirit and by Him only will it be accomplished.

Threshing becomes necessary for the sake of our usefulness, for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. We can only honor God and bless men by being holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. O corn of the Lord's threshing floor, you must be beaten and bruised, or perish as a worthless heap! Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction.

Unless thus severed from sin, we cannot be gathered into the garner. God's pure wheat must not be defiled by an admixture of chaff. There shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defiles, therefore every sort of imperfection must come away from us by some means or other before we can enter into the state of eternal blessedness and perfection. Yes, even here we cannot have true fellowship with the Father unless we are daily delivered from sin.

Perhaps some of us today are lying up on the threshing floor suffering from the blows of chastisement. What then? Why, let us rejoice therein, for *this testifies to our value in the sight of God*. If the wheat were to cry out and say, "The great drag has gone over me and, therefore, the farmer has no care for me, " we should instantly reply, "The farmer does not pass the corn-drag over the darner or the nettles—it is only over the precious wheat that he turns his cartwheel or the feet of his oxen. Because he esteems the wheat, therefore he deals sternly with it and spares it not." Judge not, O believer, that God hates you because He afflicts you! But interpret truly and see that He honors you by every stroke which He lays upon you. Thus says the Lord, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Because a full Atonement has been made by the Lord Jesus for all His people's sins, therefore He will not punish us as a *judge*—but because we are His dear children—therefore He will chastise us as a father! In love He corrects His own children that He may perfect them in His own image and make them partakers of His holiness. Is it not written, "I will bring them under the rod of the covenant"? Has He

not said, "I have refined you, but not with silver. I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction"? Therefore do not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the feeling of the flesh, but judge according to faith—and understand that as threshing is a testimony to the value of the wheat, so affliction is a token of God's delight in His people!

Remember, however, that as threshing is a sign of the impurity of the wheat, so is *affliction an indication of the present imperfection of the Christian*. If you were no more connected with evil, you would be no more corrected with sorrow. The sound of a flail is never heard in heaven, for it is not the threshing floor of the imperfect, but the garner of the completely sanctified. The threshing instrument is, therefore, a humbling token and, as long as we feel it, we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, for it is clear that we are not yet free from the straw and the chaff of fallen nature.

On the other hand, the threshing instrument is *a prophecy of our future perfection*. We are undergoing from the hand of God a discipline which will not fail—we shall, by His prudence and wisdom, be delivered from the husk of sin. We are feeling the blows of the staff, but we are being effectually separated from the evil which has so long surrounded us and, for certain we shall one day be pure and perfect! Every tendency to sin shall be beaten off. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." If we, being evil, yet succeed with our children by our poor, imperfect chastening, how much more shall the Father of Spirits cause us to live unto Himself by His holy discipline? If the corn could know the necessary uses of the flail, it would invite the thresher to his work! And since we know whereunto tribulation tends, let us glory in it and yield ourselves with cheerfulness to its processes! We need threshing—the threshing proves our value in God's sight! And while it marks our imperfection, it secures our ultimate cleansing! In the next place I would remark that—

II. GOD'S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION, "for the black cummin are not threshed with a threshing instrument." The poor little black cummin, a kind of small seed used for flavoring cakes, were not crushed out with a heavy drag, for by such rough usage they would have been broken up and spoiled. "Neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cummin." This little seed, perhaps the caraway, would have been ground by so great a weight—it would have been preposterous to treat it in that rough manner! The black cummin were soon removed from the stalks by being "beaten out with a staff." And the cummin needed nothing but a touch of a rod. For tender seeds, the farmer uses gentle means, but for the hardier grains he reserves the sterner processes. Let us think of this as it conveys a valuable spiritual lesson.

Reflect, my brothers and sisters, that your threshing and mine *are in God's hands*. Our chastening is not left to servants; much less to enemies—"we're chastened by the Lord!" The great farmer, Himself, personally bids the laborers do this and that, for they know not the time or the way except as divine wisdom shall direct—they would turn the wheel upon the cummin, or attempt to thresh wheat with a stick! I have

seen God's servants trying both these follies—they have crushed the weak and tender and they have dealt with partiality and softness with those who needed to be sternly rebuked! How roughly some ministers, some elders, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls! Yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave His chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity and preserve His own from being destroyed thereby! How glad I am of this, for there are many, nowadays, who would grind the tender ones to powder if they could!

As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also He has not left us in the power of the devil; Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as black cummin. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn—"the Lord preserves the righteous." Not a stroke in providence is left to chance—the Lord ordains it and arranges the time, the force and the place of it. The divine decree leaves nothing uncertain! The jurisdiction of supreme love occupies itself with the smallest events of our daily lives! Whether we bear the teeth of the corn-drag, or men ride over our heads, or we endure the gentler touches of the divine hand—everything is by appointment and the appointment is fixed by infallible wisdom! Let this be a mine of comfort to the afflicted.

Next, remark that *the instruments used for our threshing are also chosen by the great farmer*. The Eastern farmer, according to the text, has several instruments—and so has our God. No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it. Indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly objectionable. We say, "I think I could bear anything but this sad trouble." We cry, "It was not an enemy! Then I could have borne it," and so on. Perhaps the tender cummin foolishly fancies that the horse hoofs would be a less terrible ordeal than the rod—and the black cummin might even prefer the wheel to the staff—but happily the matter is left to the choice of One who judges unerringly! What do you know about it, poor sufferer? How can you judge of what is good for you? "Ah," cries a mother, "I would not mind poverty, but to lose my darling child is too terrible!" Another laments, "I could have parted with all my wealth, but to be slandered cuts me to the quick." There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement. When I was at school with my uncle, for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it! Either it was too thin or too stout, and in consequence, I was threatened by the sufferers with punishment if I did not do better next time! I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened. You smile at my simile but you may also smile at yourself when you find yourself crying, "Any trouble but *this*, Lord; any affliction but this!" How idle it is to expect a pleasant trial, for it would then be no trial at all! Almost every really

useful medicine is unpleasant. Almost all effectual surgery is painful. No trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, yet it is the right trial and, none the less right because it is bitter!

Notice, too, that God not only selects the instruments, but *He chooses the place*. Farmers in the East have large threshing floors upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley—and upon these they turn horses and drags—but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement—and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the greater heaps upon the larger area. Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits. They are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing floor, but the process is none the less effectual. How foolish are we when we rebel against our Lord's appointment and speak as if we had a right to choose our own afflictions! "Should it be according to your mind?" Should a child select the rod? Should the grain appoint its own thresher? Are not these things to be left to a higher wisdom? Some complain of the time of their trial—it is hard to be crippled in youth or to be poor in age or to be widowed when your children are young. Yet in all this there is wisdom! A part of the skill of the physician may lie not only in writing a prescription but in arranging the hours at which the medicine shall be taken. One draught may be most useful in the morning and another may be more beneficial in the evening—and so the Lord knows when it is best for us to drink of the cup which He has prepared for us. I know a dear child of God who is enduring a severe trial in his old age and I would gladly screen him from it because of his feebleness, but our heavenly Father knows best and there we must leave it. The instrument of the threshing; the place, the measure, the time, the end are all appointed by infallible love!

It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The farmer is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. His wheel is not to grind, but to thresh. The horses' feet are not to break, but to separate. He intends to get the cummin out of its husk, but he will not turn a heavy drag upon it utterly to smash it up and destroy it. In the same way the Lord has a measure in all His chastening. Courage, tried friend, you shall be afflicted as you need, but not as you deserve! Tribulation shall come as you are able to bear it. As is the strength, such shall the affliction be—the wheat may feel the wheel, but the black cummin shall bear nothing heavier than a staff. No saint shall be tempted beyond the proper measure—and the limit is fixed by a tenderness which never deals a needless stroke!

It is very easy to talk like this in cool blood, but quite another thing to remember it when the flail is hammering you! Yet I have personally realized this truth upon the bed of pain and in the furnace of mental distress. I thank God at every remembrance of my afflictions. I did not doubt His wisdom, then, nor have I had any reason to question it since. Our great farmer understands how to divide us from the husk and He goes about His work in a way for which He deserves to be adored forever!

It is a pleasant thought that God's limit is one beyond which trials never go—

"If trials six are fixed for men
They shall not suffer seven.
If God appoints afflictions ten
They never can be eleven."

The old law ordained forty stripes save one, and in all our scourges there always comes in that, "save one." When the Lord multiplies our sorrows up to a hundred, it is because 99 failed to effect His purpose, but all the powers of earth and hell cannot give us one blow above the settled number! We shall never endure a superfluity of threshing. The Lord never sports with the feelings of His saints. "He does not afflict willingly," and so we may be sure He never gives an unnecessary blow.

The wisdom of the farmer in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which He sets a limit to our griefs. Some escape with little trouble and, perhaps, it is because they are frail and sensitive. The little garden seeds must not be beaten too heavily lest they be injured—those saints who bear about with them a delicate body must not be roughly handled nor shall they be. Possibly they also have a feeble mind and that which others would laugh at would be death to them—they shall be kept as the apple of the eye!

If you are free from tribulation, never ask for it! That would be a great folly. I met with a brother a little while ago who said that he was much perplexed because he had no trouble. I said, "Do not worry about *that,* but be happy while you may." Only a very strange child would beg to be flogged! Certain sweet and shining saints are of such a gentle spirit that the Lord does not expose them to the same treatment as He metes out to others—they do not need it and they could not bear it—why should they wish for it?

Others, again, are very heavily pressed, but what of that if they are a superior grain—a seed of larger usefulness intended for higher purposes? Let not such regret that they have to endure a heavier threshing since their use is greater. It is the bread corn that must go under the feet of the horseman and must feel the wheel of the cart—and so the most useful have to pass through the sternest processes. There is not one among us but what would say, "I could wish that I were Martin Luther, or that I could play as noble a part as he did." Yes, but in addition to the outward perils of his life, the inward experiences of that remarkable man were such as none of us would wish to feel! He was frequently tormented with Satanic temptations and driven to the verge of despair. At one hour he rode the whirlwind and the storm, master of the entire world, and then after days of fighting with the pope and the devil, he would go home to his bed and lie there broken-down and trembling! You see God's heroes only in the pulpit or in other public places—you know not what they are before God in secret. You do not know their inner life; otherwise you might discover that the bread corn is bruised and that those who are most useful in comforting others have to endure frequent sorrow,

themselves! Envy no man, for you do not know how he may have to be threshed to make him right and keep him so.

Brothers and sisters, we see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of His people! Let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children and if you have to rebuke your brother or sister in Christ, do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over the tender seed. Recollect that the cummin is beaten out with a stick and not crushed out with a wheel. Take a very light rod. Perhaps it would be as well if you had no rod at all, but left that work to wiser hands. Go and sow and leave your elders to thresh!

Next, let us firmly believe in God's discretion and be sure that He is doing the right thing by us. Let us not be anxious to be screened from affliction. When we ask that the cup may pass from us, let it be with a, "nevertheless not as I will." Best of all, let us freely part with our chaff. The likeliest way to escape the flail is to separate from the husk as quickly as possible. "Come you out from among them." Separate yourselves from sin and sinners, from the world and worldliness—and the process of threshing will all the sooner be completed! God make us wise in this matter! A word or two is all we can afford upon the third head, which is—

III. THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOREVER.

The threshing will not last all our days even here—"Bread flour must be ground, but He will not always be threshing it." Oh, no! "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you." "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Rejoice, you daughters of sorrow! Be comforted, you sons of grief! Have hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him who is the health of your countenance! The rain does not always fall, nor will the clouds always return. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the year round—for the most part the flail is idle. Bless the Lord O my soul! The Lord will yet bring home His banished ones.

Above all, tribulation will not last forever, for we shall soon be gone to another and better world. We shall soon be carried to the land where there are neither threshing floors nor corn-drags. I sometimes think I hear the herald calling me. His trumpet sounds, "Up and away! Boot and saddle! Up and away! Leave the camp and the battle and return in triumph." The night is far spent with some of you, but the morning comes. The daylight breaks above yon hills. The day is coming—the day that shall go no more down forever! Come eat your bread with joy and march onward with a merry heart, for the land which flows with milk and honey is but a little distance before you. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, abide the great farmer's will, and may the Lord glorify Himself in you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90; 119:21-32.

"The prayer of Moses, the man of God."

I think this Psalm has been very much misunderstood because the title has been forgotten. It is not a Psalm for us in its entirety—it cannot be read by the Christian and taken as it stands. It is a Psalm of Moses as far as Moses can get. It goes a long way, but there was a Joshua that lead the people into the promised land—and there is a Jesus who has "brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." That light shines through the gloomy haze of this dark Psalm. Please remember that Moses was a man peculiarly tried. We have never duly given weight to the afflictions of Moses. All the people that he brought out of Egypt, with two exceptions, died. And he saw most of them die—himself having the sentence of death in himself that he, like the rest, must not cross into the land of promise. So that with two millions or more of people round about him, that forty years he stood in the valley of the shadow of death—and with all the mercies that surrounded him, yet still he must have had continual sorrow of heart—all his old friends and companions passing away, one by one. It is a brave Psalm if you read it in that light—it is a grand specimen of heroic faith!

Verse 1. *Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* All Your saints abide in You. Your fiery cloudy pillar covers and protects us.

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* Oh, that is grand to feel that there is something stable—there is a rock that never crumbles—God from everlasting to everlasting the same! As for us, what are we?

3. *You turn man to destruction and say, Return you children of men.* A breath gave them life—a word makes them die.

4-6. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night. You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers.* We have seen this over and over again, as we shall see it yet again this year in the flourishing and the cutting down of the grass. But we forget it for ourselves. Too often we forget it for our companions—we think that they are immortal where all are mortal. Let us correct our estimate that we may somewhat correct our sorrows.

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled.* Which was true of that generation; they died because of God's anger, but we bless God—as many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are not under the divine anger—it is taken away. When it does fall upon us, it is as a father is angry with his children. It troubles and consumes us, but blessed be God, we usually walk in the light of His countenance and joy and rejoice therein. Let us value His mercy as we see the misery of His wrath!

8. *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.* That is true of you that know not God! Your sins are

always before His face, but it is not true of believers. You have cast all their sins behind Your back. God has forgotten the sins of His chosen according to His own promise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever." O blessed gospel! Moses cannot reach to that.

9. *For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.* "For all our days are passed away in Your wrath." So it was with those that were round about Moses, but our days are passed in God's goodness! They shall pass away in infinite love! "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

10. *The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.* Speaking of the mass of men, this is all that can be said of them. But as for the godly, where do they fly? They fly into His bosom who has loved them with an everlasting love! What is death but an open cage to bid us fly and build our happy nests on high? Blessed be God that we do fly away! Have not we often wished for it and said, "O that I had the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest"—that will come, by-and-by!

11. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.* As He is greatly to be reverenced, so is He greatly to be feared. But the Lord has said of His people, "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Blessed be His name.

12-14. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* Poor Israel was greatly afflicted. Those deaths in the wilderness made her a perpetual mourner! But Moses asks that God will return to His people cheer and encourage them and let the few days they have to live be bright with His presence.

15-17. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Your work appear unto Your servants and Your glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes the work of our hands establish it.*

PSALM 119:21-32.

21. *You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments.* Wherever there is pride in the heart, there is sure to be error in the life. A proud man is wrong to begin with and as long as he continues proud, he must be wrong. It is not possible for him to be right. God has rebuked him and God has cursed him. How wise it would be of him to be humble! Remember we shall have either to be humble or to be humbled—and it is much better to be humble than to have to come under the humbling dispensations of God's hand!

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt: for I have kept Your testimonies.* O Lord, do not suffer men to believe lies and slanders

against me, or if they do, let my conscience sustain my courage by the consciousness that I have kept Your testimonies.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me*. Had they nothing else to do but talk against God's servants? No, they sat down to do it with deliberation. "Princes also did sit and speak against me."

23. *But Your servant did*—"Go to law with them?" No, not so here. "But your servant got in the face and defended himself?" No, no! Look, you will not read those words. But, "Your servant was brokenhearted about it to have the great men of the earth speaking against him?" No, it is not so either. "But your servant did"—

23. *Meditate in Your statutes.* Is not that a very blessed and admirable way of enduring slander—simply to take your Bible and read a little more than usual? You will cure it so.

24. *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors*. Because I love them and delight in them. I submit my life to their guidance. I go to Your Book to ask what I shall do. I consult it as the oracle of God. I take my doubts and difficulties and dilemmas there and I find that they are all met. "Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors."

25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your word*. Ah, there is a note of sadness here. The Psalmist complains of himself. He found himself very sorrowful and he could not get out of the sorrow. Or he found himself very full of business cares and he could not get rid of them. "My soul cleaves to the dust"—as though it was stuck to the dust and the dust to it and could not rise. Then how sweet the prayer, "Quicken You me." "Did You not first make me of dust and will You not, at the last, quicken my mortal body out of the dust? Then, now, my Lord, quicken You me according to Your word." See, here is an evil complained of. He finds himself cleaving to the dust. Here is a remedy sought, "Quicken You me." And here is an argument pleaded with God—"according to Your word." There is a promise for it. Lord, fulfill Your word!

26. *I have declared my ways and You heard me: teach me Your statutes*. A confession had been made—"I have declared my ways." That confession had been accepted—"You heard me." Then a petition is offered—"Teach me Your statutes." "You see that I confess how wrong I was. Now give me grace that I may not go wrong again." May that be our spirit always!

27, 28. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works. My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen You me according unto Your word*. "I am poured out like water " says the Savior. "My heart is like wax. It is melted." It is the greatness of pain, the greatness of fear, the greatness of sorrow, till He seems to melt away in the fire like wax. "For heaviness " says He, "my soul melts. Then strengthen You, Me." Oh it is so sweet to turn to God when your soul is burdened—to look to Him and say—not, "deliver me." Observe that—the child of God is not so anxious to get rid of trouble as he is to know how to behave worthily under it! "Strengthen You, me, according to Your

Word." How he harps on that, "*according to Your word*." The child of God does not expect God to do otherwise than He has promised to do. And he is quite content if the Lord will act according to His Word, for well does our poet put it—

"What more can He say than to you He has said—
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

In this book dear brothers and sisters, whatever your trouble, there is a promise to meet it! If you lose a key and you send for the locksmith, as a general rule, somewhere in that bunch of keys, he has a key that will fit your lock. And so here is a bunch of keys and there is a key, here, that will exactly fit the lock of your trouble whatever it may be for God foresaw the circumstances of all His people and prepared a promise for every circumstance!

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your law graciously*. "Take away the evil, give me the good." "The way of lying." Oh it is a dreadful thing to get into that! There are some that have a way of doing it—some that do it naturally. Some that do it by implication. Some think it shrewd to deceive. "Remove from me the way of lying." If truth should be banished from all the world, it ought to find a shelter in the breasts of Christians! The Christian is forbidden to take an oath because there should never be any necessity for it. His word—his, "Yes yes"—his, "No no," should always be sufficient. Thank God it is where the grace of God is!

30, 31. *have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck into Your testimonies: O LORD put me not to shame*. Here is, first, choice—"I have chosen the way of truth." Here is his practically carrying it out—"Your judgments have I laid before me." Here is his perseverance in it—"I have stuck into Your testimonies." And then there is his prayer about it, "O Lord, put me not to shame." And it is a prayer which is sure to be answered! "Truth may be blamed but it cannot be shamed." Truth is God's daughter and He will take care of her. If you have chosen the way of truth, it is a way in which though some may censure and slander, your righteousness shall come forth in due time as the noonday!

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments when You shall enlarge my heart*. "When I get liberty of heart, then will I take as my choice Your ways." The Christian is never so much at liberty as when he is under law to Christ. He knows the difference between license and liberty. He has a liberty to do as he wills because he wills to do as God wills him to do—and herein lies the only freedom which we desire!

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THE SOUL'S AWAKENING
NO. 3389

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 1914,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."
John 5:25.

I SUPPOSE that when a pearl-fisher is at the bottom of the sea and has gathered his bag full of oysters, he will sometimes see other oysters lying about which he would be very, very glad to take up if he could. And I can imagine that when he has been safely taken into his boat and has put away what he gathered the first time, he will be rather anxious to descend again somewhere near that same spot to bring up those which he left behind. This, at least, is much like my own case. While reading the chapter, and preparing the sermon for this morning, I thought there were so many pearls in the text I could not say much about this particular verse so I felt inclined to return to the same spot at once to see if we might not fetch up some fresh gems!

Those of you who were present this morning will remember that we saw in the chapter a three-fold gradation of life-giving in the person of Christ. As here and there in the Old Testament dispensation, God had raised up some persons from the dead, so Christ, also, in the days of His flesh, had quickened whom He would—persons naturally dead He had restored to natural life. This is the first and, indeed, a very wonderful prerogative of live-giving for Christ to exercise to be able to raise Lazarus from the grave or to raise the young daughter of the ruler or to restore to the widow her departed son. The second form of life-giving is that described in the verse before us. He was constantly giving through His voice spiritual life to those who were spiritually dead. The third kind of life-giving we spoke of is that of the universal resurrection when all who are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall rise to judgment. It is to the second that we propose to direct our attention this evening—a form of life-giving which is going on now—not a matter of the past as was the raising of a few in Christ's day. Not a matter of the future as the coming resurrection is, but a matter of the present—not so apparent to the eye and to the ear as either of those mysteries, in so much that it is to a great extent invisible except to the man who is a participator in it, but just as real, just as miraculous and, in many senses, even more marvelous and divine! Christ is constantly raising the spiritually dead and giving them life. Oh that we may be enabled by

God's Spirit to open up this truth of God to your understanding and may it be applied to your hearts! Our first endeavor shall be to describe—

I. WHAT IT IS TO BE SPIRITUALLY DEAD.

"The hour is coming," says the Savior, "and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." What is it to be spiritually dead? You all know what it is for the body to be physically dead. The soul has departed and has left the body incapable, insensible, and unable to preserve itself. The soul was like salt to it—that being gone, it soon becomes putrid and obnoxious. A poor dead body is a most terrible and humiliating spectacle to see—especially to look upon it after it has been lying for a while in the grave. We have, most of us, heard what it is to be morally dead. It does not happen, I hope, to very many, but there are some who seem to be dead to all moral feeling of right and wrong between their fellow men—that is what I mean just now by morality. They have been so inured to theft, uncleanness, drunkenness and, some few even to murder, that when they have been arrested, convicted, imprisoned—nothing seemed to move them to repentance! Even the dread of the last terrible penalty of the law has not sufficed to bring from some of them any kind of emotion. Those who have been most earnest to arouse their conscience have felt the most painful conviction that their moral faculties were totally defunct. They have become callous, seared as with a hot iron. It is an awful spectacle to see a man morally dead—blind to reason, deaf to warning, numb to shame—thus morally dead. His passions raging without control, he becomes like some wild wolf of whom all the district is afraid! Like a raging lion going about in quest of prey whom every man dreads to encounter and whom some think it only right to slay. May none of us ever fall into such infamy! Alas, it might be! Step by step, little by little, men have become outcasts from society and found their lodging in the very lairs of corruption though they were born in better circumstances and trained with brighter prospects! May God grant we may never come to it ourselves!

But to be spiritually dead—what is that? It is something like these two, but I think it is somewhat different. I must describe spiritual death not in its essence, for that I cannot do, but in its outward signs. *Now observe a spiritually dead man.* He is not dead in any other respect. He walks abroad and sees the fields full of abundant harvests. At night-fall he looks up to the skies and marks the glorious scenery of night. By day he climbs the mountains, beholds the valleys beneath in all their smiling beauty and gazes upward at the golden sun above. God is to be seen in all these—God manifestly the creator, preserver and benefactor of mankind—but this man does not perceive Him. He sees no God. Perhaps he can stand like Byron under the shadow of Mont Blanc and write himself, "*Atheos*," without God where God is everywhere! Where God is in every breath of air, where God is in every flower beneath his feet, he sees not the footprints of the Almighty! He believes not in His secret Presence.

Is the great eternal first cause defunct, then, or is there no God? No, sirs, the man's perception of God is all gone and that is all that is gone! His power to realize spiritual things has failed or else his ears would hear the voice of God in the sounding tops of the pines! His eyes would see the name of God written in golden letters in the midnight sky! His every sense would perceive God and his inmost soul drink deep of God—but he is dead and, therefore, he cannot! Watch that man in the common events of providence. Many mercies have come to his store—there are happy children climbing his knee, his wife is in strong health and full of happiness—they have no need to look from where the next meal shall come. The stream of mercy flows hard by their door and this has been continued many years! They have long enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity! Now, all this comes from God, and health and strength are peculiarly His gifts. The power to get and the power to enjoy our earthly goods must both proceed from Him. But this man never sees God in it at all! He sometimes talks of luck and thinks himself a fortunate fellow. Luck, chance and fortune—these seem to be his deity! Though the hand of God, wide open and full of bounty, is so spread out that one might think a bat or an owl might see it, yet this man perceives it not! The man is dead to the perception of spiritual things that the great Master-Spirit, Himself, is not perceived when He comes near loaded with favors!

As it is in nature and as it is with the gifts of providence, so especially it is in anything like outward religion. The man attends a place of worship—it may be he repeats his creed, joins in a form of prayer, or possibly he drops in where simpler worship is adopted and what does he do? He sings as others sing! He bows his head as others do in prayer. He listens as others do to the preaching of the Word, but it is a heavy dull monotonous service to him! He wishes it were over. He sees nothing in it. If he had his way and custom did not bind him at all, he would never he found wasting his time in such unprofitable proceedings as he thinks them to be! He is like the mouse in church that thinks the Bibles and prayer books dry nibbling! He would rather be in the common ale-house, or at home reading novels, or walking out in the fields, or anywhere than in the place of worship! Yet others sitting by his side have found the most profound pleasure in those sacred engagements which have only brought weariness to him! Unlike him, they have been carried as on eagles' wings up to heaven! Their souls have been filled with joy and peace and they have said as they have retired, "Surely God was in this place and it was good to be here." Why is this? The things ministered and the man who ministered them were the same. Ah, the one was dead while the others lived! How shall the dead derive comfort? How shall the dead be charmed? How shall the dead be fed and instructed? God was in the sermon but the carnally-minded man, being dead, perceived Him not!

Nor, my dear friends, is this spiritual death merely a failure to recognize the being of God—it is equally seen in reference to the moral

obligations it involves. Man, by nature, is dead to the right and to the true, to the commandments of the Lord which enlighten the eyes and to the testimony of the Lord which makes wise the simple. He is probably alive to his obligations to his fellow men because he has a clear understanding of their obligations to him. He generally keeps himself within the bounds of law and decency, but his greater obligations to his creator—these cross not his mind—yet it is the very essence of rectitude and truth that He who made all things should be served by those He made and that He who sustains life in all His creatures should have honor from those creatures who owe their continued existence to Him! Why does the ungodly man not think of this? How is it he can live for 30 or 40 years sustained by God and yet never give to God the service of his heart—scarcely thinking about his God at all? How is it? Why, because the man is dead to spiritual obligations! It must be so or else he would lament that he had not met those obligations and begin to repent that he had transgressed the bounds that his Maker set. The man is dead, sirs—dead!

Further *the natural man is dead to eternal things*. How quick-eared he is to the things of time—how swift to perceive their value and in what haste to grasp them if he can! But ah, the eternal realities which God has revealed in Scripture the man neither cares to hear about them nor, hearing them, do they excite any desires within his spirit! Alas, my hearers, we have sometimes had to warn you of the judgment to come. We have had to take down the shrill-sounding trumpet and blow an alarm! We have had to tell you that there is a dreadful hell into which the wicked, dying impenitent, must be cast! How is it that men are not stirred by a theme so truthful and so dreadful? Because they are dead! They would be awake enough if they were afraid that their house should be on fire and that they, themselves, might be burned with the natural element! Yet the spiritual danger far more to be apprehended arouses them not—because they are dead to it. At other times it has been our delight to speak of heaven, to picture the pearly-gated city with all its azure brightness, with its bejeweled foundations and to talk of its inhabitants, all blessed forever, who walk in the light of their glorious King! And surely it would be enough to make the cold marble heart glow with warmth! But no, the thing moved not men. Some little joy of earth would whet their appetite far more quickly! It is because to the spiritual heaven revealed in Scripture men are altogether dead and care not for it! Oh sirs, 'tis sad, 'tis sad, 'tis very sad that to the fleeting shadows we should be wide awake but to that substantial truth of God we should be sound asleep—that after the poor gewgaws and child's bubbles of this mortal state, we should be all agog—but as to the solid joys and lasting pleasures of an eternal world, we show no desire! This again is a mark of spiritual death!

I must hurry on to mark a few more indications of this spiritual death. Prayer is one of the most blessed engagements and occupations of men

while they are out of heaven—to ask of the all-bountiful One the mercies which they need. But there are some here tonight who never pray—who never really ask of God what they require. They take the attitude of supplicants, perhaps as a matter of habit, but there they are like kneeling corpses! They do not pray—they are dead to prayer. Open this book, this holy Bible, before them. There was never such another—no angel ever gazed upon a page more rich with glory than this! This book it is that opens to us immortality and gives us the news of eternal love! Set the natural man down before it. It is to him a mere history or a dry book of dogmatic matters! He sees nothing in it that can charm him, nothing that can interest his spirit. The man is dead, sir! To the sightless eyeballs, the brightest jewels flash back no radiance. He is dead! Yes, to Christ, Himself, the man is dead for when He is preached—Christ, the Father's Son, the virgin's child, the condescending Savior, the ascending conqueror, the exalted King crowned with glory—why the people of God delight to hear of Him! To them the savor of Jesus' name is like ointment poured forth! But exhibit this Savior to the natural man and he perceives nothing! How could he? He is dead—dead in trespasses and sins! All the outward phenomena that you will discern in the best natural man indicate that whatever kind of light there may be in him, the light of God that deals with God, with the spirit-world, the world to come, is not there! He is unconscious of these! He has no fellowship with them. He is dead and a prey to corruption! When we have paused a minute we shall endeavor to describe—

II. THE WORD WHICH JESUS BRINGS TO THE DEAD.

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." Our Lord Jesus Christ is, in Scripture, especially in the gospel of John, called, "the Word." Here His voice is spoken of but what is a voice apart from the person that utters it? What is the Word which Jesus speaks by which dead men are quickened? Is not Jesus Christ, Himself, the Word of God to man? The distinct articulate manifestation of deity is Jesus Christ! Now, let me show you this. Jesus Christ came, once upon a time, from heaven. He condescended to become a baby, to be nursed in a manger, to hang on a woman's breast. He was God! What did that say—that child, that baby—human, yet divine? Why, it said this, "God has pity upon man and has not left him. He is about to establish an intimate relationship between Himself, the great and the glorious, and man, the weak and the pitiable—a union not at first between God and fully developed man, but between God and the baby, as if it should be said the weakest and feeblest of all that bear the name of manhood may take comfort, for God has come down and taken a baby's form into union with Himself!" That meant pity! It meant mercy! It meant fellowship and it meant hope to the race of man! To this end Jesus passed a life in the midst of all our sorrows, infirmities and took upon Himself our sickness!

And what did that mean? Why it meant *compassion*. A beautiful word, that—compassion—a united passion, a fellow-feeling, a kindred suffering! It seemed to say, "God is not indifferent to your woes. Oh, sons of men! You have fallen through your sins, but God pities you! God feels for you! He is no flinty-hearted Jupiter who sits serenely on his throne amidst the pains and agonies and eternal death of his creatures! No, but He has come down to you! He has taken upon Himself manhood, that He may suffer with man and let man see that He has not left him, but that He feels for him! And after He had lived a life of holiness which was, indeed, comparatively but a small part of His work, our Lord Jesus Christ *gave Himself up to die!* Into the garden He went and there the wrath of God was laid upon Him till that precious cluster was so crushed in the awful press of the divine wrath that great red drops of bloody sweat were distilled from every pore like the red juice from the cluster! He went to Pilate's hall, to Herod's tribunal, to be mocked and scourged and spat upon and, at last, in extreme agony He offered up His life on the accursed tree! What did He say to us then? He said this—"God is just. I come down to you poor mortal men and, taking upon Myself your nature and taking also your sins as your substitute, I have to suffer." Christ Jesus' suffering is a loud word from God to this effect, "I pity you men, but your sins I must punish. I cannot pass them by. If they are laid upon My Son, I must prostrate My Son beneath their load. I cannot wink at sin though it is laid upon the perfect substitute, for even there I must hunt it to the death! It is an accursed thing and must not be tolerated. I must stamp it out of My universe." This is God's Word. He says, "Justice as well as compassion; pity but pity consistent with severity." Moreover Jesus rose again from the dead and now He ever lives at the right hand of God and His Holy Spirit has come and animates, at this time, the preaching of the Word with divine energy! Christ now declares to us God's Word after this fashion, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Whoever will trust in the incarnate Son of God and fully rely upon the merits of His wondrous suffering shall be saved. God wills not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live! And everyone that will turn unto the living God and trust His Son to make propitiation, shall be saved from the damning power of sin and have everlasting life." Christ, the living One, is God's Word to us that we shall be delivered from the wrath to come if we trust in Him, even as He, Himself, was delivered when He rose again from the dead and ascended into glory!

My dear friends, the gospel which I preach again, tonight, is that which I have always preached and always will preach until I have a fear lest I should preach till you are almost nauseated with the repetition! Yet if it were so, I could not help it, for no other name do I dare to preach, nor is there any other foundation that I dare to lay and bid you build on it but this! Jesus Christ, the Son of God has come! Here on earth He lived and died and suffered for the sake of mankind. God is a God of love,

but He is also a God of justice. There is a way in which He can be just and yet tender to you. If you trust His dear Son, your sins shall not destroy you! Christ's sufferings shall stand instead of yours and you shall live! If you will now accept Christ; if you now will lean fully on Jesus; if you now will fling away both your love of sin, and your love of your own righteousness, and come and rest where God would have you rest, God shall be reconciled to you, and you shall be His child, and you shall live forever and ever! I must now close with third point—

III. THE MODE BY WHICH THIS WORD IS APPLIED.

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear." I have told you what they will hear. They will hear the Word of God! But who will speak it? Who is it that alone can speak it to purpose? Why—"When the dead shall hear *the voice of the Son of God,* they that hear shall live." Whenever any dead soul lives, it is through the Word, but it is not through the voice of the preacher. That is but an instrument and nothing more! The real voice that makes dead souls live is the voice of Christ Jesus! What, is it so? Does He actually speak to every soul that is saved? He does! I do not mean in fancy as though you heard voices in the air, but I mean that this Word which I have just now preached to you must come home to your heart and your conscience and be applied by the Holy Spirit so that you prove its power and feel its energy. Through the Holy Spirit, it is that the voice of Christ is heard in the soul! But while I speak to you thus, some will say, "What, then, can we do with sinners as we have not the voice that can raise them?" Why you can pluck your Master by the skirt and say to Him, "Good Lord, speak the Word! Speak the Word!" When I come into this pulpit, the prayer that rises to my heart always—I hope I can always say without guile—is this, "Lord be here to speak, Yourself, through me." I am persuaded that though I preach to dead sinners ten thousand years, never will one be saved by my voice. Why, then, do I preach to sinners knowing them to be dead? Because I am simply the instrument of Christ and He speaks through His voice with His own Spirit, which is as His voice, and the dead do hear and they are made to live—not without the instrumentality, not through the instrumentality, alone, but by the voice of Jesus Christ! I ask you, then, dear brothers and sisters who are alive to God, to pray that Jesus would speak while the preacher speaks. Be lifting up your hearts and silently crying—

"Oh, let the dead now hear Your voice!
Bid, Lord Your banished ones rejoice!
Their beauty this their glorious dress
Jesus the Lord our righteousness!"

What encouragement there is in this for you, my brothers and sisters! However feeble you may be in yourselves, yet if it is the voice of Christ you have to rely upon, what power there is in that! You may go to your class and say, "I cannot teach these troublesome boys and these inattentive girls! How can I hope to see them saved?" Ah but your Master

can speak through you and He can do what you cannot! Though it is true that old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon, he is not too strong for the mighty Savior whose voice does not merely speak to the living, but to the dead—and all who hear that voice shall live! Bend your ear, then, and bow down your heart! Attend to the voice of Christ seeing that thereby, alone, the dormant faculties can be quickened and a lively interest excited!

Yet while Christ speaks to the dead, *power is communicated to them that they may have it and use it, call it their own and exercise it.* "The dead *shall hear*," and do notice, "*They that hear shall live*." You must not imagine that man is passive in the matter. What does it say, "Draw us, " and we will be drawn? No, but, "Draw us *and we will run after You*." There comes an activity. I have heard some speak of faith and repentance as the gifts of the Holy Spirit; most truly so they are, but why speak of these gifts as though the sinner had nothing to do to repent and to believe? Always remember that it is *you* who must repent and believe. The Holy Spirit will not repent for you! What would He repent about? He never did wrong. And the Holy Spirit will not believe for you. What would He believe for? He is God, Himself! The fact is that the apostle has expressed it exactly when he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure." Christ gives the voice but the man hears. There is something done—there is a something to be received. It is no great act to hear a sound when it is made. It is no great act to receive mercy when it is presented. Yet the hearing is a miracle, for the dead hear! And the receiving by faith is a miracle, for none do this but those to whom it is given—yet it is done by man. Faith and repentance are gifts of God—the voice that saves is the voice of Christ but the point of personal salvation is reached when the man actively hears and receives the truth of God!

I pray you, then, my dear hearers, if you would be saved, be diligent in hearing the gospel! I would urge you to frequent those places of worship most where there is most of Christ preached. Do not seek after eloquence, oratory, gaudy periods or grotesque observations that might amuse you. You have something else to do on the Lord's Day besides being amused and having your ears tickled! There is a soul in you that will either be saved or lost—and this day is given you peculiarly that you may listen to the gospel which saves you! Hunt out the gospel in your locality! Follow it wherever you may hear it preached. I entreat you to hear it, but do not think that the mere hearing it with your outward ears will be enough! Alas, such a hearing may involve responsibility and bring you no blessing. I pray you ask the Lord as you go up to the house of prayer to open your inward ears to quicken you from your spiritual death and give you to derive profit. I do believe, my dear friends that few will miss a blessing who hear a gospel minister anxiously desiring to get a blessing. In these waters, men shall catch what they fish for! And if you seek earnestly after God's blessing, you shall find it! Thirst for it! Pant for

it! Long for it! You already have the beginning of it, for to desire grace is evidence that you have grace in a measure! And to earnestly seek Christ is already to have something from Christ—a foretaste of the feast they enjoy who find Him!

Ah, my dear friends, we keep on preaching and you keep on coming and going, Sunday after Sunday, but how is it with you? Are you saved or not? A man opens a shop for the sale of medicines and I will suppose them to have great medicinal virtue. There is a plague in the district and he asks himself, "Are these drugs, after all, what they profess to be?" If men keep on dying, he will, as an honest man, begin to get anxious and to enquire. And if he meets with persons who are talking of other things, he will say, "Nonsense! Put them aside a bit. I want to ask you about something of more importance. Are these drugs of mine true shots with which to do battle with the plague? Are these the weapons with which to chase away this horrible disease and avert the threat? Is the plague increasing in your street or is it dying out?" Oh I want to push these questions home to you tonight! I know I preach the Word of Christ. I am sure I have told you the gospel of His salvation. The voice of Christ I cannot imitate nor would I if I could. 'Tis His to use His own voice; His tongue and His tongue, only, is like a two-edged sword which can cut and cure, kill and heal at the same time! How is it with you? Are you saved? Are you awakened? Are you seeking? Are you finding? Or are you, after all, just hearing and hearing and hearing again and again to no purpose? Ah, I would to God that I were not the preacher to such as you and that you were not my hearers, for I cannot bear that I should be adding to your condemnation! That I should be hardening you—for so it must be—hardening your hearts with the very truth of God that ought to soften them! I pray the Master bring you into a different state and give you to lay hold on these things, for if they are not true, it is time I had done preaching them! But if they are true, it is time you had received them! If they are not true, it is time that these services were given over, for they are awful farces! But if this book is true and Christ's gospel is true, it is time that you did not make farces of them but that you turned unto God with full purpose of heart!

The Lord save you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 2; MATTHEW 11:1-6.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.* What a great change, then, has taken place in the people of God! It is described as being similar to the resurrection of the dead. And do you suppose that this took place without a man's knowing it? Do you think that we are wrong in stating a wide difference between the quickened ones and the dead? I think not. In fact, those addresses made to

congregations in which there is no distinction made between the living and the dead in Zion are deceptive. And prayers that are meant to suit congregations of mingled character—where some are dead in sin and others alive unto God—are, on the very face of them, an attempt at an impossibility! As great as is the distinction between the dead in their graves and living men that walk the streets, so great is the difference between the regenerate and unregenerate! Do you think that in reading this verse, dear friends, you could apply it to yourself, "and you, and you, and you, has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins"?

2. *Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.* Those who are not saved have a life of evil. They are dead towards God, but they are alive towards Satan. An unregenerate man's heart is Satan's workshop in which he forges divers devices of evil—the spirit that works in the children of disobedience!

3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.* No difference by nature between the brightest saint in the Church of God and the blackest sinner of the camp of Satan—all fallen, all desperately depraved at our very original! What wonders of grace are those who are saved! Let them taken care that they never fail in praising that grace of God!

4-7. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ (by grace you are saved). 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.* God's great objective is to display His grace—to let all the universe know what a gracious God He is—therefore did He pitch upon us who were dead in sin even as others! Therefore does He quicken us and, therefore, having quickened us, does He go on to raise us up from one point to another until He makes us sit with Christ upon His throne! Oh beloved, if all the ages are to learn the grace of God from His dealings towards us, let us learn it and let us talk much of it and exult much in it! Who is a gracious God like unto our God?

8. *For by grace are you saved;* not by your own merits! Not by priestcraft! Not by your own free will. "By grace are you saved." This is the great summary of the gospel! Let this doctrine be preached and we shall soon see the errors of Rome fly before it! "By grace are you saved."

8. *Through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* Neither the faith nor the salvation are of ourselves. They are both the gifts of divine love—both worked in us by the divine Spirit. It is the gift of God!

9, 10. *Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship.* No good man can boast of his works because those works are the work of God. Without Him, we could not perform good works! So that even when we possess them, we are His workmanship. Shall the

vessel on the wheel exalt itself as if it made itself? No, the potter must have the credit for all the skill of the making of the vessel. And if, therefore, there shall be in our character marks and lines of grace and truth—unto God be the glory for them, for we are His workmanship!

10-12. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, being in time past, Gentiles in the flesh who are called Uncircumcision by those who are called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. That at the time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world.* This is where our fathers were. This is where we are by nature! We have not got even as far as the Jew who had a covenant according to the flesh to plead and had received the sign of it while yet a child! But we—we were altogether foreigners and aliens from the Most High!

13. *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ*. Oh, rejoice in this! You far-off ones made near, lift up your hearts in thankfulness for what the Lord Jesus has done for you by His blood— made near by the blood of Christ!

14. *For He is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.* Christ is peace between Jew and Gentile—peace between both of them and their God. I have heard of a poor bricklayer who when at work on a scaffold, fell from a great height and was taken up and was dying. They sent for a minister of the gospel who began addressing him in such terms as this, "My dear man, you are evidently near to die and therefore I exhort you to make your peace with God." He knew but very little of it compared with what the poor bricklayer knew, for opening his eyes, he said, "Make my peace with God, sir? That I could not do, but I thank God it was made for me in the everlasting covenant of grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ 1,800 years ago! I have no peace to make!" It is peace already made! And we have but to accept it, for He is our peace who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of partition between us!

15, 16. *Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man so making peace. And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby.* No enmity now should exist between Jew and Gentile. None does exist between the believer and his God. The enmity is dead forever, for Christ has died.

17, 18. *And came and preached peace to you which were afar of and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father*. In this verse you have the whole Trinity and all the Trinity in unity are necessary for prayer. "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

19. *Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.* How blessedly grace annihilates all national distinction! Cowper spoke of nations which, like kindred drops, would have melted into one if they had not been divided by a range of mountains or intersected by a narrower faith. But in the gospel of grace we do melt into one! Whoever loves the Lord is a co-patriot with all who love Him! Distinctions of nationality sweetly sink when we come to know the Savior. We are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God!

MATTHEW 11:1-6.

Verses 1-5. *And it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison, the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And they said unto Him, Are You He that should come or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk. The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* These were Christ's seals and proofs—John needed not to seek others. These were the very works of which prophecy had said would be the marks of the Messiah! If, then these marks were found in Him, He left John and his disciples to draw the inference that He was, indeed, the One who was to come! Christ is always best known by His works, and especially in His people; He is seen in their lives. There are two great precepts for the conquest of the world for Christ—the first is preach the gospel—but the second is live the gospel and if we do not live the gospel, we shall not succeed in preaching the gospel! In fact, those members of our churches who do not *live* the gospel undo through all the week what the preacher of the gospel endeavors to do on the Lord's Day! It is a fine thing to preach with your mouth, but the best thing in the world is to preach with your feet and with your hands—in your walk and in your work! And if you are enabled to do this, the people will be able to say very little against the preaching of the gospel when they see the result of it in those who accept it! God grant that we may be all preachers in some way or another!

6. *And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*

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HOPING IN GOD'S MERCY
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A SERMON
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"Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy."
Psalm 33:18.

BY THE TERM, "the fear of God," we understand in Holy Scripture the whole of true religion. We do not mean by the fear of God, the *slavish* fear which trembles in God's presence, as the poor slave trembles under his master's lash, but that child-like fear which fears to offend, which fears to be led into error—a reverential fear such as the angels have when they veil their faces with their wings and cast their crowns before the glorious throne of God—to have such a fear of God before our eyes as to restrain our wandering passions, to keep our hands from doing evil and our tongues from speaking the thing which is not right—to have such a fear of God that we feel as though we were in God's presence and act, and speak, and think as though we fully recognized the eye that reads the secrets of the heart. When we read, therefore, that the eye of the Lord is upon "them that fear Him," we are to understand that He has gracious regard towards those who delight in Him, who worship Him and are His children.

But the part of the text to which I call your special attention now is that expression, "Those who hope in His mercy." This is intended to be of the same reach and compass as the first. Those who fear God are the same persons as those who hope in His mercy and this is very consoling, for to hope in God's mercy seems to be but a very small evidence of divine grace and yet it seems to be a very sure sign, for those who hope in God's mercy are the same persons who are said to fear Him. They are the same persons as are described as being His saved ones, His children—the truly godly ones.

I hope there are many here who can say, "Well, I do hope in His mercy. If I cannot get farther, yet I can get as far as that—my hope is fixed in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ." Then, dear friend, may the words we shall speak be comforting to you! And may you rejoice that the Lord considers you and has an eye of favor towards you, now, and will have forever!

I am always very anxious about those who have the beginnings of grace in them. I think I would go a long way out of my way to carry one of the lambs in my bosom and to try to cherish one that was ready to die

with doubt. But, on the other hand, I am always fearful of giving any encouragement to those who are on a wrong foundation. Like the ancient mariner who was afraid of the whirlpool on the one hand and the rocks on the other, and found it difficult to steer along the middle of the channel, so may I find it tonight. I would not grieve a trembling soul. I would not bolster up a self-deceived one. Far be it from these lips to ever become a rod for the backs of God's weak ones! And equally far be it from this tongue to speak so as to put pillows under men's arms and under their heads wherewith they may go to sleep and sleep themselves into hell!

In trying, therefore, to avoid two evils, I shall begin by speaking about a hope in God's mercy which is false—and then I shall say a little about a sound hope in God's mercy. To begin, then, at the beginning—

I. THERE IS A FALSE HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY AGAINST WHICH WE EARNESTLY WARN YOU.

"I do not believe," says a man, "that God will ever cast me into hell, *for God Almighty is very merciful*." "What will become of you when you die?" said one man to another. "I do not know," was the answer, "and I do not think much about it because I know that God is a very good God—and I do not think that He will cast the souls of men into hell, as bigots say, and cause them to be forever banished from His presence." Now, friend, if this is your hope, I beseech you to be rid of it, for it is a deadly viper and though you nurse and cherish it in your bosom, it will sting you to your destruction, for do you not know that the God of the Bible is a God of justice, as well as a God of mercy? Though He is infinitely good, yet He Himself has said, "I will by no means spare the guilty."

What do you think of this text, "The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God"? Does that seem as if God would not punish sin? "The soul that sins, it shall die." What do you think of that? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Does that seem like an effeminate and sentimental kindness that will wink at sin? If you are to be saved by the general mercy of God, then let me tell you that this blessed book of God is all a mistake and deception, for there are no such teachings here, as those of which you dream. Besides, you know better than this—I appeal to your own conscience, *you know better than this!*

We tell people that if they allow filth to accumulate and sewage to become stagnant; if they deprive themselves of fresh air and neglect ventilation and cleanliness, when the fever comes it will be sure to make them its prey! And they might say, "Oh, we don't believe that! God is merciful and we do not believe that He will ever let the fever take people off by scores—we shall not think of clearing away the dung heaps, or cleaning out the sewers, or getting the windows made to open! We tell you it is all bigoted trash! God will not let the people die of fever!" But they do die of fever and the very people who neglect the laws of health are taken away, God's mercy notwithstanding! And so it will be with you. Sin

is like a dung heap—your iniquities are like those fever-breeding drains and your soul will die of the disease which springs from the sin which you so much love. And all your talk about God's mercy you will find to be a dream! If a man shall go to sea tomorrow in a leaky ship which takes in the water while she is going down the Thames, they may keep the pumps always going, but yet the water gets ahead of the men. You say to the man, "Sir, if you go out into the sea—it is only a matter of time—your ship will go down. She is not seaworthy—she will never get down the Channel." "Oh," he says, "don't tell me that—God Almighty is merciful and He will never let a poor fellow drown! I believe that my ship will float and I mean to run the risk of it, for I believe in God's mercy." Down the vessel goes—and the wretch on board of her and all her passengers are drowned! And what do we say? Do we say that God is not merciful? No! But we say that some men are insane—and so say we of you! If you trust in that general mercy of God, but will not obey the gospel and put from you the way of salvation which God has ordained, you will perish! And on your own head will be your blood since you have foolishly perverted the goodness of God to your own destruction!

In other persons, this belief in the mercy of God takes the shape of saying, "*Well, I have always done my best*. I have been a respectable person ever since I can recall—I bring up my children as well as I can—I send them to the Sunday school. I always pay my debts. I don't swear and I am not a gin drinker—I don't know that I have any particular vice. On the contrary, I am always ready and happy to help the poor and to say a good word for religion and so on. It is true that I am not all I ought to be—no doubt we are all sinners and there is a great deal that is wrong and imperfect about us—though I don't know what it is in particular. But anyhow, God is merciful and what with what I have done and what I have not done—and God's mercy to make up for all the shortcomings—I do not doubt but what it will be all right with me at the last." Now this, again, is a deceit and a refuge of lies—a bowing wall and a tottering fence which will fall on those who take shelter behind it!

You have read of Nebuchadnezzar's image which was part iron and part clay. Had it been all iron, it might have stood, but being part clay, by-and-by, the whole image was broken in pieces! Such is your religion! You trust in part to the mercy of God—I will call that the iron. But you trust in part to your own so-called good works—that is the clay and down your image will fall before long! Why, you are like the man in the proverb who tries to sit on two stools—and you know what becomes of him! Besides, how foolish you are to try to yoke yourselves to God to help Him! Go and yoke a gnat with an archangel, or find a worm and put it side by side with leviathan—and hope that they will plow the stormy deep together! Then think of Christ helping you and of you helping Christ. Absurd! If you are to be saved by works, then it must be all of

works! But if by grace, it must be all of grace, for the two will no more mix than fire and water. They are two contrary principles! Therefore, give up the delusion! A hope in God's mercy which is twisted and inter-twisted with a hope in your own works is certainly vain!

But we know others who say, "Well said, Mr. Preacher! I know better than that—I shall never fall into that snare. I trust in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ and in Him, alone! I expect the mercy of God to come to me through Christ and I depend upon only Him." Well, you talk very well. You talk very well. I must go home with you! But the man does not want me to go home with him. I do not know where he means to turn in—perhaps once or twice on the road before he gets to his house! When he gets home, we shall ask his wife what sort of a man he is. She will then be compelled to say, "Well, sir, he is a great saint on Sunday, but he is a great devil all the rest of the week! He can talk a horse's head off about religion, but, sir, there is no genuine living in the matter—no real, righteous, godly action in him."

Did you never read of Mr. Talkative in *The Pilgrim's Progress?* How he could tell out all the doctrines! How he could prate about them! He had them all at his fingertips and at his tongue's tip, too, but they never operated on his life. They never affected and sweetened his character. He was just as big a rogue as though Christ had never lived—and just as graceless a villain as though he had never heard of the Savior at all! Now, sirs—any kind of faith in Christ which does not change your life is the faith of devils! And it will take you where devils are, but will never take you to heaven! Men are not saved by their works—we declare that plainly enough—but if faith does not *produce* good works, it is a dead faith and it leaves you a dead soul to become corrupt and to be cast out from the sight of the Most High. A genuine hope in God's mercy, according to the teaching of Scripture, purifies a man. "He that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." If you have a hope in the mercy of God which lets you do as the ungodly do with impunity, then, sir, you have about your neck a millstone that will sink you lower than the lowest hell! God deliver you from such a delusion!

I fear there are still others who have a bad hope—a hope which will not save them—because they trust in the mercy of God that they shall be all right at the last, *though they have neglected all those things which make men right*. For instance, the Word of God says, "You must be born-again." These men have never been born-again, but yet they trust in the mercy of God! Sir, what right have you to expect any mercy when God has no mercy, except that which He shows to men by giving them new hearts and right spirits? You say you trust in the mercy of God and yet you have no repentance—and do you think God will forgive the man who not only does not love, but refuses and despises His Son, the only Savior? I tell you there will have to be a new Bible written before this can be true! And there will have to be a new gospel—yes—and a new God,

too, for the God of the Bible never will, nor can wink at sin! Unless He makes you sick of sin, He must be sick of you! And until you hate your iniquities with a perfect hatred, there cannot be mercy in God's heart to you, for you go on in your iniquities!

You tell me you trust in God, and yet there has been no change of life in you! Oh, sirs! Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven! The first thing God's mercy will do for you will be to turn your face in the opposite direction.

If mercy shall ever come to you, it will make you a new creation, give you new loves, new hates. But if you have not conversion, what have you to do with mercy? The mercy of God, wherever it comes, makes men pray. You never bend your knees and yet you say you trust in God's mercy? Oh, sir, you are deceiving your own soul!

The mercy of God makes a man love Christ and makes him seek to be like Christ. You have no love to Christ and no desire to be like He. Then, sir, I pray you give up that falsehood, which has been, up to now, as a soft pillow for your head, and believe me that the mercy of God cannot come in the way in which you expect it!

I wish I might have torn away, from some now present, their false dependences, but I am afraid they are too dear to them for my hands to do it! May God's Holy Spirit deliver men from all false confidences in God's mercy! But now a much more pleasant part of my work comes before me, namely—

II. TO DESCRIBE A SOUND HOPE IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

I shall say of it, first, that *a soundly hopeful soul feels its need of mercy*. It does not talk about sin, but it feels it. It does not talk about mercy, but it groans after it. Beware of superficial religion! I think if I might only say two things before I die, one out of the two would be—*beware of surface godliness*. Take care of the paint, the tinsel, the varnish, the oil! There must be in us a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness! There must be in us the broken heart and the contrite spirit. I like revivals—far be it from me to ever say a word against them—but I have seen scores of men jump into religion just as men jump into a bath—and then jump out, again, just as quickly because they have not felt their deep need of Christ.

You may depend upon it, there is no sound bottom to a man's religion unless he begins with a broken heart. And that religion that does not begin with a deep sense of sin, and a thorough heartbreaking conviction, is a repentance that will have to be repented of before long. God save us from it! If you are to have a hope in mercy, you must know that it is mercy! You must know that you need it as mercy! You must be clean divorced from every confidence except in mercy! You must come to this that it must be grace first, last, and midst—grace everywhere—otherwise

it will never serve or save such a poor helpless castaway as you are. A sound hope, then, is one in which a man knows that he needs mercy!

Another mark of a sound hope is that he clearly perceives that mercy can only come to him through the Mediator—Christ Jesus. The Word of God tells us that there is but one door of grace, and that is Christ! But one foundation for a genuine hope—and that foundation is Christ! God's mercy is infinite, but it always flows to men through the golden channel of Jesus Christ, His Son! Soul, it will be a good thing for you when you have done with the idea of hunting after mercy here, there and everywhere, and when you come to Christ, and Christ alone, for it! God swears by Himself that there shall be no hope for man out of Christ, but that there shall be hope for them there. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Against all other confidences God thunders out that famous sentence, "He that believes not, in condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." When you are tied up to Christ; when every other door is shut and barred, and fastened up with iron padlocks; when every cistern is broken; and when every hope is shipwrecked, and the last broken board has been swallowed up in the whirlpool of despair—if your soul then clings to Christ—you have a sound hope, a hope that can never let you go!

Yet again. That *hope which leads a man to desire to be conformed to God's plan of mercy* is a sound hope. I mean this. There may be someone here who says, "I fear I am not regenerated. You condemned me just now, sir, but oh, I wish I were! I am afraid I am not converted, but oh, that God in His grace would convert me! You spoke of repentance—I fear I do not repent as I should, but oh, I wish that I could repent! Oh, that my heart would break! I feel because I do not feel and I sigh because I cannot sigh!" Ah, poor soul, if you are willing to be what God would make you to be, then is your hope, though not yet a perfect one, yet good so far as it goes! If you will now come and cast yourself on Christ, though you have no regeneration apparent to yourself, yet you shall be saved! If you will come as you are, with all your iniquities about you, without any repentance that you can discern. If you will come empty-handed and cast yourself on what Jesus did upon the cross and is still doing in pleading before the throne of God, you shall never perish, but you shall be saved!

Oh, it is a precious gospel which we have to preach to needy sinners! A full Christ for empty sinners! A free Christ for sinners that are enslaved! But you must be willing to be this—you must be willing to be renewed in the spirit of your mind—and if you can honestly say that you are so willing and that you will now close in with Christ, then yours is the hope upon which God looks with the kindest regard!

I might thus continue to describe this hope, but I shall not detain you longer upon that point. I do hope and trust that I have many here who are beginning to have a little hope in Christ. Oh, it is a mercy to see the first streaks of daylight, for the sun is rising. It is pleasing to see that

first dewdrop, the first tear that comes from a troubled heart. I think the Lord is about to bring water out of the flinty rock! I feel so grateful when I meet with some in distress. Sometimes after the service there is somebody that wants to see us. They are so distracted and depressed—and they think they are giving us so much trouble, but oh, it is blessed trouble! There is not one of us but would be glad to sit up all night, I am sure, to see many such troubled ones, if we might but speak a word to them by which they might find joy and peace!

Now, I want to take the text like a very sweet and dainty morsel and just drop it into the mouths of you who are ready to faint for it—"The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy." Though you have got no further than that, yet you have God's eye upon you and you may be greatly comforted! But we must go to another point with great brevity. We have in this house of worship, here and now—

III. SOME WHO ARE AFRAID TO HOPE IN GOD.

They unconsciously desire to trust Him in His own appointed way. They understand it, but they are afraid to do it. Now, my beloved fellow sinner, I beseech you to cast yourself upon Christ and to trust in Him! And remember that *God cannot lie*. It is blasphemy to suppose that God can say a thing that is not true. Now, He has promised, over and over again, to save everyone that trusts in Christ. And if He does not save you, well, then_____. You know what I mean. Oh, but God cannot lie! Therefore, come and cast yourself upon His faithful promise! Well do I remember when that text, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," stayed my fainting soul for months together, before I actually had joy and peace. Do you call upon God in prayer? Do you trust in God, however little it may be? Then you shall be saved! Believe it. If any soul here feels himself to be as black as night—imagines himself to be out of the list of the hopeful—yet if he can but come and cast himself upon what Christ did when He died upon the cross for sinners, God must cease to be God before that soul can perish! Hope then, hope then, sinner, for God cannot lie!

Then hope, again, because *God has saved and is still saving others!* We have not ceased to have conversions in this church. I am sometimes afraid that they are not as many as they once were, but they do come and come frequently, too, to the praise of God's grace! Now, if others are saved when they trust Christ, why should not you be? Who has clambered up into the secret chambers of heaven and found that your name is not written in the roll of election? Who? Why, no one has done so! Then, since Christ bids you come and trust Him—come and trust Him! Oh, that you might come, tonight, and as He has accepted others, He will accept you, for He says, "He that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

I beseech you have hope, again, because *it is to God's honor to save sinners*. If it were dishonoring to Christ to receive the ungodly, you might stand in doubt. But since it is one of the jewels in His crown which gladdens His heart and brings Him honor in the sight of glorified saints in heaven, depend upon it, He is not hard to be persuaded! Christ is quite as willing to save as ever the most longing sinner can be to be saved! It is His delight to give of His liberality, to dispense of His bounty to those who need! Have hope then. The generous character of Christ should encourage you!

Have hope, I say, once more, *because of what Christ endured upon the cross*. See Him dying in unutterable pains and pangs! See His hands and feet distilling founts of blood! See His body racked with agonies that cannot be described! His soul, meanwhile, ground and crushed beneath the wheels of divine wrath against the sin He bore for our sakes! His whole being is a mass of suffering in our place! Now, why all this miraculous and sacrificial endurance? Surely that bearing all this, we might be spared and never know its anguish! Oh, when my soul looks to Christ, it seems to see that nothing is impossible with such an atonement! No sin is too black for that blood to wash and cleanse away! It cannot be that beneath heaven there can be a sinner so abominable that the blood of Christ cannot make a full atonement for all his sins! Come, then! Come, then—'tis the voice of Jesus that calls you! Come, you chief of sinners! Come now, before yet another sun shall dawn! Come and find in Jesus' wounds a refuge from the stormy blast that shall soon come to sweep the unconverted into condemnation!

Yet must we still pass on and, only for a moment, linger upon—

IV. THE COMFORT WHICH THE TEXT AFFORDS TO THOSE WHO HAVE A HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY.

It says that the eye of the Lord is upon them. There is a blessing for you. Nobody else's eye is upon you. You have got up to London, away from parents and friends, and nobody looks after you now. You have come into this big tabernacle and I am sorry to find that there are still some of our members who do not look after strangers—do not look after souls as they ought to do—and you have been coming here and nobody has spoken to you. Now, let me read the text, and I need not say any more, "*The eye of the Lord* is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy." God sees you and you do not need anybody else! Be content that God knows all about it. You are up in the top gallery there, somewhere behind where my eye cannot reach you—and hardly my voice—but "the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy." And mark that eye, as well as being an eye of observation, is also an eye of pity! God has compassion on you! He stands side by side with you—that bleeding Son of God—and in your groans He groans, and in your griefs He takes a share. He has compassion on you—yes, and He will help you—and even now He loves

you. The eye with which He looks upon you is a Father's eye and when a father sees his child broken-hearted, he says to himself, "I can stand anything but this. My child's tears overcome me, overmaster me. I cannot see him sick and sad and sobbing, without pitying him."

Oh, some of you have sons and daughters of your own! And when you see that sick child of yours crying with pain, why, you would spend all you have, if you could but get some doctor that would make him well again. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And that means all those who hope in His mercy, for they are put, as I told you, in the text in the same category as those who fear Him. Your Father's eye is upon you and He pities those tears, sighs and cries of yours—He loves you and He means to bless you!

Now, I want to say to you believers here, something similar to what I said at this morning's service. I wish that all the members of this church were more on the alert after those who are beginning to hope in God's mercy. Some are. I cannot find much fault with you. You are my joy and crown—and sometimes I boast—I hope in no wrong way, of the earnestness of many in this church! But make me not ashamed of this, my boasting, as some might well do, who are cold and careless about the souls of men. Do you know there are lost ones round about you, lost ones about whom you seem to have no concern, though, according to Christ's law, they are your brethren, your neighbors? What a sad, sad story it is that we have lately been seeing in the newspapers every day—a gentleman lost, rewards offered, the police searching—but he is lost! A hat found. Some sort of clue given. But he is lost! How must the parent's hearts break! How must friends, day by day, feel life a burden till they know what has become of him! He is lost! He is lost! Ah, but the loss of a man for this life, though it is a very heavy blow, is nothing compared with the loss of a soul! Ah, mother, you have got a child who is lost. Ah, husband, you have got a wife who is lost! Ah, wife, your husband is lost! And have you never advertised for him? Have you never sought him? God knows where he is! Have you never gone to God and said, "Seek him and find him"? Have you never enlisted the great soul-finder's aid, who came into the world, "to seek and to save that which was lost"?

Are you quite careless about it, whether your servants, your neighbors, your husbands, your wives, your children shall be lost forever or not? Then am I ashamed of you! And angels are ashamed of you! And God's living people are ashamed of you! And Christ Himself may well be ashamed of you, that you have no care for those whom you ought to love!

I do trust that this is not the case with us, but that we do anxiously desire that lost ones should be saved. Come, then, I want you to look up those who are beginning to seek Christ! And when you have done that, and have found them out, then I want you to seek after those who are *not* seeking Christ. I do not think there ought to be a person come within

these four walls, into these galleries, or on the area, but shall be attacked, for his good, by someone or other, before the whole assembly is scattered! Surely you might find a way of putting some question, kindly and affectionately—not rudely—but respectfully, so that if I have been the means in any way of making a little impression on their souls, you may follow it up by personal dealing! If I have put in the nail of the truth of God a little way, you may give it a heavy blow and drive it in deeper—and God grant that the Holy Spirit may clinch the nail so that it may never be drawn out!

Oh, my hearers, we must have you saved! We cannot go on much longer with some of you as you are because you yourselves will not go on much longer as you are! We have been rather free for the last few weeks from deaths and departures, but do not think that we shall be free from them long! In the ordinary course of nature, as those who calculate the averages of human life will tell you, a certain proportion of a great multitude like this—some 6,000 and more—must soon die. There is no chance about whether we shall or not—*we must*. Now, who shall it be? Who shall stand before his God? To whose ears will the ringing trumpet of the archangel sound? For whom shall the funeral bell be tolled? Over whom shall it be said, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust"? Since we know not to whom the summons may come, may this be the command to all, "Consider your ways and prepare to meet your God." Oh, that you might prepare this very night, and seek unto the Lord with full purpose of heart! And this is the promise, "He that seeks, finds; he that asks, receives and to him that knocks, it shall be opened."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 139.

This is a Psalm we can never read too often. It will be to us one of the greatest safeguards against sin if we have its teaching constantly before our mind's eyes. The teaching of this Psalm is simply this, "You, God, see me."

Verse 1. *O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.* You have looked into my most secret part. The most intricate labyrinths of my spirit are all observed by You. You have not searched and yet been unable to discover the secret of my nature, but You have searched me and known me. Your search has been an efficient one. You have read the secrets of my soul.

2. *You know my sitting down and my rising up, You understand my thoughts afar off.* It is a common enough thing to sit down and to rise up and I, myself, oftentimes scarcely know why I do the one or the other, but You know and understand all. "You understand my thoughts afar off." My heart forms a thought that never comes to a word or an act, but

You not only perceive it, but You translate it! You understand my thoughts.

3. *You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways*. I am surrounded by You as by a ring of observers.

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether*. Not only the words on my tongue, but those that slumber in my tongue, the unspoken words, You know them perfectly and altogether!

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me*. Your presence amounts to actual contact. You not only see, but touch, like the physician who does not merely look at the wound, but by-and-by comes to probe it. So do You probe my wounds and see the deeps of my sins.

6, 7. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me! It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence?* It seems as if the first impulse was to fly away from a God whose attributes were so lofty. 'Twas but a transient impression, yet David words it so.

8, 10. *If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me*. How swift he supposes his flight to be, as swift as the light, for he borrows the wings of the morning—and yet the hand of God was controlling his destiny even then! As Watts rhymes it—

"If mounted on the morning ray,
I fly beyond the western sea,
Your swifter hand should first arrive,
And there arrest Your fugitive."

11, 12. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* For, mystery of mysteries, and more wondrous still, You not only observe, but You always have observed! And You have not only observed my well-formed being and my visible life, but before I had a being, You did observe what I should be, and when I was yet in embryo, Your all-observing eyes watched me.

13-16. *For You have possessed my reins: You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Your works: and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hid from You when I was made in secret and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being not perfect, and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* In so vivid a manner does our holy poet sing of the omniscience of

God with regard to our creation. Before we had breath He formed and fashioned us.

17. *How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* How many thoughts has God towards us! We cannot count them! And how kind are those thoughts—we cannot estimate them—how precious, how great!

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.* I suppose I had finished the tale, had counted up all Your thoughts to me and then fell asleep. I should then but begin to count again, for You continue to thrust out mercies from Your hands. My God, my numeration shall never overtake You, much less my gratitude, and the service that is Your due!

19. *Surely You will slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.* "Surely"—here is a solemn inference from the omniscience of God—"surely You will slay the wicked, O God." You have seen their wickedness. They have committed their wickedness in Your presence. You will need no witnesses, no jury! You are all in one! Are You not the Judge of all the earth, and shall You not do right? "Surely You will destroy the wicked, O God." Then I desire not to have those in my company who are condemned criminals and are soon to be executed. "Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men." See how this sets David upon purging his company and keeping himself clean in his associations, since God, who sees all, and will surely punish, would hold it to be evil on the part of His servant to be found associating with rebellious men?

20-22. *For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are bound to love our own enemies, but not God's enemies, since they are haters of all that is good and all that is true—and the essentially good One, Himself. We love them as our fellow beings, but we hate them as haters of God.

23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

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PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER
NO. 3391

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."
1 Corinthians 11:28.

"LET a man examine himself." That is, any man—every man who intends to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. The word is indefinite that it may be understood to be universal. No man is to come to that table, no woman is to draw near without the previous self-examination. No age will excuse us, for there have been aged hypocrites, as well as young deceivers. No office will exonerate us from this examination, for there was a Judas even among the apostles. The highest degree in the Church of God may consist with the most rotten formality. We are to examine ourselves each time we come. Each man is to do so. No one is to shirk the personal duty. Everyone is to undertake it as in the sight of God. Brothers and sisters, you members of the church about to come around this table, give heed to the mandate of the Holy Spirit, by the inspired apostle! "Let each one here examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread."

"Let a man *examine* himself." The word is forcible. Let him make inquisition into his own soul as to whether all is right or not. Let him search diligently, tracing out every symptom that looks unfavorable, if, perhaps, that symptom may reveal the truth. Let him dwell upon every dark side or ill-looking spot, if, perhaps, those dark signs should mean more than is apparent on the surface. We are not to trifle with ourselves by making a superficial survey. Let a man examine himself as does the dealer in precious metals when he thrusts the ore into the fire, knowing that only the gold will come out, while the dross will be consumed. Put yourself into a crucible! Heat the furnace of examination seven times hotter than before, for since your heart will, if possible, escape from knowing the truth, be resolved that it shall know it, and the worst of it, too! Let a man review, test, prove, search, try! In all the strongest words that I could find that mean the fullest scrutiny, would I put the language of the apostle, "Let a man examine himself."

"Let a man examine *himself*." He need not be so particular to examine those that surround him. If there should be unworthy communicants at the table, his communing will not thereby be damaged. Though some may have intruded where they ought not to be, yet if your heart and mind shall come near to Christ in actual fellowship, we shall not have the less indulgence from our Lord because a Judas happened to be there. "Let a man examine himself." Let it be personal work. I know there is an

examination through which the church member among us passes, when such as are experienced in the faith ask, "What do you know of these things? What is your faith touching this and that? Have you believed? Have you repented?" Such an examination, however, must never content you. I pray you never feel that it is any certificate of genuine discipleship to have been seen by the elders, or to have had the pastor satisfied of your conversion. We are poor, fallible creatures—we cannot profess to search the heart—no, we never did profess it! It is but your outward life and your profession that we are called upon to judge at all. You must not go by our examination, but, "Let a man examine himself." You are to look into your own heart, with your own eyes and ask to have them enlightened by the Holy Spirit! You are to hold the balance, yourselves, and weigh your soul therein. You are not to be satisfied with a second-hand judgment, or with another man's search! Take the candle yourself, man! Go through every corner and every crevice. Sweep out the old leaven and so keep the feast in simplicity of heart. "Let a man examine himself."

"*And so*," says the apostle, *"let him eat of that bread."* That is to say, *the examination is to be seasonable*. It is to come always at the time of the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine. It should always be the prelude to communion. Examination should preface enjoyment. You should see whether you ought to be there and have a right to be there and, that ascertained, then you should come—but not till then! Is it not a very significant circumstance that the very first time our Lord took the bread and broke it, and instituted this Supper, there was at that very time a self-examination going on—and they then made an appeal to the Lord, Himself, at the conclusion, for each one said, when the question was asked as to who it was that would betray Him, "Lord, is it I?" "Lord, is it I?"—not at all an unsuitable question to be passed round tonight, when we shall break bread, and hear it said, "One of you will betray Me." Ah, brothers and sisters, I fear there are many more than one here among professors who will betray Him! Perhaps there are scores, if not hundreds, among so large a mass of professing Christians who will not prove, after all, to be genuine! Then let the question, though it stirs the anguish of your souls, pass round among you, "Lord, is it I?" "Lord, is it I?" Nor let any man eat of this bread, or drink of this cup till he has humbly in his soul sought to put it to his conscience, that he may investigate this matter whether he is Christ's or not!

Now, dear brothers and sisters, for a few minutes we shall *look at the matter about which we are to examine ourselves.* And then *we shall press upon you this examination, by giving you a few reasons for it.* May God grant us a blessing in this searching business!

I. CONCERNING WHAT WE ARE TO EXAMINE.

You will observe that the text does not tell us, "Let a man examine himself as to this or that particular, and so let him eat." He is to examine himself, but the apostle does not say about what. The inference is that he is to examine himself about this Supper. He is to examine himself as to whether he has a right to eat of this bread and to drink of this wine.

The Supper gives us the clue, then, as to what we are to examine ourselves upon. I shall see before me, presently, broken bread and the wine cup filled with the red wine. These two things are the emblems—the bread of the body of Christ, which was bruised and made to suffer for our sake—the wine of that precious blood of Christ by which sin is pardoned and souls are redeemed.

I have no right to touch these emblems *unless in my soul I believe the facts that they represent*. Shall I not begin to question myself, then? *Do I accept, as a certain fact that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*? Do I believe that God descended from the highest throne of glory and became a man born of woman? Do I believe that He suffered in human flesh, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God? Do I believe that in His blood, which was "shed for many," there is a virtue for the putting away of sin and making atonement to Almighty God, and that so sinners may be accepted in the Beloved? Unless I believe these things, I am clearly a hypocrite, a terrible hypocrite, if I dare to come to this table at all! I am perverse among the perverse to thrust myself in to touch the emblems when I do not accept the facts which those emblems set forth! Now, every man here can easily examine himself by that test, but I hope the most of us here would say, "We do believe those facts." Yes, but do you believe them as facts that are forcible in themselves and fraught with consequences? Do you apprehend them in their amazing weight and their stupendous bearing upon the judgment of God and the destiny of men? God made flesh—God incarnate—Jesus, Immanuel, suffering to put away the sins of His people—the Christ of God presenting salvation to every soul that trusts in Him! Why, this is news such as never stirred even Paradise, itself, before! It is the best, highest and most wondrous news that angels ever heard! We ought to so hear and accept these facts in that same spirit that characterized them when they transpired, in order to duly discern their importance, or we have no right to come here!

Furthermore, brothers and sisters. Every man who eats of the bread and drinks of the wine sets forth in emblem by the eating of the bread *that the flesh of Christ is his, and by the drinking of the wine that the blood of Christ is his*. Because he has possession of these things, he, therefore, comes to eat as men eat their own bread, or to drink as men drink their own wine. Now, dear hearer, the question asked of you is this—have you an interest in the body and the blood of Christ? "How can I know my interest therein?" asks one. You may know it thus—Do you fully and alone rely upon Jesus Christ for your salvation? Do you implicitly trust the merits of His agonies? Do you, without any other confidence, cast yourself fully upon the great atoning sacrifice and transactions of Calvary? If so, that faith gives you Christ! It is the evidence that Christ is yours—you need not be afraid to come and take the wine when you so manifestly have the thing that is signified thereby. You may come—you are invited to come—you cannot stay away without sin if Christ, indeed, is yours!

The question may assume another form. This Supper was instituted *that we might remember Christ in it*. A question, then, for each one—can you remember Christ? Will coming here help you to remember Jesus Christ? If not, you must not come. How can you remember what you do not know? And how shall you remember at all aright, One in whom you have no part nor lot? To remember Christ as a mere person in history is of no more use than to remember Julius Cesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte! To remember Christ, who loved you and gave Himself for you—this is the choice remembrance that will be beneficial to your spirits. Beloved, I am quite certain that sometimes in what is called, "the sacrament," there is little or no recollection of Christ. Men and women come to it with no idea of remembering Him. They think that there is something in the thing, itself—some holiness in eating the bread and drinking the wine—some grace bestowed by the priestly hands that administer the emblems of the passion. But oh, it is not so! This is not to receive the Lord's Supper—this is but Popish idolatry! This is not the true worship of the child of God! You come to the table to remember Him! And only as far as those signs help you to remember Him—to trust Him, to love Him—only so far do they become a means of grace to you! There is no latent moral virtue in material substances! No regeneration lurks in water! No confirmation in grace streams from prelatic hands! There is no sanctity in lawn sleeves! There is no holiness in bread and nothing devout in wine! These are just outward and visible signs. The holiness, the sanctity, the grace must lie in your own hearts as you lovingly receive these symbols and draw near with true spirits to the Lord who bought you with His blood! Ask yourselves, then—do you remember Him? Would these things help you to remember Him? If not, you have no business here.

It may be that some child of God here tonight is not fit to come to the table. You may be startled, perhaps, at that remark, but I venture to suppose such a thing possible! And if it should happen to turn out to be the case, I pray that brother or sister to take the admonition home! Is there any brother whom you have offended, whose forgiveness you have not sought, or is there anyone who has offended you, to whom you have not rendered forgiveness? I think that what our Lord said about coming to the altar and leaving the gift before the altar until first we have been reconciled to our brother—though this is no altar at all—may be with all righteousness supposed concerning this table! How can you expect fellowship with Christ with an unforgiving heart? How can you love God, whom you have not seen, if you do not love your brother, whom you have seen? If it is so hard for you to forgive, how hard will it be for you to *be forgiven*? An unforgiving spirit shuts you out of heaven. Why, man, you cannot even perform the lowliest act—you cannot pray! You, cannot say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." And if you cannot pray, much less can you commune! Oh, see to that, and let each man and woman examine themselves upon that!

In pressing this subject upon you, may I be permitted to say, very earnestly, that the right way to examine ourselves before coming to this table is *by the rule which is laid down in Scripture*. Examine yourselves

by the tests and proofs of the Spirit which are spoken of in God's Word. Just as you would examine another, impartially—

"Nothing extenuate,
Nor anything set down in malice"—

so must you examine yourselves. Alas, we have one rule for others and another rule for ourselves! How mistakenly quick-sighted are we to discover the imperfections and infirmities of others of God's people, while our own glaring sins scarcely give our conscience a twinge! We go about with great beams in our eyes, all the while wondering why our brothers and sisters cannot see the mote that is in theirs! Judge yourselves! Judge yourselves and let the severity of your judgment upon your fellow Christians be now turned upon yourselves! It will be much more to your profit and much more according to the rules of Christian charity. God grant we may, none of us, be afraid of the strictest rules of Scripture in their sternest form. Alas, brothers and sisters, we often stop short in our self-examinations just when they might be of use to us, like the patient who tears off the plaster just when it begins to work, or ceases to receive the medicine precisely when it has reached a point in which it would be useful! Press home, press home, the grave questions and anxieties that lurk within you! Never be afraid to be probed to the quick and to be cut to the core. Make no provision for self-deception! Ask the Lord to lay bare your hearts, right bare, before His omniscient eyes. And as you are thus examining, do not flinch, do not mince matters, do not trifle, do not be partial, but judge yourselves truly and thoroughly, lest, after all, you should be mistaken! And lest, after coming to this table, you should be banished from the marriage Supper of the Lamb!

Thus much upon the points which are in debate—about which we are to examine our fitness to come to this table. Allow me now, as best I can—

II. TO PRESS THIS VERY IMPORTANT SUBJECT UPON YOU, WITH SOME REASONS WHY THERE SHOULD BE SUCH A SELF-EXAMINATION.

I might say, brothers and sisters, that such an examination should be used *because self-knowledge is always valuable*. The old Greeks, whose wonderful sayings often verged upon inspiration, used to say, "Man, know yourself!" It is ill for a man to be acquainted with foreign countries and to know nothing of his own—to understand other men's farms and to let his own run to waste—to be conversant with other men's health and to be dying of a secret disease! To study other men's characters, but to allow his own character to be obnoxious in the sight of God. Know yourselves! Nothing will pay you better than to search your own hearts and to know yourselves. Of all stock-taking, this is one of the most beneficial. It will often be the death of pride when a man finds out what he really is. Self-righteousness will fly before such a searching, as owls fly before the rising sun! Know yourself and you are on the road to knowing Christ, for the knowledge of self will humble you, will make you feel your need of Jesus and may, in the hands of God the Holy Spirit, lead you to the finding of the Savior! Oh, men and women, how is it that

you have so many acquaintances, such a large circle of friends and yet do not make acquaintance with yourselves? While you will read much of literature, you read not your own hearts! You commune with others, yet you commune not with yourselves and do not know yourselves. I pray you examine yourselves, if for no other reason than because such lore is among the most precious that a man can gain!

Examine yourselves, again, you professed Christians, *because it is a marvelously easy thing for us to be deceived and to continue to be deceived*. Of course, every man likes to be flattered. Whether he believes it is so or not, this is a universal truth, and any man—I care not who he may be—is very easily to be persuaded that all is right with him. Satan, too, will help your natural tendencies, your partiality to yourselves. He only wishes to lull you to sleep and to rock you in the cradle of delusion. All things around a man conspire to help him to delude himself. The notion of grace which is commonly entertained, the popularity of religion, the ease with which a man can join a church, the littleness of persecution in these days—all these things help to make it a very easy passage by which a man may glide along, until even when he dies he may still believe that he is on the road to heaven, while all the while he has been going post-haste to hell! Oh, since it is so easy to be deceived, and it is your soul that is in jeopardy, I beseech you examine yourselves!

Besides, my dear friends, *you know how some are deceived*. Charge your memories a minute. Do you not know some among your own acquaintance that are deceived? Ah, you readily remember them! But do you know that there were persons sitting in other parts of the Tabernacle who were thinking of *you* while you were thinking of them! You said of such a one, "Ah, I have watched her at home. I know that noisy tongue of hers, she is no Christian." And that very woman was just whispering to herself, "Ah, I know him. I have traded at his shop. I know those short weights of his—he is no Christian." Ah, you do not want God to condemn you—if you were only allowed to speak, you would condemn yourselves! But if such is the case, that we so readily can find out that others are deceived, is not the question one that is worth the asking, "May we not be deceived, ourselves?" Oh, let it come home. May not the preacher be deceived? May not elders and deacons, who have been in honor these many years, be, nevertheless, rotten at heart? May not members of this church who have been at this table from the very beginning, almost from their childhood have, after all, had but a superficial godliness that will not stand the fire, that shall try every man's work, of what sort it is? Therefore, I beseech you, since many are deceived, examine yourselves and so come to this table.

Further, remember that it is important for professing Christians to do this, beyond all others, because, perhaps, there is no greater bar to the reception of grace in this entire world *than the belief that you have grace already*. It would be a mercy if some here present had never joined the church; sad that I should say it, but it is so. It would be a mercy to themselves that they had never professed to be Christians, because now, if we preach repentance, they say, "I repented years ago." If we talk of

faith in the Savior, they say, "I have faith—I joined the church and avowed my faith." If we speak of Christian knowledge—they have Christian knowledge—though it is the knowledge that puffs up. They have the imitation of all the graces and, as it is sometimes very difficult to know which is the real gem and which is the paste gem that imitates it, so these people live so much like Christians, in many respects, that it is hard even for themselves to discover that they are not rich and increased in goods, but are naked, and poor, and miserable! If I were out of Christ, I would wish to be out of the church. If I had no faith in Him, would that I had no profession of Him! If there is any soul in any place that is least likely to be saved, it is an unregenerate soul inside the church, participating in Christian ordinances and dead while it lives! Search yourselves, then on this account.

And let me add another solemn word. Search yourselves *because within a short time, at the very longest, you will be upon the bed of death and there, if not before, there will be deep searching of heart.* When the outward man decays and the flesh is melting away, you will need something more than profession to lean on. Sacraments, and going to places of worship will prove but poor things to bear you up in the midst of the billows of death! How must a man feel when he puts out on that dread sea with his lifebelt and finds it will not bear his weight! When he leaps into his lifeboat that he had hoped would bear him safely to the haven, and finds that every timber is strained and that it leaks—and he sinks into the flood. Oh, find out your mistakes while yet there is time to rectify them! I beseech you by the living God, whose face of fire you shall soon see, prepare yourselves for His judgment as well as for the judgment of your own conscience in the hour of death, for every man must be weighed in the balance! No mere pretender shall pass the gates of bliss. Destitute of faith, it matters not how bright your profession—you shall be banished from His presence! If it is not grace-work and heart-work, you may have eaten or drunk in His presence and He may have taught in your streets, but He will never know you! If you have never confessed your sins in secret to the great High Priest; if you have never laid your hand upon that precious head that bore the sin of His elect; if you have never seen in solemn transfer your iniquities passed over to Him—and if your faith has never recognized that transaction and rejoiced in it—oh, beware, beware, beware, for in the last tremendous day your professions shall be but a painted pageantry for you to go to hell in! Yes, worse than that, among the firewood of your burning that shall flash most furiously with devouring fire, will be the hollow sticks of your base profession, your bastard godliness, your counterfeit graces, your glitter that was not golden, your profession that was not based upon possession!

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, for these reasons let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread.

But now, supposing this to be all done and we have come to this answer, "I am not in Christ. I am not a Christian. I have not believed"?

Then, away, away, away from this table! But where shall I send you? I will send you to the cross. Though you may not come to the table, you may come to Jesus!

But suppose your answer should be, "I am very unworthy and sinful, but still, I have believed in Jesus, though I yet see much in myself that is evil." Dear brothers and sisters that is not the question! Preparation for the Lord's Supper does not lie in perfect sanctification, but in true faith in Jesus! If, then, you have made sure of this, have done with the examination—I mean for tonight—because after you have examined yourself, it does not then say, "Keep on," but, "So let him eat," and I do not like that examination to stick in the throat so that you cannot digest the dainty morsels of the Savior's precious body. It is done! You have examined and you know Him! You have believed in Him and trusted that He is able to keep you. Now, then, take care that you eat! I mean not merely eat with the mouth and drink with the throat, but now take care to pray that you may have real fellowship with the incarnate God, gratefully magnifying the grace that has made you to differ and cheerfully accepting the precious person who is the ground of your reliance, of the life of your soul!

God grant you now, having passed the door and shown your entrance ticket as true Christians, to sit and eat bread in the kingdom of God!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 6:1-24; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-16.

Verse 1. *Take heed that you do not do your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.* The motive which leads a man to give will form the true estimate of what he does. If he gives to be seen of men, then when he is seen of men he has the reward he sought for—and he will never have any other. Let us never do our alms or good works before men, to be seen of them.

2-5. *Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does, that your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret, shall Himself reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* I have heard very great commendation given to certain Easterns, because at the hour of the rising of the sun, or the hour when the sound is heard from the summit of the mosque, wherever they may be, they put themselves in the posture of prayer. God forbid I should rob them of any credit they deserve, but far be it from us ever to imitate them! We are not to be ashamed of our prayers, but they are not things for the public street! They are intended for God's eyes and God's ears, only.

6, 7. *But you, when you pray, enter into your closet and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.* It is not very easy to repeat the same words often without it becoming a vain repetition. A repetition, however, is not forbidden, but a "vain" repetition. And how greatly do they err who measure prayers by the yard! They think they have prayed so much because they have prayed so long, whereas it is the work of the heart—the true pouring out of the desire before God—that is the thing to be looked at. Quality not quantity! Truth, not length. Oftentimes the shortest prayers have the most prayer in them.

8, 9. *Be not you, therefore, like they: for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him. After this manner therefore pray you.* And then He gives us a model of prayer which never can be excelled—containing all the parts of devotion. They do well who model their prayers upon this.

9-13 *Our Father which are in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.* Our Savior now makes a remark upon this prayer and on one particular part of it which has stumbled a great many.

14, 15. *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* There are some who have altered this and pray in this fashion, "Forgive us our debts as we desire to forgive our debtors." It will not do! You will have to desire God to forgive you, and desire in vain if you pray in that fashion! It must come to this point of literal, immediate, completed forgiveness of every offense committed against you if you expect God to forgive you. There is no wriggling out of it. The man who refuses to forgive, refuses to be forgiven! God grant that we may, none of us, tolerate malice in our hearts. Anger glances in the bosom of wise men—it only burns in the heart of the foolish. May we quench it and feel that we do freely, fully and heartily forgive, knowing that we are forgiven!

16. *Moreover when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* Simpletons praise them—think much of them—and they plume themselves thereon and think themselves the very best of men. They have their reward.

17, 18. *But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret, and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.* Yet have I heard persons speak of certain emaciated ecclesiastics as being such wonderfully holy men. "How they must have fasted! They look like

it. You can see it in their faces." Probably much more likely produced by a fault in their digestion, than by anything else! And if not—if we are to suppose that the skinniness of a man, his person, is to be the token of his holiness—then the living skeleton was a saint to perfection! But we are not beguiled by such follies as these. The Christian fasts but he takes care that no one shall know it. He wears no ring or token even when his heart is heavy. Full often he puts on a cheerful air, lest by any means he should communicate unnecessary sorrow to others! And he will be cheerful and happy in the midst of company, to prevent their being sad, for it is enough for him to be sad, himself, and sad before his Father's face.

19-21. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* There is many a way of sending your treasure before you to heaven. God's poor are His money-boxes—His bankers. You can pass your treasure over to heaven by their means. And the work of evangelizing the world by the labors of God's servants in the ministry of the gospel—you can help this, also. There is much need for your plenty. Thus also you can pass your treasure over into the King's bank and your heart will follow it! I have heard of one who said his religion did not cost him a shilling a year—and it was remarked that very probably it would have been expensive at the price. You will find people form a pretty accurate estimate of the value of their own religion by the proportion which they are prepared to sacrifice for it.

22. *The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eye is single.* If your motive is single—if you have only one motive—and that a right one—the master one of glorifying God—if your eye is single.

22, 23. *Your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!* When a man's highest motive is himself, what a dark and selfish nature he has! But when his highest motive is his God, what brightness of light will shine upon all.

24. *No man can serve two masters.* He can serve two persons very readily. For that matter, he can serve twenty, but not two *masters*. There cannot be two master principles in a man's heart, or master passions in a man's soul. "No man can serve two masters."

24. *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* Though some men's lives are a long experiment of how far they can serve the two.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-16.

Verse 1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.* The church at Corinth consisted of persons of large education and great abilities. It was one of those churches that had given up the one-man system, where everybody

talked as he liked—a very knowing church, and a church of Christians, too. But for all that, Christian babies! And though they thought themselves to be so great, yet the apostle says that he never spoke to them as to spiritual men—he kept to the simple elements—regarding the carnal part as being too much in them as yet to be able to drink down spiritual things.

2. *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for up to now you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able.* How grateful we ought to be that there is milk and that this milk does feed the soul—that the simplest truths of Christianity contain in them all that the soul needs—just as milk is a diet upon which the body could be sustained without anything else. Yet how we ought to desire to grow that we may not always be upon a milk diet but that we may be able to digest the strong meat—the high doctrine of the deep things of God. These are for men, not for babes. Let the babes be thankful for the milk, but let us aspire to be strong men that we may feed on meat.

3. *For you are yet carnal: for where as there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men?* A united church, you may conclude, is a growing church—perhaps a grown church! But a disunited church, split up into factions where every man is seeking position and trying to be noted—such a church is a church of babes. They are carnal and walk as men.

4. *For while one says, I am of Paul: and another, I am of Apollos, are you not carnal?* Instead of that, they should all have striven together for the defense of the common faith of Jesus Christ. No greater symptom of mere infancy in true religion than the setting up of the names of leaders or the preference for this or that peculiar form of doctrine, instead of endeavoring to grasp the whole of the truth of God wherever one can find it.

5, 6. *Who, then, is Paul? And who is Apollos but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase.* Let God, then, have all the glory! Be grateful for the planter and grateful for the waterer, yes, and grateful to them as well. But still, let the stress of your gratitude be given to Him without whom watering and planting would be in vain!

7, 8. *So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters, but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one.* They are pursuing the same design! And Apollos and Paul were one in heart. They were true servants of one Master.

8, 9. *And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building.* The Church is built up. God is He who builds it up—the Master of the work, but He employs His ministers under Him to be builders.

10-13. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation*

can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. It is very easy to build up a church quickly. It is very easy to make a great excitement in religion and become very famous as a soul-winner. Very easy. But time tries everything! If there were no other fire than the mere fire of *time*, it would suffice to test a man's work. And when a church crumbles away almost as soon as it is got together—when a church declines from the doctrines which it professed to hold, when the teaching of the eminent teacher is proved, after all, to have been fallacious and to have been erroneous in practical results, then what he has built comes to nothing! Oh, dear friends, what little we do, we ought to aspire to do for eternity. If you shall never lay the brush to the canvas but once, make an indelible stroke with it! If only one work of sort shall come from the statuary's workshop, let it be something that will live all down the ages! But we are in such a mighty hurry—we make a lot of things that die with us—transient results. We are not careful enough as to what we build with. May God grant that this truth may sink into our minds! Let us remember that if it is hard building with gold and silver, and harder still building with precious stones, yet what is built will stand the fire! It is easy building with wood—and still easier with hay and stubble—but then there will be only a handful of ashes left of a whole lifework if we build with these.

14-15. *If any man's work abides which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* If he meant right—if he endeavored to serve God as a worker, though he may have uttered many errors and have been mistaken—(and which of us has not been?)—he shall be saved, though his work must be burnt.

16. *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* Do you know it? He says, "Know you not?" but I might leave out the, "not," and say, "Know you that you are the temple of God?" What a wonderful fact it is! Within the body of the saint, God dwells, as in a temple. How some men injure their bodies or utterly despise them, though they would not so do if they understood that they are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in them.

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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH
NO. 3392

A SERMON
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"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
Romans 5:1.

WE desire this evening not to preach upon this text as a mere matter of doctrine. You all believe and understand the gospel of justification by faith, but we want to preach upon it tonight as a matter of experience, as a thing realized, felt, enjoyed and understood in the soul. I trust there are many here who not only know that men may be saved and justified by faith, but who can say in their own experience, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and who are now, at the present moment, walking and living in the actual enjoyment of that peace!

Wishing to speak of the text, then, in this sense, I shall ask you to accompany me not only with your ears and with the attention which you usually give so generously, but also with the eyes of your self-examination, asking yourselves, as we proceed, step by step, "Do I know that? Have I received that? Have I been taught of God in this matter? Have I been led into that truth of God?" And our hope will be that some person to whom these things have hitherto been merely external and, therefore, valueless, may be led by God to get hold of them, so that they may be matters of soul, heart and conscience—so that they may enjoy them and find themselves where once they feared they would never be, namely, in a state of reconciliation with God—happily enjoying peace with the Most High.

Our first thought shall be some plain, earnest talk concerning—

I. A FEW PRELIMINARY DISCOVERIES WHICH A MAN MAKES BEFORE HE GETS PEACE WITH GOD.

These, I do not think, are by any means foreign to the text, or merely imported to it, but belong rightfully to it. You see that Paul, before he came to this justification by faith, had been *speaking about sin*. It would not have been possible for him to have given an intelligent definition of justification without mentioning that men are sinners, without informing them that they had broken God's holy law and that the law, by and of itself, could never restore them to the favor of God. Now, some of these things of which I am going to speak are absolutely necessary, if not to my

sermon, yet certainly to your spiritually understanding even so much as one jot or tittle of what it is to be justified by faith!

Well, then, what are these things? The first discovery that a man is led by the Spirit of God to make before he is justified is that it is important to be justified in the sight of God. Many people do not know this. You shall step into a shop this evening and find a man at the counter, and you say to him, "Well, do you never go to a place of worship?" "No," he would say, "but I am quite as good as those who do." "How so?" "Well, I am a great deal better than some of them." "How is that?" "Well, I never failed in business. I never duped people in a limited liability company. I never told lies. I am no thief. I am not a drunk—I am as honest as the days are long in the middle of June—and that is more than you can say of some of your religious, people." Now, that man has got a hold of one part of a good man's character. There are two parts, but he can only see one, namely, that man is to be just to man. He sees that, but he does not see that man is to be also just to God. And yet if that man were really to think a little while, he would see that the highest obligations of a creature must be not to his fellow creatures, but to his Creator—and that however just a man may be to another man, yet if he is altogether unjust to God, he cannot escape without the severest penalty! But oh, the most of men think that so long as they keep the laws of the land, so long as they give to their fellow men their due, it matters not though God's day should be a subject of scorn, God's will be used as men will and God's law trodden under their feet! Now, I think that everyone here who will but put his fingers to his brow for a moment and think, that he will see that even though a man may go before the bar of his country and say before any judge or jury, "I have in nothing injured my fellow man. I am just before men," yet it does not make the man's character perfect. Unless he is also able to say, "And I am also just before the presence of the God who made me and whose servant I am," he has only kept one half—and that the less important of God's law for him.

It cannot help being—it must be important to the highest degree that you and I should stand on good terms with the great God unto whom we shall so soon return in the great day when He shall say, "Return you children of men." We must then render up our souls to Him who created us. Well, you can surely go as far as that with me—that it is necessary. You do feel, do you not, a desire in your heart to be just before your Maker? I am thankful that you can go so far.

The next thing is this. A man, when the Spirit of God is bringing him to Christ, discovers that *his past life has been marred badly by serious offenses against the law of God.* Before the Spirit of God comes into our soul, we are like being in a room in the dark—we cannot see in it. We cannot discover the cobwebs, the spiders, the foul and loathsome things that may be lurking there. But when the Spirit of God comes streaming into the soul, the man is astonished to find that he is what he is! And especially if he sits down and opens the book of the law and, in the light

of the divine Spirit, reads that perfect law and compares it with his own imperfect heart and life! He will then grow sick of himself, even to loathing and, sometimes, despair! Take but one command. Perhaps there are some here who will say, "I know I have been very chaste all my life, for the command says, 'You shall not commit adultery,' and I have never broken it—I am clean there." Yes, but now hear Christ explain the command, "He that looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, then, who among us can say that we have not done that? Who is there upon earth, if that is the meaning of the command, who can say, "I am innocent"? If the law of God, as we are told by Scripture, has to deal not with our outward actions, alone, but with our words, and with our thoughts and with our imaginations—if it is so exceedingly broad that it applies to the most secret part of a man—then who of us can plead guiltless before the throne of God? No, dear brothers and sisters, this must be understood by you and by me, before we can be justified, that we are full of sin! What if I say that we are as full of sin as an egg is full of meat? We are all sin! The imagination and the thought of our heart is evil and only evil, and that continually. If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves, for if you never see your own nothingness, you will never understand Christ's all-sufficiency! Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up! Unless you know yourselves to be lost, you will never care for that Savior who came "to seek and to save the lost." That is a second discovery, then, that it is important to be just before God, but that on account of the spirituality of God's moral law and our consequent inability to keep it perfectly, we are very far from standing in that position.

Then there comes another discovery, namely, that consequently *it is utterly impossible for us to hope that we ever can be just before God on the footing of our own doing*. We must give it up, now, as an utterly lost case. The past is past—that can never be blotted out by us! And the present, inasmuch as we are weak through the flesh, is not much better than the past. And the future, notwithstanding all our fond hopes of improvement, will probably be none the better! And so, salvation by the works of the law becomes to us a dreary impossibility! The law said, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." I was conversing on one occasion with one of our most illustrious Jewish noblemen. And when I put to him the question—he believed himself to be perfectly righteous, and I believe if any man could be so by his moral conduct, he might have fairly laid claim to it—but when I said to him, "Now, there is your own law for it, 'Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them'—have you continued in all things?" He said, "I have not." "Then," and I found that to be a question for which he, at any rate, had

no answer—and it is a question, which, when properly understood, no man can answer except by pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, "He was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing." Unless you and I keep the law of God perfectly, it matters little how near we get to perfection! It is as though God had committed to our trust a perfect crystal vase and had said, "If you keep that whole, and present it to me, you shall have a reward." But we have cracked it, chipped it—ah, my brothers and sisters, the most of us have broken it and smashed it to pieces! But we will suppose that we have only cracked it a little. Yes, but even then we have lost the reward, for the condition was that it should be perfectly whole—and the slightest chip is a violation of the condition upon which the reward would have been given! But you say that you will not break it farther. But you have broken it! You have thrown yourselves out of the list. It sometimes seems hard when you tell people that if they have violated the law in one point, they have broken the whole of it—but it is not so hard as it looks to be, for if I tell a man who is going down a coal mine on a long chain that if he breaks one link of the chain, it does not matter though all the other hundreds or thousands of links may be sound—if there is only one link that is broken—down will descend the basket and the poor miner will be dashed to pieces! Nobody thinks that is difficult. Everybody recognizes that as being a matter of mechanical law that the strength of a chain must be measured by its weakest part. And so, the strength of our obedience must be gauged by the very point in which it fails. Alas, our obedience has failed and, through it, no one of us can ever be just before God!

Now, I want to stop a minute and put the question round the galleries and below stairs. Have you all got as far as that? It is important to be just before God—we see that we are not so—do we see that *we cannot be so*? Are we quite convinced that by our own obedience to the law of God, it is hopeless for us to think of standing accepted before the Most High? I pray the eternal Spirit to convince you all of this, or you will keep on knocking at the door until you are quite sure that God has nailed it up forever! And you will go scrambling over that Alp and tumbling down this precipice until you are convinced that it is impossible for you to climb it—and then you will give up your desperate endeavor and come to God in God's way—which is quite another way from your own! I trust that we are all convinced of this.

Let us notice one more preliminary discovery. A man, having found out all this, suddenly discovers that inasmuch as he is not just before God and cannot be, *he is at the present moment under condemnation!* God is never indifferent towards sin. If, therefore, a man is not in a state in which God can justify him, he is in a state in which God must condemn him! If you are not just before God, you are condemned at this very moment! You are not executed, it is true, but the condemnation has gone forth against you and the sign that it is so is your unbelief, for, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on

the Son of God." How some of you would spring up from your seats tonight if all of a sudden you got the information that you had been condemned by the courts of your country! But when I say that you have been condemned by the court of heaven, this glides across your conscience like drops of water, or oil over a marble slab! And yet, my hearers, if you did but know the meaning of what I am saying—and I pray God the Holy Spirit to make you know it, it would make your very bones quiver! God has condemned you! You are out of Christ! You have broken His law! God has lifted His hand to smite you! And though His mercy tarries for a while, yet days and hours will soon be gone—and then the condemnation shall take the shape of execution—and where will your soul be, then? Now, you must have the sentence of condemnation passed in your own soul, or else you will never be justified, for until we are condemned by ourselves, we are not acquitted by God! Again I pause and say, Do you feel this, my dear hearer? If you do, instead of despairing, be hopeful! If you have the sentence of death within you, be thankful for it, for now shall life be given you from the hand of God's grace!

Having occupied, perhaps, too much time over that, we now come more immediately into the text to—

II. SHOW THE GOSPEL LEARNING WHICH IS TAUGHT TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

That gospel learning I may give you in a few sentences, namely, these, that inasmuch as through man's sin, the way of obedience is forever closed, so that we—none of us—can ever pass by it to a true righteousness, God has now determined to deal with men in a way of mercy, to forgive them all their offenses, to bestow upon them His love, to receive them graciously and to love them freely! He has been pleased, in His infinite wisdom, to devise a way by which, without injury to His justice, He can yet receive the most undeserving sons of men into His heart and make them His children—and can bless them with all the blessings which would have been theirs had they perfectly kept His law, but which now shall come to them as a matter of gift and undeserved grace from Himself.

I trust we have learned that that there is a plan of salvation by grace and, by grace alone—and it is a great thing to know that where grace is, there are no works!

It is a blessed thing to never muddle in your head the doctrine of working and the doctrine of receiving by grace, for there is an essential and eternal difference between the two. I hope you all know that there can be no mixing of the two. If we are saved by grace, it cannot be by our own merits! But if we depend upon our own merits, then we cannot appeal to the grace of God, since the two things can never be mingled together. It must be all works or else all grace. Now, God's plan of salvation excludes all our works. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." It comes to us upon the footing of divine grace, pure grace alone.

And this is God's plan, namely that inasmuch as we cannot be saved by our own obedience, we should be saved by Christ's obedience! Jesus, the Son of God, has appeared in the flesh, has lived a life of obedience to God's law and, in consequence of that obedience, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! And our Savior's life and death make up a complete keeping and honoring of that law of God which we have broken and dishonored. And God's plan is this—"I cannot bless you for your own sakes, but I will bless you for His sake. Looking at you, I must curse you, but I have laid the curse on Him and now, looking at you *through Him*, I can bless you though you deserve it not. I can pass by your undeserving. I can blot out your sins like a cloud and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea through what He has done. You have no merits, but He has boundless merits! You are full of sin and must be punished, but He has been punished instead of you—and now I can deal with you." This is the language of God put into human words, "I can deal with you upon terms of mercy through the merits of My dear Son." This is the way in which the gospel comes to you, then. If you believe in Jesus—that is to say if you trust Him—all the merits of Jesus are your merits and are imputed to you. All the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Every one of His merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if He were you—He in your place, you in His place. Substitution! That is the word! Christ, the substitute for sinners! Christ standing for men and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin! He "who knew no sin, being made sin for us." Man standing in Christ's place and receiving the sunlight of divine favor, instead of Christ.

And this, I say, is through trusting, or believing! God's way of your getting connection with Christ is through your reliance upon Him. "Therefore, being justified"—how? Not by works! That is not the link, but—"being justified by *faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ offers to God the substitution—through faith we accept it—and from that moment God accepts us!

Now, I want to come to this, dear friends. Do you know this? Have you been taught this by the Spirit of God? Perhaps you learned it in the assembly's catechism when you were but children. You have learned it in the various classes since then, but do you know it in your own soul and do you know that God's way of salvation is through a simple dependence upon His dear Son? Do you so know it that you have accepted it and that you are now resting upon Jesus? If so, then thrice happy are you!

But, going further, I have now to dwell for a minute or two upon—

III. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE OF THE TEXT.

We have led you, and I hope the Spirit of God has led you, too, through the preliminary discoveries and through the great discovery that God can save us through the merits of Another! Now let us notice this glorious privilege word by word.

"Being justified." The text tells us that every believing man is at the present moment perfectly justified before God. You know what Adam was in naked innocence in Paradise. Such is every believer. Yes, and more than that. Adam could talk with God because he was pure from sin and we, also, have access with boldness unto God our Father because, through Jesus' blood, we are clean. Now, I do not say that this is the privilege of a few eminent saints, but here I look around these pews and see my brothers and sisters—scores and hundreds of them—all of whom are tonight just before God—perfectly so! Completely so—so just that they never can be otherwise than just—so just that even in heaven they will be no more acceptable to God than they are here tonight! That is the state into which faith brings a poor, lost, guilty, helpless, good-for-nothing sinner! The man may have been everything that was bad before he believed in Jesus, but as soon as he trusted Christ, the merits of Christ became his merits and he stands before God as though he were perfect, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," through the righteousness of Christ!

Note, however, as we have noticed the state of justification, the means whereby we reach it. "Being justified *by faith*." The way of reaching this state of justification is not by tears, nor prayers, nor humbling, nor working, nor Bible-reading, nor church-going, nor chapel-going, nor sacraments, nor priestly absolution, but by *faith*—which faith is a simple and utter dependence and believing in the faithfulness of God—a dependence upon the promise of God because it is God's promise—and is worthy of dependence. It is a reliance with all our might upon what God has said! This is faith—and every man or woman who possesses this faith is perfectly justified tonight!

I know what the devil will say to you. He will say to you, "You are a sinner!" Tell him you know you are, but that for all that, you are justified. He will tell you of the greatness of your sin. Tell him of the greatness of Christ's righteousness. He will tell you of all your mishaps and your backslidings, of your offenses and your wanderings. Tell him and tell your own conscience, that you know all that, but that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that although your sin is great, Christ is quite able to put it all away. Some of you, it seems to me, do not trust in Christ as sinners. You get a mingle-mangle kind of faith. You trust in Christ as though you thought Christ could do something for you—and you could do the rest. I tell you that while you look to yourselves, you do not know what faith means! You must be convinced that there is nothing good in yourselves—you must know that you are sinners and that in your hearts you are as big and as black a sinner as the very worst and vilest—and you must come to Jesus and leave your fancied righteousnesses, and your pretended goodness's behind you! And you must take Him for everything and trust in Him. Oh, to feel your sin, and yet to know your righteousness—to have the two together—repentance

on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice! Oh, if you could understand that saying of the spouse, "I am black, but comely"—for that is where we must come—black in myself, as black as hell, and yet comely, fair, lovely, inexpressibly glorious through the righteousness of Jesus!

My dear brothers and sisters, can you feel this? If you cannot feel it, do you believe it? And do you sing in the words of Joseph Hart—

"In your surety you are free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee!
With your Savior's vesture on,
Holy as the holy one."

For so it is—you stand before God as accepted as Christ is accepted and, notwithstanding the inbred sin and corruption of your heart, you are as dear to God as Christ is dear and as accepted in the righteousness of Christ as Christ is accepted in His own obedience!

Have we got so far? That is the point on which I want to enquire this evening. Have you got as far as to know at this moment that it is through faith we are justified? If so, I shall conduct you just one step farther, namely to observe—and this is coming back, while it is also going forward—that "we are justified by faith *through our Lord Jesus Christ*." There is the foundation! There is the mainspring! There is the tree that bears the fruit! We are justified by faith, but not by faith in itself. Faith in itself is a precious grace, but it cannot in itself justify us. It is "*through our Lord Jesus Christ*." Simple as the observation is, I must venture to repeat it tonight because it is hard for us to keep it in mind. Remember that faith is not the work of the Spirit within, but the work of Christ upon the tree! That upon which I must rest as my meritorious hope is not the blessed fact that I am now an heir of heaven, but the still more blessed fact that the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me! My dear brothers and sisters, when all is fair weather within, there is such a temptation to say, "Well, now, it is all right with me, for I feel this and I feel that." Very good, these evidences are in their places, but oh, when it grows dark and when, instead of these gracious evidences, you get equally clear evidences that you are not perfect—when you have to say, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You will find that instead of your beautiful evidences, you will have to fly to the cross! There was a time when I, too, could take a great deal of comfort in what I believe is the Spirit of God's work in my soul. I do thank God for it, and bless Him for it now, but I trust I have learned to walk where poor Jack the huckster, walked—

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

Brothers and sisters, it is down on the ground that we must live! We must build upon the Rock, itself! On the top of some mountains men sometimes build heaps of timber, so as to get a little higher. Well, now, some of these rickety platforms, you know, get shaky, but when you get right down on the mountain, itself, it never shakes and you are perfectly

secure there! So sometimes we get to building up our rickety platforms of our experience and our good works—all very well in their way, but then they shake in the storm! Depend upon it, that the soul that clings to the Rock, notwithstanding all that the Holy Spirit has done for it, and having nothing, then, to depend upon, more than the poor dying thief had when, without a single good work, he had to hang on the dying Christ, alone—oh, believe me, that soul is in the safest place to live in—and the most blessed place to die in! None but Jesus! None but Jesus for a poor sinner when he is torn from his cups and his sins! And none but Jesus for the aged saint when he stays himself upon his bed to bear his last testimony—

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

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now, to crown all, there is here the precious, precious privilege which such men enjoy—"we have *peace with God*." I know that this may seem a trifle to thoughtless people, but not to those who think! I cannot say that I sympathize with those people who shut their eyes to the beauties of nature. I have heard of good men traveling through fine scenery and shutting their eyes for fear they should see! I always open mine as wide as ever I can because I think I can see God in all the works of His hands—and what God has taken the trouble to make, I think I ought to take the trouble to look at! Surely there must be something to see in a man's works if he is a wise man—and there must be something worth seeing in the works of God who is all-wise! Now, it is a delightful thing to say, when you look upon a landscape lit up with sunlight and shaded with clouds, "Well, my Father made all this. I never saw Him, but I do delight in the work of His hands—He made all this and I am perfectly at peace with Him." Then as you are standing there, a storm comes on. Big drops begin to fall. There is thunder in the distance. It begins to peal louder and louder. Presently there comes a flash of lightning. Now, those who are not at peace with God may go and flee away, but those who are perfectly at peace with Him may stand there and say, "Well, it is my Father who is doing all this. That is His voice, the voice of the Lord which is full of majesty." I love to hear my Father's voice. I am never as happy as in a tremendous storm—and when the lightning flash comes, I think—well, it is only the flashing of my Father's eyes! Now, God is abroad—He seemed as if He had left the world before, but now He comes riding on the wings of the wind! Let me go and meet Him. I am not afraid!

Suppose you are out at sea in a storm. You are justified by faith, and you say, "Well, let the waves roar! Let them clap their hands! My Father holds the waters in the hollow of His hand, why should I be afraid?" Let me say to you that it is worth something to believe that God can put us in a calm state of mind when "earth is all in arms abroad." It is just so with the believer when temporal troubles come. There comes crash after

crash until it seems as though every house of business would come down. Nothing is certain. Man has lost confidence and reliance in his fellow man. Everything is going bad. But the Christian says, "God is at the helm. The whole business of business is managed by the great King—let the sons of earth do as they will, but—

"He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might."

It is something to feel that my Father cannot do me a bad turn. Even if He should use His rod upon me, it will do me good, and I will thank Him for it, for I am at perfect peace with Him.

And then to come to die and to feel, "I am going to God and I am glad to go, for I am not going like a prisoner to a judge, but like a wife espoused goes to her husband—like a child home from school to the parents' arms. Oh, it is something to die with a sense of peace with God! Surely every thoughtful man will feel that! Now, if you trust Christ, you shall be justified by faith. Being justified, your heart shall feel that perfect peace is brought into it, so that you shall meet your Father's will with perfect equanimity, let it be what it may! Come life, come death, it shall not matter to you, for all is right between God and your soul!

Oh, I wish it were so with all present! It may be so if God the Spirit brings you to rest in Jesus. No, it *shall* be so, my dear friend! It shall be so with you tonight! Though you never thought it would be when you came in here, yet you see it all now. It is simply believing, simply trusting! Oh, believe Him! Trust Him and it shall be the joy of your soul to have a peace with God which as the world did not give you—so the world shall never take away! But you shall have it forever and ever! God grant it to each one of us! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:25-32.

Most of us recognize the beauty of this parable as it concerns the prodigal and his boundless forgiveness by the father, but few of us probably have seen how the elder brother has his portrait also painted by our Lord and how He sets forth the self-righteous professor who hates to have prodigals made much of.

25. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.* This was the better one of the two. I have heard him often greatly blamed and so he deserves to be. But for all that, he was a true son. He was not at home. He was out at work. There are some Christians that are all for work and never seem to have any fellowship and communion. They are always active, but they are not always contemplative. He was in the field.

26. *And he called one of the servants and asked him what these things meant.* He was a gloomy spirit—good, solid, regular, constant—but not very joyful. He took things rather severely, so he did not understand

what this amusement could mean. “Some of the Salvation Army got in here,” he said. “Some of those boisterous Methodist people got here and I do not like it. I am more regular than that. I do not like these rows and uproars. He asked of the servant what these things meant.

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come: and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in.* No, I dare say he was glad his brother was back, but he did not like such a fuss made over him. He was glad to see a wandering one restored, but why, why, why should there be all this extravagance of joy concerning this wandering young fellow who had been no better than he should be? Why all this delight? And there are some kinds of Christians who always feel that when there is a sinner introduced into the Church, “Well, I hope that it will turn out a genuine case,” and always that is the first thought! They are afraid that it cannot be. They have never sinned in that way. They have been kept by the grace of God from outward transgression and they are half afraid to hear of these outrageous sinners being brought in and so much joy made over them. “He was angry, and would not go in.”

28. *Therefore came his father out, and entreated him.* He was worth fetching in. There was a good deal of solid worth in his character and his father kindly came to ask him to come in and share the joy.

29. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years have I served you.* You may read it, “slaved for you.”

29. *Neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* Here have I been constant in the house of prayer, regular at my Sunday school class—and yet I get little or no joy from it. I go on just in the regular path of duty but I have no music and dancing! I have a great many doubts and fears, but very little exhilaration, very little delight.

30. *But as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* He has been a great sinner and he is newly converted—and he has got all the joy! He has been running, anyhow, and yet he is full of assurance, full of delight, full of confidence. How can this be? I am a staid Christian having but slight joy, and he is but newly converted, but confident and full of delight. You have killed the fatted calf for him! But even one of the little kid goats you have never given me. You have given him the fatted calf.

31. *And he said unto him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.* Why did not this son wake up to his privileges? Instead of not having a kid, he might have had whatever he liked! “All that I have is yours.” He had been put into such a position as that, instead of being badly treated as he, perhaps, would half accuse his father of treating him. “Son, you are always with me. You live at my table. My house is your house. I love you and delight in you. All that I have is yours.”

32. *It was meet*—It was right, it was proper, it was fitting—

32. *That we should make merry, and be glad, for this, your brother.* "You call him my son, but he is your brother, and I remind you of it—this, your brother."

32. *Was dead, and is alive again: and was lost, and is found.* So if there are any here that do not take the joy which they ought in the conversion of great sinners, let them hear the gentle persuasive voice of God. You, as believers, have everything! Christ is yours. Heaven is yours. You are always with God and all that He has belongs to you. But it is proper and fit that when a sinner returns from the error of his ways, they should ring the bells of heaven and make a fuss over him, for he was dead and is alive again! I hope that you and I will never catch the spirit of the elder brother. Yet I remember that Krummacher says that he sometimes found that same spirit in himself. There was a man in the village where Krummacher lived, who was a great drunkard and everything that was bad. But all of a sudden he came into a very large sum of money and became a wealthy man. Krummacher felt, "Well, this hardly looks like the right thing—so many good, honest, hard-working people in the parish still remaining poor, and this worthless man has suddenly become wealthy and well-to-do." It seemed a strange way in the order of providence. Oh, we ought to rejoice and be glad when another person prospers! And we ought to wish that his prosperity may be blessed to him.

I remember a minister years ago, when first Mr. Moody came, saying that he did not believe that Mr. Moody was sent of God, "Because," he said, "I find that many of the people who are converted under him never went to a place of worship before. It is only the riffraff that are brought in." There is a nasty elder brother spirit! The riffraff were just the people that we wanted to bring in and if they had never been to a place of worship before, it was time that they should go! It was a mercy that they were brought in! Oh, instead of ever sniffing at sinners as if we were better than they, let us welcome them with all our heart and praise the heavenly Father that He so lovingly takes them in!

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WHEAT IN THE BARN
NO. 3393

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But gather the wheat into My barn."
Matthew 13:30.

"GATHER the wheat into My barn." Then the purpose of the Son of man will be accomplished. He sowed good seed and He shall have His barn filled with it at the last. Be not dispirited, Christ will not be disappointed. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." He went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, but He shall come again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

"Gather the wheat into My barn." Then Satan's policy will be unsuccessful. The enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, hopeful that the false wheat would destroy or materially injure the true—but he failed in the end, for the wheat ripened and was ready to be gathered. Christ's garner shall be filled—the tares shall not choke the wheat. The evil one will be put to shame!

In gathering in the wheat, good angels will be employed—"the angels are the reapers." This casts special scorn upon the great evil angel. He sows the tares and tries to destroy the harvest and, therefore, the good angels are brought in to celebrate his defeat and to rejoice together with their Lord in the success of the divine husbandry. Satan will make a poor profit out of his meddling—he shall be defeated in all his efforts and so the threat shall be fulfilled, "Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat."

By giving the angels work to do, all intelligent creatures, of whose existence we have information, are made to take an interest in the work of grace—whether for malice or for adoration, redemption excites them all. The wonderful works of God are made manifest to all, for these things were not done in a corner.

We too much forget the angels. Let us not overlook their tender sympathy with us—they behold the Lord rejoicing over our repentance—and they rejoice with Him! They are our watchers and the Lord's messengers of mercy. They bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot against a stone. And when we come to die, they carry us to the bosom of our Lord. It is one of our joys that we have come to an innumerable company of angels—let us think of them with affection.

At this time I will keep to my text and preach from it almost word by word. It begins with, "but," and that is—

I. A WORD OF SEPARATION.

Here note that the tares and the wheat will grow together until the time of harvest shall come. It is a great sorrow of heart to some of the wheat to be growing side by side with tares. The ungodly are as thorns

and briars to those who fear the Lord. How frequently is the sigh forced forth from the godly heart, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" A man's foes are often found within his own household. Those who should have been his best helpers are often his worst hinderers. Their conversation vexes and torments him. It is of little use to try to escape from them, for the tares are permitted, in God's providence, to grow with the wheat—and they will do so until the end. Good men have emigrated to distant lands to found communities in which there should be none but saints, but, alas, sinners have sprung up in their own families! The attempt to weed the ungodly and heretical out of the settlement has led to persecution and other evils—and the whole plan has proven a failure. Others have shut themselves away in hermitages to avoid the temptations of the world, and so have hoped to win the victory by running away—this is not the way of wisdom! The word for this present is, "Let both grow together." *But* there will come a time when a final separation will be made. Then, dear Christian woman, your husband will never persecute you again! Godly sister, your brother will heap no more ridicule upon you! Pious workman, there will be no more jesting and taunting from the ungodly! That, "but," will be an iron gate between the God-fearing and the godless! Then will the tares be cast into the fire, *but* the Lord of the harvest will say, "Gather the wheat into My barn."

This separation must be made, for the growing of the wheat and the tares together on earth has caused much pain and injury and, therefore, it will not be continued in a happier world. We can very well suppose that godly men and women might be willing that their unconverted children should dwell with them in heaven, but it cannot be, for God will not have His cleansed ones defiled, nor His glorified ones tried by the presence of the unbelieving. The tares must be taken away in order to the perfectness and usefulness of the wheat. Would you have the tares and the wheat heaped up together in the granary in one mass? That would be bad husbandry with a vengeance! They can neither of them be put to appropriate use till thoroughly separated. Even so, mark you, the saved and the unsaved may live together *here*, but they will not live together in another world! The command is absolute—"Gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: *but* gather the wheat into My barn." Sinner, can you hope to enter heaven? You never loved your mother's God and is He to endure you in His heavenly courts? You never trusted your father's Savior and yet are you to behold His glory forever? Are you to go swaggering down the streets of heaven, letting fall an oath, or singing a loose song? Why, you know you get tired of the worship of God on the Lord's Day—do you think that the Lord will endure unwilling worshipers in the temple above? The Sabbath is a wearisome day to you—how can you hope to enter into the Sabbath of God? You have no taste for heavenly pursuits and these things would be profaned if you were permitted to partake in them! Therefore that word, "but," must come in and you must part from the Lord's people, never to meet again! Can you bear to think of being divided from godly friends forever and ever?

That separation involves an awful difference of destiny. "Gather the tares in bundles to burn them." I do not dare to draw the picture, but when the bundle is bound up, there is no place for it except the fire. God grant that you may never know all the anguish which burning must mean, but may you escape from it at once. It is no trifle which the Lord of love compares to being consumed with fire. I am quite certain that no words of mine can ever set forth its terror. They say that we speak dreadful things about the wrath to come, but I am sure that we understate the case. What must the tender, loving, gracious Jesus have meant by the words, "Gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them"? See what a wide distinction there is between the lot of the Lord's people and Satan's people! Burn the wheat? Oh, no—"Gather the wheat into My barn." There let them be happily, safely housed forever! Oh, the infinite distance between heaven and hell!—the harps and the angels, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth! Who can ever measure the width of that gulf which divides the glorified saint, robed in white and crowned with immortality, from the soul which is driven forever away from the presence of God and from the glory of His power? It is a dreadful, "but"—that, "but" of separation! I pray you, remember that it will interpose between brother and brother—between mother and child—between husband and wife. "One shall be taken and the other left." And when that sword shall descend to divide, there shall never be any union later!

The separation is eternal. There is no hope or possibility of change in the world to come. "But," says one, "that dreadful '*but*'! Why must there be such a difference? The answer is because there always was a difference! The wheat was sown by the Son of man—the false wheat was sown by the enemy. There was always a difference in character—the wheat was good, the tares were evil. This difference did not appear at first, but it became more and more apparent as the wheat ripened and as the tares ripened, too. They were totally different plants—and so a regenerate person and an unregenerate person are altogether different beings. I have heard an unregenerate man say that he is quite as good as the godly man, but in so boasting he betrayed his pride. Surely there is as great a difference in God's sight between the unsaved and the believer as between darkness and light, or between the dead and the living! There is in the one a life which there is not in the other—and the difference is vital and radical. Oh, that you may never trifle with this essential matter, but really be the wheat of the Lord! It is vain to have the name of wheat—we must have the nature of wheat! God will not be mocked—He will not be pleased by our calling ourselves Christians while we are not! Be not satisfied with church membership, but seek after membership with Christ! Do not talk about faith, but exercise it! Do not boast of experience, but possess it. Be not *like* the wheat, but be the wheat! No shams and imitations will stand in the last great day! That terrible, "but," will roll as a sea of fire between the true and the false! Oh, Holy Spirit, let each of us be found transformed by Your power! The next word of our text is, "gather,"—that is—

II. A WORD OF CONGREGATION.

What a blessed thing this gathering is! I feel it a great pleasure to gather multitudes together to hear the gospel! And is it not a joy to see a house full of people on weekdays and Sundays who are willing to leave their homes and to come considerable distances to listen to the gospel? It is a great thing to gather people together for that, but the gathering of the wheat into the barn is a far more wonderful business. Gathering is, in itself, better than scattering, and I pray that the Lord Jesus may always exercise His attracting power in this place, for He is no divider, but, "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Has He not said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me"?

Observe that the congregation mentioned in our text is *selected and assembled by skilled gatherers.* "The angels are the reapers." Ministers could not do it, for they do not know all the Lord's wheat and they are apt to make mistakes—some by too great leniency and others by excessive severity. Our poor judgments occasionally shut out saints and often shut in sinners. The angels will know their Master's property. They know each saint, for they were present at his birthday. Angels know when sinners repent and they never forget the persons of the penitents. They have witnessed the lives of those who have believed and have helped them in their spiritual battles, and so they know them. Yes, angels by a holy instinct discern the Father's children and are not to be deceived. They will not fail to gather all the wheat and to leave out every tare!

But they are *gathered under a very stringent regulation,* for, first of all, according to the parable, the tares—the false wheat—have been taken out and then the angelic reapers gather nothing but the wheat. The seed of the serpent, fathered by Satan, is thus separated from the seed of the kingdom, owned by Jesus, the promised deliverer. This is the one distinction and no other is taken into consideration. If the most amiable unconverted persons could stand in the ranks with the saints, the angels would not bear them to heaven, for the mandate is, "Gather the wheat." Could the most honest man be found standing in the center of the church, with all the members round about him and with all the ministers entreating that he might be spared, yet if he were not a believer, he could not be carried into the divine garner! There is no help for it. The angels have no choice in the matter—the peremptory command is, "Gather *the wheat*," and they must gather none else!

It will be *a gathering from very great distances*. Some of the wheat ripens in the South Sea Islands, in China, and in Japan. Some flourishes in France, broad acres grow in the United States—there is scarcely a land without a portion of the good grain! Where all God's wheat grows, I cannot tell. There is a remnant, according to the election of grace, among every nation and people, but the angels will gather all the good grain to the same garner.

"Gather the wheat." *The saints will be found in all ranks of society.* The angels will bring in a few ears from palaces and great armfuls from cottages! Many will be collected from the lowly cottages of our villages and hamlets, and others will be raised up from the back slums of our great cities to the metropolis of God! From the darkest places angels will bring those children of sweetness and light who seldom beheld the sun,

and yet were pure in heart and saw their God! The hidden and obscure shall be brought into the light of God, for the Lord knows them that are His—and His harvest-men will not miss them.

To me, it is a charming thought that *they will come from all the ages*. Let us hope that our first father, Adam, will be there. And mother Eve, following in the footsteps of their dear son, Abel, and trusting in the same sacrifice. We shall meet Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, and all the saints made perfect! What a joy to see the apostles, martyrs, and Reformers! I long to see Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, and Whitefield. I like the rhyme of good old father Ryland—

"They all shall be there, the great and the small!
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul."

I do not know how that will be, but I have not much doubt that we shall have fellowship with all the saints of every age in the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven!

No matter when or where the wheat grew, *it shall be gathered into the one barn*—gathered never to be scattered—gathered out of all divisions of the visible Church, never to be divided again! They grew in different fields. Some flourished on the hillside where Episcopalians grow in all their glory! And others in the lowlier soil, where Baptists multiply, and Methodists flourish! But once the wheat is in the barn, none can tell in which field the ears grew. Then, indeed, shall the Master's prayer have a glorious answer—"That they all may be one." All our errors removed and our mistakes corrected and forgiven, the one Lord, the one faith and the one baptism will be known of us all—and there will be no more displeasure and envying! What a blessed gathering it will be! What a meeting! The elect of God, the *elite* of all the centuries, of whom the world was not worthy! I should not like to be away. If there were no hell, it would be hell enough to me to be shut out of such heavenly society! If there were no weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, it would be dreadful enough to miss the presence of the Lord, and the joy of praising Him forever, and the bliss of meeting with all the noblest beings that ever lived! Amid the necessary controversies of the age, I, who have been doomed to seem a man of strife, sigh for the blessed rest wherein all spiritual minds shall blend in eternal accord before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Oh, that we were all right, that we might be all happily united in one spirit! In the text there is next—

III. A WORD OF DESIGNATION.

I have already trespassed upon that domain. "Gather *the wheat*." Nothing but "the wheat" will be placed in the Lord's homestead. Lend me your hearts while I urge you to a searching examination for a minute or two. *The wheat was sown of the Lord*. Are you sown of the Lord? Friend, if you have any religion, how did you get it? Was it self-sown? If so, it is good for nothing! The true wheat was sown by the Son of man. Are you sown of the Lord? Did the Spirit of God drop eternal life into your bosom? Did it come from that dear hand which was nailed to the cross? Is Jesus your life? Does your life begin and end with Him? If so, it is well!

The wheat was sown of the Lord—it is also *the object of the Lord's care*. Wheat needs a deal of attention. The farmer would get nothing from it if he did not watch it carefully. Are you under the Lord's care? Does He keep you? Is that word true of your soul, "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? Do you experience such keeping? Give an honest answer, as you love your soul.

Next, wheat *is a useful thing*, a gift from God for the life of men. The false wheat was of no good to anybody—it could only be eaten of swine—and then it made them stagger like drunken men! Are you one of those who are wholesome in society, who are like bread to the world, so that if men receive you, your example and your teaching, they will be blessed thereby? Judge yourselves whether you are good or evil in life and influence.

"Gather the wheat." You know that God must put the goodness, the grace, the solidity and the usefulness into you, or else you will never be wheat fit for angelic gathering. One thing is true of the wheat—that *it is the most dependent of all plants*. I have never heard of a field of wheat which sprang up and grew and ripened without a farmer's care. Some ears may appear after a harvest when the corn has died out, but I have never heard of plains in America or elsewhere covered with unsown wheat. No, no. There is no wheat where there is no man, and there is no grace where there is no Christ! We owe our very existence to the Father, who is the farmer.

Yet, dependent as it is, wheat stands in the front rank of honor and esteem—and so do the godly in the judgment of all who are of an understanding heart. We are nothing without Christ—but with Him we are full of honor. Oh, to be among those by whom the world is preserved, the excellent of the earth in whom the saints delight! God forbid we should be among the base and worthless tares! Our last head, upon which also I will speak briefly, is—

IV. A WORD OF DESTINATION.

"Gather the wheat *into My barn*." The process of gathering in the wheat will be completed at the day of judgment, but it is going on every day. From hour to hour saints are gathered—they are going heavenward even now. I am so glad to hear as a regular thing that the departed ones from my own dear Church have such joy in being harvested. Glory be to God, our people die well! The best thing is to live well, but we are greatly gladdened to hear that the brethren die well, for, full often, that is the most telling witness for vital godliness. Men of the world feel the power of triumphant deaths!

Every hour the saints are being gathered into the barn. That is where they want to be. We feel no pain at the news of ingathering, for we wish to be safely stored up by our Lord. If the wheat that is in the field could speak, every grain would say, "The ultimatum for which we are living and growing is the barn, the granary." For this the frosty night! For this the sunny days! For this the dew and the rain—and for this everything! Every process with the wheat is tending towards the granary. So is it with us—everything is working towards heaven—towards the gathering place—towards the congregation of the righteous—towards the vision of our

Redeemer's face! Our death will cause no jar in our life-music! It will involve no pause, or even discord—it is part of a program—the crowning of our whole history!

To the wheat the barn is the place of security. It dreads no mildew there. It fears no frost, no heat, no drought, no wet when once in the barn. All its growth-perils are past. It has reached its perfection. It has rewarded the labor of the farmer and it is housed. Oh, long-expected day, begin! Oh, brothers and sisters, what a blessing it will be when you and I shall have come to our maturity and Christ shall see in us the travail of His soul!

I delight to think of heaven as *His* barn! *His* barn, what must that be? It is but the poverty of language that such an expression has to be used at all concerning the home of our Father, the dwelling of Jesus! Heaven is the palace of the King, but so far to us a barn because it is the place of security, the place of rest forever! It is the homestead of Christ to which we shall be carried and for this we are ripening. It is to be thought of with ecstatic joy, for the gathering into the barn involves a harvest home and I have never heard of men sitting down to cry over an earthly harvest home, nor of their following the sheaves with tears! No, they clap their hands, they dance for joy and shout right lustily! Let us do something like that, concerning those who are already housed. With grave, sweet melodies let us sing around their tombs. Let us feel that, surely, the bitterness of death is passed. When we remember their glory, we may rejoice like the travailing woman when her child is born, who "remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Another soul begins to sing in heaven—why do you weep, O heirs of immortality? Is the eternal happiness of the righteous, the birth which comes of their death-pangs? Then happy are they who die! Is glory the end and outcome of that which fills our home with mourning? If so, thank God for bereavements! Thank God for sad severing! He has promoted our dear ones to the skies! He has blessed them beyond all that we could ask or even think! He has taken them out of this weary world to lie in His bosom forever! Blessed be His name if it were for nothing else but this! Would you keep your old father here, full of pain and broken down with feebleness? Would you shut him out of glory? Would you detain your dear wife here with all her suffering? Would you hold back your husband from the immortal crown? Could you wish your child to descend to earth again from the bliss which now surrounds her? No, no! We wish to be going home ourselves, to the heavenly Father's house and its many mansions! But concerning the departed, we rejoice before the Lord as with the joy of harvest! "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:1-23; 15:13-28; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:17-23.

Verses 1, 2. *The same day went Jesus out of the house and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

He had thus a little breathing space between Him and the people—a better opportunity for His being both heard and seen. A noble instance of open-air preaching. And if our climate would permit, what a blessing it would be if we could turn out of these houses and sit in a boat or stand on the seashore!

3-9. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them. Some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them; but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.* Upon the very surface of it, this parable teaches those of us who have to sow that we must not expect to have our choice of the ground—and that we are not even to make a choice of the matter, but we are bound to go, as this sower did, and cast a handful there upon the hard trodden road and a handful there among the thorns and nettles, and a handful here again where there is no deepness of earth and God be thanked if a handful shall fall on good ground. Still, for us to suppose that we are to sort out the characters and to select the ground is a very great mistake! "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." A distinction will soon come! The seed will be the grand detective of the soil. It will show what the soil is. Just as Christ on the cross is the discerner of men's thoughts, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, so is the preaching of Christ crucified the test of human condition! You shall see now who it is that has the honest and good ground, and who has not. Not by a geological inspection, but simply by throwing a handful of seed on it. That will soon discern between the precious and the vile.

10-16. *And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why do You speak unto 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 what he has. 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 waxed 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 hearts and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.* A judicial blindness and deafness of heart had come over the nation of Israel, so that even when the sun shone in its strength in the person and teaching of Christ, they could not see. And when God spoke more plainly than He ever spoke before, by His Son, yet they could not hear so as to understand. And I sometimes fear that some measure of this judicial blindness has happened unto many in our land. Those who take the

metaphors of Scripture and interpret them literally and dare to take out of the old law excuses for ritualistic observance—what can we say of them, but that this people's hearts have waxed gross? God has done very much for our country. He has seeded it with the blood of martyrs. The scars of martyrdom have hardly passed away and, after all this, if men will go back to the fooleries of popish ceremony—if they will put from them the blessed light of the gospel of Jesus Christ—depend upon it, God will give them up to some kind of hardness of heart, so that they will plunge from one superstition to another, and their last end shall be worse than the first! But blessed are they who, being taught of God, can perceive the spirit beneath the letter, and do not confound the emblems which the Savior used, but suck out the meaning from them as bees do the honey from the flowers!

17-19. *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see and not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them. 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 seed by the way side.* Do you notice here the importance of the Word of God? But when it is heard, but not understood, you would suppose that the devil might as well let it stay where it was, for what hurt could it do to his kingdom for the man to hear it and not to understand it? But he is so frightened at the Word of God that he comes, like an evil bird, and takes it away for fear lest lying even in the dull heart without understanding, yet, somehow, it should breed an understanding in the heart! And so he takes it away from the thoughts and the memory, so fearful is he of it. "Nothing makes the devil tremble like the gospel," said Martin Luther, and I do not doubt that all the churches in the world, with all their ceremonies, are less feared by the devil than one single doctrine or text out of the Word of God! So he comes, like an evil bird, and catches away that which was sown in the heart. You must expect to lose a good deal of your teaching. As farmers drop several beans in the hole and say, "That one is for the worm; this one is for the crow—then there is another which they hope will spring up—so must we expect it to be with our teaching—much of which will be lost.

20, 21. *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it. Yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: but when tribulation or persecution arises, because of the word, by-and-by he is offended.* A straw fire blazes fiercely, but lasts not long. And so there are some who we hope are converts who show an extraordinary zeal, and you would fancy that, surely, they would outrun all Christians! But they have not breath. They are not good stayers. They soon cease in the race. They are soon hot—soon cold. And we may expect to have many disappointments from persons of this character, and all the more so among children—readily impressed, but easily do they lose the impression.

22. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke*

the word, and he becomes unfruitful. Dear friends who have to teach the young, you have, in their case, less danger in this respect. They have not yet come to the time when the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches will choke the Word. You have some advantage over us, though even the little things of a child's play may make nettles and thorns. Things which we could not consider to be cares—that seem too trivial—are cares to them. It may be that our heavenly Father thinks of our cares very much as we think of our children's cares—and as we should smile to see them distrustful, so it may be that He smiles and grieves whenever He finds us so. For, mark you, even among God's own people, God's Word cannot grow in our hearts at the rate it should, for we have the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. We must cry to be lifted above these—delivered from the evil influences of the world in which we dwell—or else our good Lord and Master will waste many a handful of good seed upon us, though, I trust, that out of us He will get some harvest.

23. *But he that received seed into good ground is he that hears the word, and understands which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* For all Christians are not alike fruitful. Would God they all reached to the hundredfold and went beyond it! Such seed, and such a sower, and such fruitful seasons as He has given to some of us, and such plowing and such tilling, and such feeding, and such watering, and such sunshine, and such dew—oh, we ought to bring forth a hundredfold! Let us chide ourselves and whenever we have to complain that we do not get a harvest from our sowing, or as much as we could desire, let us look within and say, "My heart, you are like the field I have to sow. My Master, I fear, gets as little out of you as I get when I go unsuccessfully to my work."

MATTHEW 15:13-15; 21-28.

13. *But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.* He had not any peculiar tenderness towards them, they were not plants of his Father's planting—they deserved to be rooted up and their teaching was so utterly false that if He had offended against it, He was glad to have done so.

14. *Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* The bad teacher and he that is badly taught, for they are both responsible, shall both fall into the ditch. No man can lay the sin of his being misdirected entirely upon his priest or his teacher. He had no business to have submitted to him. At the same time, it is a very serious responsibility for a man who knows not God to attempt to teach the things of God. I know a man who, in a certain place of worship was deeply convinced of sin—the arrows of God stuck in him and, being in great distress, he went to the minister and told him how he felt the burden of his guilt. The minister said to him, "My dear friend, I really had no intention of making you uneasy—what was it I said?—I will get the sermon—I am very sorry, but really I do not know anything about it." The man said, "You told us we must be born-again." "Oh," said the minister, "that was done for you when a child—your parents did it." "You know, sir, we must be converted." "Well, really

I do not understand it. I am afraid I have disturbed you unnecessarily." Our friend, however, was not to be put off, so he sought and found the Savior. But how dreadful a thing it is when the blind lead the blind—they shall both fall into the ditch!

15. *Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man.* There is no defilement about that. Cleanliness is to be observed, but not the mere act of washing just for the sake of it, every time you eat bread, which defiles not a man! But oh, what defilement there is in evil thought! In anger, which breeds murder! In lust, which leads to adultery and fornication! In covetousness which begets theft! And in a false heart which leads to false witness, and in a profane mind which leads to blasphemy! Oh, that God would cleanse our secret thoughts, the very center of our hearts, for until the fountain is made clean, the stream that comes from it cannot be pure!

21, 22. *Then Jesus went from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* "But He answered her not a word." How painful that silence must have been! In what suspense she was.

23. *But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away: for she cries after us.* They were mistaken. She did not cry after them—she knew better than that! She cried after the Lord, after the great Son of David, not after them, but, however, she disturbed them.

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Christ's personal ministry was confined to the Jews. He came as a Savior to redeem all mankind, but as a preacher, He was a minister to the Circumcision and He came to speak only to Israel.

25. *Then came she and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me!* Her prayer got shorter and she grew more intense, more energetic, more determined to win the blessing. "Lord help me!"

26-28. *But He answered and said, It is not right to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Oh, can you exercise a like faith in Christ? If so, you shall get a like blessing! Only believe in Him! Only make up your mind and however great the mercy, it cannot be too great for Him to give! And believe that He will give it, rest on Him to bestow it and you shall have it! God grant that many may receive it at this very hour!

1 CORINTHIANS 3:17-23.

17-18. *If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* Do not let him seek to be reckoned wise by the philosophers of the period who are always against the truth of God. Let him consent to be thought to be a fool—yes, let him know in his own heart that he is not wise—and then let him yield himself up to the wisdom of God. Consciousness of ignorance is the vestibule of knowledge! And he that knows right well that he is a fool is on the way to becoming a wise man! He that would pass into the temple of wisdom must first of all confess his ignorance.

19, 20. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.* What a wonderfully small difference there is, after all, between the very cultured man, who thinks himself so, and the man who makes no pretense to it whatever! The knowledge which the wisest man has is about equal, in the presence of God, to the knowledge which one child of three years old has over a child of two years old! To God we must all seem masses of ignorance! And if you could put the whole British Association, all the doctors of divinity, and all the LL.D.'s and all the men of high degrees together, the things they did *not* know would make a great many volumes—and the things they *did* know would not go very far. "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain."

21. *Therefore let no man glory in men.* There really is not anything to glory in, in men! "The best of men are men at the best." Never need we exalt ourselves or extol others. "Lord, what is man that You are mindful of him?" "Let no man glory in men."

21 *For all things are yours.* Children of God, all men are yours, to serve your highest benefit! All ministers and leaders in Christ are yours to seek your souls' good! Treat them as bees do flowers, and gather honey from them all. "All things are yours."

22-23, *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

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A SERMON
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When He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" Matthew 21:10.

THIS was not the first time that question had been asked, or asked concerning the same person. "Who is this?" is a common question in reference to our Lord. "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" "Who is this king of glory?" and so on. Doubtless, the angels who are represented as standing on the mercy-seat gazing down upon its golden brightness, desired to look into this very question in the olden times, and often said to one another, "Who is this?" We hear the prophet speak of One who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and is therefore man, but He is called by the same prophet equal with God, fellow of the Eternal! How can this be? "Who is this?" The subject of the incarnation of a pure Spirit such as God is, in human flesh, must have been staggering even to the intellect of seraphs—and again and again they must have said, one to another, "Who is this?"

I can conceive that on that memorable night when the first Christmas carol made glad both heaven and earth, the angels came to Bethlehem's manger and looked upon the new-born child, and said, "Who is this?" Knowing that He was the same person to whom they had been obedient for many an age, the ever-glorious Son of God, they must have marveled to find Him an infant sleeping there where the horned oxen fed, or hanging on a woman's breast! And they said to each other, "Who is this?" And I can conceive that they followed Him through those 12 years of His childhood, or during the years in which He remained in solitude and obscurity, unknown to the sons of men, and though they knew Him as the son of Mary, and the reputed son of Joseph, yet as watchful spirits they must have seen the pure beams of deity in His character! And so the marvelous and supernal excellence of His secret life must often have compelled them to ask, one of another, "Who is this?"

He is in the carpenter's workshop, using the axe and the plane, and yet this is He who is to deliver Israel! How is this, and who is this? And I can imagine them following Him through the three years of His public ministry in the wilderness beholding Him tempted of the devil, though Lord of all and Prince and King! When they watched Him in His hunger, and cold, and nakedness, and saw Him in His sleepless nights upon the

bare mountainside—when they beheld Him and strengthened Him in His agony and bloody sweat—when they gathered around the cross, with all its terrors, could their eyes have known a tear, they would have wept it there and would have said, "Who is this?" When He was buried and after three days, rose again from the grave, there must have been amazement through all the angelic host! They came, some of them, and sat, the one at the head and the other at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain, still wondering much at the great mystery. We can well gather that they asked such questions onward through His life, since when that life had come to a close, and the issues of it had begun to be developed, when our Lord ascended up on high and led captivity captive, clothed with glory—when they came to meet Him, joined in the triumphal procession and approached the golden gates—when the songs went up, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in!" there was a wonder lingering among the watchers at the portals of heaven, for they said, "Who is the King of glory?" And again, a second time they said, "Who is the Lord of hosts? Who is the King of glory?" and they had to receive the two answers—they had to be told who He was that was mighty in battle and the Lord of hosts who was the King of glory! Do they not even now marvel, as they cast their crowns upon the glassy sea and mingle with the white-robed band—do they not now marvel that such as He should be born of a woman, that such as He should be tempted by the devil, that such as He should have known poverty, and nakedness, and death itself? Those wounds, those scars still visible, must still be a theme for holy admiration and adoring questioning! And as they worship Him, recognizing in Him the wisdom that was with God in the beginning, and without whom was not anything made that was made—as they adore Him as the eternal Word, the Preserver as well as the Creator of all things—they must still, as they look to His manhood taken into such union with His Godhead, think of Him with holy amazement, with joyous astonishment and ask, "Who is this?"

But we have not to do with the angels at this time! Rather our business is with the sons of men. And among them there ought to be more of the asking of this question, and there ought to be less. There ought to be more of it, the asking in holy wonder! There ought to be less of the asking of it in ignorance or in derision. The question, I take it, can be asked in both ways. Endeavoring to understand the mystery, he that knows it best may still say, "Who is this?" Caring not to know Him, but scornfully turning aside from this great mystery of godliness, there are tens of thousands who will continue to say, "Who is this? And why make this noise about Him, and all this stir and hubbub about the man of Nazareth?" This question is still asked among the sons of men because in one sense it ought to be more common, but because in another sense it ought never to be raised, I speak upon it tonight. And first we shall take—

I. THE QUESTION AS IT STOOD IN REFERENCE TO THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM.

I suppose there was a pretty common knowledge of our Lord in Jerusalem. He spoke openly in the temple. He was no teacher in secret conventicles, hidden away in the dark. He had been seen in their streets. His miracles had been the subjects of admiring wonder and observation by tens of thousands. They knew who He was. Many of them rather delighted to remember His lowly origin. "His brothers, are they not all with us?" They knew His mother. They said they knew His father. "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" A knowledge of Christ was pretty general. They did not ask the question out of ignorance, but it was asked for this reason, among others—by some it was asked because *now He came under quite a different aspect from that in which He had ever appeared before*. He never rode, that I know of, upon the land but that once. He never rode in anything like pomp or state. He had come into Jerusalem and He had gone out of it, a simple private individual, claiming no office except that of preacher. But on this occasion He comes as a King! Riding in pomp as one who claims to be honored among men, and even claims to be King, for He says, "Behold, your King comes, meek and lowly." They, therefore, said, "Who is this?" What a change has come over the scene!—

"The lowly man before His foes,
The weary man and full of woes."

Does He ride, and ride amidst shouts of popular acclaim, He that did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets? He? Does He come in this guise? Therefore greatly struck and amazed by the change, they said, "Who is this?" Yes, and we may learn from this that when Christ, who is still among the sons of men as the meek and lowly Savior, bearing with their bad behavior, and saying, "Come you weary, take My yoke and bear it, and you shall find rest"—when He comes before long as the King of kings and Lord of lords, the whole earth will then cry out, "Who is this?"

Is this the man that bled at Calvary? Is this the man that died praying for His enemies? And does He come with a rod of iron in His hand to break the nations and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel? Oh, what astonishment will seize the sons of men when they see the King in His glory, whom they would not understand nor serve when He came in the meekness and gentleness of love!

Part of the reason why the people of Jerusalem asked the question was, no doubt, this—*they were struck with the remarkable enthusiasm with which the people received Him*. People had been enthusiastic at other times, but then it had been immediately after they had been fed with the loaves and fishes and, therefore, their enthusiasm was very easily accounted for. But on this occasion there had been no feeding with loaves and fishes, and yet here He was received by a most enthusiastic crowd. They could not, if they had all been sure that He was the very Messiah, have received Him outwardly with greater delight. There were

their garments for Him to sit upon. There were their garments in the road to carpet the ground which was thought too coarse for Him to tread upon. There were the trees, denuded of their branches, and the palm branches borne in front amidst general acclamations of, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" Yes, and the world may say whenever it sees an enthusiastic Church, whenever it beholds a company of people treating Christ as He ought to be treated, "Who is this?" The Church, as we generally see it, never excites any wonderment among men. They quite understand what it is—a compact of people who have got enough religion to make themselves comfortable and form an association for mutual admiration. But a genuine Church is a company formed for the admiration of Christ Jesus! A company of people who are melted into one because they are all red-hot and flow like streams of molten metal into one mold—all united, loving Christ after such a sort that they would not merely put their garments in the road, but would themselves make a road—who would wish, themselves, that their blood could be shed if Christ might be glorious! When the world sees such a Church as this, then they begin to cry, one to another, "Who is this? Who is this around whom such enthusiasm gathers?" Glory be to God, Your day shall yet come to this world when the Church shall wake from her slumbers! Then shall she be ashamed of herself, to have treated her bridegroom in such a scurvy manner! When she once loves Him as she ought and puts the crown upon His head as she should—then will the whole earth say, "Who is this?"

I have no doubt; also that part of the question of the people of Jerusalem arose *from the singular nature of the pomp with which the enthusiastic multitude surrounded our Lord*. There was a great deal of beauty about it, but how very simple it was, how altogether opposed to the usual array, to the usual order of pomp! Why, my brothers and sisters, if you could see the pomp in which great priests—say, at Rome—are carried through the streets, with men all clad in liveries, with attendants in blue and scarlet, and fine linen and peacocks' feathers, and the high elevated throne on which the man is carried who claims to be, "his holiness," you would see how artificial it all is! And it is all the same if there is nobody there that cares about it! True, some may, but if they did not, it would be all the same. It would all be gone through and the admiration that is poured on any of these kings and princes—well, it all comes as a matter of course! It is natural that we poor worms of the dust should clap our hands when we see a king. Of course, it is the bounden duty of such ordinary mortals as we are to pay wonderful respect to all those who happen to have a peculiar kind of blood in their veins. That is the order of things and, as long as people are conventional fools, it always will be! And the men of the world will always remain so. We shall always reverence rank, whether it has any worthy character about it or not—and priests will always like such reverence as that!

But here was a different style of pomp altogether. Here was a plain, common man, whose garment was merely the smock-frock of an ordinary

peasant—a garment "without seam, woven from the top throughout"—a man who made no professions to rank, did not separate Himself at all from the people! And here they have extemporized for Him a pomp in which every jot and tittle is true and real! There was not a shout raised here because it was the custom to raise shouts to Jesus of Nazareth. There was not a garment strewed in the way because His office required Him to be esteemed. It was all genuine, true, real and, mark you, brothers and sisters, there is no pomp like it!

What a distinction there is between the honor given to a monarch who is beloved, such as we would give to ours—and the honor that is given to a monarch such as the one I spoke of just now—who is honored merely because he is a monarch, but whom men would honor just as heartily or even more heartily if he were gone! Now, the honor given to our Lord Jesus Christ was all given because of His person and the work that He had really done in the raising of Lazarus, out of—I will not say true spiritual affection, for the multitude did not understand Him in His deeper character, so as to receive Him spiritually—but out of a real feeling of reverence for this wonderful being. There was a natural pomp about the whole thing that quite distinguished it from anything that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had ever seen before. Some of them might have seen a Caesar or a Pompey come home from the wars. Some of them might have seen the conquerors and their pageants, and their triumphal return into the capital and all the imposing preparations that were made that everyone might join in the welcome. They hailed him as Rome's greatest man, who trod Rome's enemies beneath his heels. But they had never seen anything like this—when the very children in the streets took up the cry and said, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." And so they said, "Who is this?"

Now, mark you, this is always one of the points which should distinguish the triumphs of Christ. It is not the victory of officialism. It is not the splendor of outward dress, and form, and show. There is a real force over men's hearts so that they come to love Jesus for what He truthfully is to them. It is not a mock homage which they pay, which consists of genuflections and of pompous ceremonies, but it is that they exult at the very thought of Him! The heart invents, without being taught, its own method of praising Him, seeking out and straining after new songs with which to sing unto the Lord who has gloriously triumphed! I do believe that the very beauty of the Christian religion is its simplicity. And the beauty of the Church of God is its having simple worship—all its joys and all its pomp being that which comes out of the simple heart—which has no form, no ceremony and needs no directorium, no rule by which to guide it but just does what it feels to be the natural expression of that which is felt within. And wherever this is, the world cries, "Who is this?"

Still, there were some in that crowd who did not ask the question for that reason at all, but merely that they might say, *"Who is this? What is He? What's in it? It is all an imposture! He is not the Messiah! He comes*

not in the name of the Lord." They looked down upon the crowd who followed Christ, and they said, "It is a vulgar herd—have any of the rulers believed in Him? Did the Rabbis follow at His heels? Do the scribes and chief priests accept Him? Who is this?" Well, and this, too, is a part of the proof of the true Christ. Wherever He is fully preached and His power is known, there is sure to be stirred up a company of men who, knowing nothing of the real power of the gospel, will be quite sure to sneer at it! They will say it is only the poor who come to it, as though that were not said of old, "The poor have the gospel preached to them." They will say it is only the illiterate, as though they had not known that the Apostle Paul, himself, blessed God that He "had chosen the foolish things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are." There will always be those who, not caring to enjoy, themselves, the blessings of the Great Shepherd's reign, will sneer at all those who would. Let us accept their sneers as the only tribute they can render to Christ, and as true a proof of His excellence and His glory as the admiration of His followers!

I will not detain you further about the people of Jerusalem, but now just observe that—

II. THIS QUESTION WILL ALWAYS BE ASKED WHENEVER JESUS CHRIST COMES INTO ANY PLACE THROUGH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

Ah, my brothers and sisters, I am not about to criticize that which is called the preaching of the gospel, so as to condemn it in any wholesale way, but I will say this, that wherever the gospel has been preached simply, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with the plain words of the common tongue; wherever Christ has been preached affectionately; wherever the whole gospel has been delivered with fervor and with impartiality, it has never failed in any place, or in any time, to draw attention to itself, to excite enquiry and to compel men to take sides about it, one way or the other! We need never be afraid that the gospel is not suitable to any village, that the inhabitants are too degraded. Take it there and they must and shall receive it, or else, at their peril shall they reject it! But they will hear it! It shall attract them! They shall be found, if not willing acceptors of it, yet at least willing hearers of it, willing critics of it and that is something! We need not, on the other hand, be afraid to take the gospel among the most enlightened classes. Whatever they may know, they know nothing superior to the Word of Jesus Christ—and it shall command even their attention. They shall be compelled to examine it and if it is not a savor of life unto life to them, still it shall be a savor of death—and to God in either case—a sweet savor of Jesus Christ! Let us never think that the gospel needs to be rendered attractive by some additions of our own! It is like a sword that cuts just as well without the diamonds in the hilt, for the cut of it lies not in the handle, but in the sword itself. The gospel will cut and clear its own way. I scarcely think we shall need to come down to the use of so-called popular lectures on Sundays. I think we shall never need to come down to catchwords for

sermons. The gospel will, after all, if it is but drawn out of its scabbard and lifted up as the bare and naked sword of the Lord, be pretty sure to cut its own way. And, ah, how have we learned in the past, when the gospel has come to a place and it has begun to be the means of the conversion of sinners, what a stir it has made! The little village was snug enough in the darkness that had gathered around the old tower and there it lay all asleep and in the death, but some Methodists came and preached upon the Green. A few were converted and gathered into a little room—and what a noise there was about it! The squires would put it down. How there were threats against those poor cottagers and others! They must lose their work—certainly their Christmas gifts—but all that only proved that the gospel still had power, a power, at any rate, to irritate the ungodly, which is something, and to bless the simple men and women that were willing to receive it!

Before long we have sometimes seen those very persons who were the most determined opponents of the gospel, sit at its feet! Some of them have become its preachers! More and more the kingdom of Christ has spread and grown! From village to village, from town to town the sacred ardor has spread! In the days of Whitefield and Wesley the whole nation was awakened—as from a long sleep our land started up! Then there were found a multitude whom God had chosen, who began to sing glad hymns and to chant the praises of God in every town and street! And this land, which seemed fast going down in sin and wickedness to the very gates of hell, took a start on the road to heaven, which, thank God, has never been altogether lost, nor shall be, for still will God raise up others who will preach Jesus Christ and the leaven shall continue to permeate! The salt shall still work for Christ among the putrefying mass until He comes, who shall end the battle in a glorious victory!

But I hasten from that to notice that the same wonderful effect in another form is produced—

III. WHEN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST COMES INTO A SINGLE HEART.

Do not some of you remember when Jesus Christ first came to your heart? Oh, I remember when Moses came into mine, with the law and the great commandments. When I saw myself a sinner in the light of the law of God! When the fiery light of Sinai made me see my multitude of spots—yes, discover that I was covered all over with filthiness and blackness! Then the minister came to my gate and I heard the Word preached, preached affectionately, too. Then parents taught me the Word with tears and prayers, but I got no comfort and my soul continued in bondage under a sense of sin. But what a mercy it is when Jesus Christ, Himself, comes! When it is no longer the coming of the minister or of the preacher, but the coming of Jesus Christ, Himself, when Jesus passes by! I know some of you can remember right well the time when He passed by you and came into your heart. You believed Him—it was but a small action—you believed in Jesus! You gave up all trying to save yourselves by your works—you renounced once and for all your reliance upon ceremonies, past or future, and you cast yourselves down before

that cross whereon the Master shed His atoning blood! You remember that. Now, do you not remember what peace there was that came into your spirit, a peace that passes all understanding?

The promises of God could not comfort you until Jesus came with them and applied them to your soul. They were full of power when He brought them in His hands, but they were nothing until He brought them!

Do you remember, too, how your doubts and fears all fled? They had been hooting in your soul, but when that light of God shone in, full upon you, they soon took to their wings and there was not one of them left! You could then rejoice where so lately you had been mourning—and you now had songs instead of groans! And do you remember those sinful habits of yours which you could not break off? You had struggled against them, but you were like a man who is bound fast in iron—you could not snap the fetters by any means! You tried, and tried, and tried again, but always in vain. But when Jesus came, how free you were, how delivered you were! [Here someone shouted, "Hallelujah! Glory be to God! Jesus is passing by!"] I wish our friends would not be at all troubled with our brother who simply spoke out of the affection of his heart. We are not Methodists and do not quite like it, but when a brother does it, it does not disconcert me and it ought not to trouble you! I wish sometimes that there were interruptions like that which came at Pentecost, "What must I do to be saved?" I wish sometimes that we did feel that we must tell all that Jesus was passing by and was entering into our hearts, as our brother told us just now. Well, you remember the moment when Christ came to those bad habits of yours—when you had strived against them but could not overcome them—but when He came, they dropped off as though they were cloth! Those great ropes of sin were snapped and were gone—and you recollect the joy you felt within when you could say, "I'm forgiven! I'm, forgiven!"

Later when you sat down in holy wonder, you could not help it, but the tears came fast and thick, one after the other, as you said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, that ever I was led to receive Christ and to find peace in Him!" Oh, beloved, I know that you said to yourselves, "Who is this? What a matchless Christ is this? Who is this that could have worked such a wonderful change in me, that could have made my dead heart live, could have thawed the iceberg, could have made the mountain of snow that is in my soul dissolve, could have brought me up from the valley of the shadow of death into the land of light and exceeding brightness and glory?" I know you said, "Who is this?"

And, let me add, your wonder at Christ has not ceased since then! It is not long ago since you had sore trouble in business and your heart was very heavy. But you got alone with God in prayer and you saw Christ as suffering with you, standing in the furnace with you—and how happy and quiet your mind was! You could not help saying to yourself, "What manner of man is this that He made me to rejoice, even in tribulation, and to be calm in the midst of my afflictions?" You lost a child not long

ago and you thought your heart would break under that trial, but you took the case to Jesus and you were resigned to it, and you said, "What manner of man is this, again, that could so have comforted me?" Or it may be you are like some of us watching day by day the slow but steady progress of disease in one dear to you as your life. And the only comfort you have is by feeling that Jesus Christ being with you, it is still easy to bear and to be resigned. And, perhaps, you have been slandered for Christ's sake and misrepresented in all you have tried to do. But when you have told it to Him you have said, "I'll hail reproach and welcome shame for Jesus' sake." And the calm you have had has made you say, "Who is this?" I can only say tonight, though I hope I have known my Lord these 21 years that I do marvel more and more at Him, that ever He could do such marvels for me, a poor worthless worm. And I think the more you know of yourselves, and the deeper you sink in self-abasement, the more will the question rise in your soul, "What a glorious Christ must this be! What power there must be in His blood! What prevalence in His plea! What tenderness in His heart! What might in His arm! What immutability in His nature, that ever He should continue to look down on me and bless me as He does!" "Who is this?" your soul will say!

Now, I must not detain you on that and, therefore, again with great brevity, remark that—

IV. THE TIME IS COMING WHEN THIS QUESTION MAY BE ASKED BY SOME HERE WITH GREAT FEAR AND ALARM.

Unless we ask it now in loving wonder, we shall soon have to ask it in most fearful terror! We know not when the time shall be, for times and seasons are not committed to us. But it is certain that within a short time, Christ will come upon the clouds of heaven. When the time appointed by the Father shall arrive, that very man who was crucified on Calvary, and, who was taken up from among His disciples upon the mount of olives, shall so come in like manner as He went up to heaven.

Now, He went up in person, and He will come in person, too, and when He comes, it will not be alone, as first He came, but in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him! What astonishment and confusion will seize the minds of those who doubted His very existence, who denied His Godhead, who stood out against His power! What will the Jew say when he looks on Him whom he pierced? What will the Gentile say when he looks on Him whom he despised? What will the great men of the earth say as they rise from their graves and find themselves so little and Him, whom they thought so little, to be so great? What will the rich men of the earth say as they find themselves naked and poor as beggars and the King, whom they thought nothing of, clothed with the glory of God? Oh, what then will the pleasure-seeker say, who said, "As for Christianity, I care not the snap of my finger for it"? What will the blasphemer say who even poured contempt and curses upon Christ's name? There He sits in majesty that out blazes the sun! There He is surrounded by immortals, each one of them shining forth like the sun, for so the promise is to all the righteous! There rings the trumpet that

every ear must hear, and all the dead start up from sea and land—a countless multitude! There are the books, they are opened amidst a blaze of light and there is the voice that reads out the doom of the sons of men! Jesus! Jesus it is, who says, "Depart, you cursed," as well as, "Come, you blessed." Oh, how the multitude will wring their hands in amazement when they discover that the man of Nazareth and the son of Mary is the everlasting Son of the Father—and those, His enemies who would not that He should reign over them, shall be utterly destroyed by the glory of His presence when He comes in His power! Oh, how will the question be asked and how terrible will be the answer, "Who is this?" I would rather that you should ask tonight, humbly and enquiringly, "Who is this?" And if you do so ask, these few words shall tell you and may God tell you to your heart what I can only tell to your ears. Who is this? It is Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed forever! He so loved the sons of men that He would rather die than they should die! He came into the world, took our flesh and became Emmanuel, God with us and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross—

"He bore that we might never bear,
The Father's righteous ire."

And whoever trusts in this man—this God, the appointed substitute for man—shall be saved! But if you trust Him, you must take Him to be your monarch. You must henceforth, by His grace, yield Him service! And His service is pleasure. His service is holiness and holiness shall to you be a delight! Oh, that you would, finding that He is such a Savior, divine and human blended in one—a dying Savior risen from the dead, and living at the right hand of God—oh, that you would say, "I know who He is," and then, "I will accept Him! He shall be mine forever." God grant to you the willing mind to do this, and yours shall be the blessing—and His shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 2:15-26.

15. *Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* This is a metaphor taken from the action of the priest at the sacrifice. The priest cut up the bullock and then laid it in its different pieces according to order. Or, as some think, it is taken from the part of the father at the table, when he carves the meat and gives to every child its portion. Old Master Trapp said that "there are some ministers who are only fit to be Gibeonites—and certainly not to be Levites, for they hardly understand the cutting of wood, much less the art of cutting up the sacrifice of God." Brothers, it is well so to handle the Word of God as to be able to give rebuke when rebuke is needed, exhortation when it is needed, and comfort when consolation is required, for otherwise we do mischief. As it is said in the old fable of the simpleton, that he gave to the ass a bone and to the dog

hay, so there are some who give wrong exhortations, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because they are wrong in their application.

16, 17. *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does a canker.* Now, there are some people who can never be content except they make their religion a sort of wrangling match. They get hold of a word in Scripture, and away they go with it! Here shall be another opportunity for finding fault with all the Church of God. Here shall be another occasion for railing against all the preachers of the truth of God. How delighted they are when they can do this! Shun profane and vain babblings! Martin Luther said that there were some in his day so nice and precise about the letter of Scripture, that when one of them had delivered an exposition upon the book of Job, Luther said that by the time the man had got to the 10th chapter, Job had been a thousand times more plagued by the expositors than he had ever been by the losses which he suffered upon the dunghill! And doubtless there are many truths of Scripture which are turned to mischief because men will be forever making them opportunities for strife—not bonds of love! Brothers, hold the five points of the Calvinistic doctrine, but mind you do not hold them as babbling questions! What you have received of God, do not learn in order to fight with it, and to make contention and strife and to divide the Church of God, and rail against the people of the Most High as some do! But on the contrary, love one another as brothers and sisters, and hold the truth of God in love, and seek after the unity of the Spirit and the perfect bond of charity. The word of those who raise these questions will eat as does a cancer, which eats till it gets to the bones, and turns the sound flesh into rottenness. Oh, there are many contentions which have done this mischief in the Church of Christ!

17-19. *Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort. Who concerning the truth, have erred, saying that the resurrection is already past; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His.* How careful the apostle is lest we should think that any have turned aside, who were the Lord's people. He says the faith of some was overthrown, but nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure. Oh brothers and sisters, whenever we see apparent apostasy, let us not therefore think that any of God's people have perished! Oh, no, for the Lord knows them who are His!

19-21. *And let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man, therefore, purges himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.* When Mr. Philpot, the martyr, was addressing a young man about to die for Christ, he said to him, "Brother, you are a vessel in the great house of your Master, and this day He will scour you, scour you hard, but remember, you shall soon stand upon the shelf,

shining bright and glorious." Well, sometimes pains and troubles, and tribulations do have this effect of scouring the vessels of God to make them bright for heaven. We must all be purged and scoured from sinful lusts, from all the contamination of the flesh and of the creature—and then we shall be fit for the Master's use!

22. *Flee also youthful lusts.* Run away from them! It is no use contending with them. Fight with the devil. Resist the devil and make him flee, but never fight with the flesh. Run away from that. The only way to avoid the lust of the flesh is to stay out of its way. If you subject yourself to carnal temptations and fleshly lusts, remember it is almost certain that you will be overcome by them! "Flee youthful lusts," and as you must keep going and have something after which to follow—

22, 23. *But follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions, avoid, knowing that they do cause strifes.* It is generally a good thing to avoid all questions that breed strife, unless they are upon vital and important matters. For, oh, brothers and sisters, it is so important to keep the unity of the Spirit! It is such a blessed thing to preserve love among Christians and there are some who in order to create disunion, go about the land and tear and rend the body of Christ as much as they can! Beware of such! Seek not their company! Come not near them, lest their cancer pollute you also!

24-26. *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those who are in opposition, if God, perhaps, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him to do his will.* We have here laid down, then, the duty of the Christian minister and the duty of each Christian, too! And let us seek, in the Holy Spirit's grace, to carry it out, being at once firm, and gentle, and loving of heart, and yet honest for the truth of God as it is in Jesus.

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THE SAVIOR'S PRECIOUS BLOOD
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The precious blood of Christ."
1 Peter 1:19.

WE have come in our theological conversation to use that word, "blood," somewhat lightly. I think it should scarcely ever be pronounced without a shudder. "The blood is the life thereof." When shed, it indicates suffering—suffering more intense than that of chastisement or bruising. Wounds are inflicted which make the lifeblood to flow out. In the case of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the term, "blood," brings before us all His griefs and anguish and where the crown of thorns pierced Him. Behold the man! Think of Gethsemane, where He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! Think of Gabbatha, the pavement, where they scourged Him with rods, and with the scourge of the Roman Lictors where the crown of thorns pierced Him. Behold the man! Think, lastly, of Golgotha! There they pierced His hands and His feet and, at last, pierced by the spear, out of His side there came blood and water. Pass not lightly, therefore, over such a word as this—blood—the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son! And when you read of its being "precious," remember that the word never had such a wealth of meaning in it, before, in any of its applications. Precious metals—gold and silver; precious stones—sardonyx, agate and diamond—these are but gaudy toys compared with Christ's precious blood! Precious, for He is God as well as man; precious, for He is Jehovah's darling, the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish; precious, when you think of God's design; precious, when you see the effects which it produces. Precious, certainly, to the heart of every pardoned sinner, and precious in the song of every glorified spirit before the throne of God!

It is not, however, my objective, this evening, to pursue the sacred history, so much as to set forth the saving doctrine, while I remind you of some of the uses of this precious blood. For, after all, the standard of preciousness, when we come to the very essence of it, is not scarcity, but usefulness, for there are things in this world exceedingly scarce and, therefore, precious among the sons of men, which will be left out and treated with contempt when we get into the land where the true standards of value are in use. That is the most precious which is the most serviceable. So in truth, the precious blood of Christ is beyond all estimation! I want to conduct you, step by step, through the application of this blood and its effects upon the heart and conscience. And I shall pause at each step to ask you, dear hearer, and to ask myself this question—Do you know the blood, the precious blood, in this respect? Have you felt it in this peculiar form of its efficacy? Beginning thus at the first—

I. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE BLOOD OF THE ATONEMENT.

We read of the blood of the atonement under the old law. Christ, now under the gospel, is the propitiation for our sins. It is through the blood that God, infinitely just, without the violation of His character, can pass by the transgression of the guilty. It is not possible that any one attribute of God should ever shadow another. He is perfect. He is infinitely merciful, but He will not be merciful at the expense of justice! Justice shall never triumph against mercy! Mercy, on the other hand, shall never cut off the skirts of the flowing robe of justice. It is in the person of Jesus and especially in the blood of Jesus, that the great riddle of the ages is solved! God can be just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. We have sinned. God must punish sin. According to the inexorable laws which God has stamped upon the universe, the sinner cannot go unpunished. His sin is, in fact, its own punishment and becomes the mother of unnumbered griefs. The mediator steps in—the Son of God and the Son of man, eternal, and yet as man, born of Mary and slumbering in Bethlehem's manger—He comes as the substitute for the guilty. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." And "now in Christ Jesus, we who some time were afar off, are made near by the blood of Christ." God can be gracious without the violation of the severity of His judgment. His moral government remains untarnished in all the majesty of its purity, and yet He puts out the right hand of reconciliation and love to all who approach Him making mention of the blood of the atonement of His dear Son!

Are you, then, thus reconciled to God by the death of His Son, or are you still an enemy? Have you ever seen the distance between you and God bridged by the cross? Have you seen at once how God, the infinitely just, can commune with you without consuming you, because He poured His wrath upon Christ, instead of you? And then, accepted in Him and for His merits, you live because Jesus lives! Ah, dear hearer, if you have not seen this, may the Lord open those blind eyes of yours and by His eternal Spirit bring you, with your burden of sin upon your back, to the foot of the Master's cross, where you may look up and sing—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing,
Of His sin-atoning blood!
With divine assurance knowing,
That it made my peace with God."

The blood of Jesus Christ has another effect upon us, namely—

II. IT CLEANSES FROM SIN.

Surely we can never fail to remember that choicest of all Scriptural texts, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." There is such music in it that when the spirits before the throne of God desire to have a song of which they might never grow weary, they select that sentiment, and they sing before the throne that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Their purity before God is due to the fountain filled with blood wherein their stained garments, all soiled with sin, have been made clean! When the soul comes to Jesus Christ by faith and relies upon Him, then the sentence of the perfect pardon goes forth from God and the soul is purged from all the stains of accumulated years! In a single moment those who were

black as hell become white as heaven through the application of the blood of sprinkling—for all sin disappears as soon as the blood falls on the conscience! That which the blood of bulls and of goats could not do, the blood of Jesus effectually accomplishes—cleansing from all sin!

Now, dear hearer, have you ever been thus cleansed? Say not you had never need of cleansing, else you know not your natural condition and your actual transgressions. Man, you can never have seen yourself in the mirror of the Word of God, or you would perceive yourself to be totally defiled and altogether as an unclean thing! You would have bowed yourself before the Lord and joined in the confession, "We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done. And there is no health in us." Well, if you have ever thus felt your guilt, have you ever realized your pardon? If not, give yourself no sleep till you have! Can you bear to live unpardoned, or in doubt whether or not God has absolved you? Can you ever take any kind of rest, much less indulge your soul with mirth, until the word, "Absolvo," has come from God, Himself, the eternal Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that you are born of God? Happy are they who have been washed! They have need to come each night (even as Peter the Apostle had need) to wash their feet, but they need not except to wash their feet, for they are clean every whit. Jesus has made them clean through His blood! The third step is that—

III. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE GREAT PRICE OF OUR REDEMPTION.

Redemption sometimes in Scripture is spoken of as being the same thing as pardon, and I shall not at all dogmatically attempt tonight to draw any nice distinction between the two. "We have redemption through His blood—to wit, the forgiveness of sin—according to the riches of His grace." But redemption seems rather to be in some sense the *effect* produced by a pardon than the actual pardon, itself. Man is a slave. As long as guilt is written in God's book against us, we are in bondage. We feel for the present that we are slaves to sin, and that for the future; the punishment of sin will inevitably come upon us to our eternal destruction. But the moment we are purged from the guilt of sin, we are set free from the slavery of it! Jesus Christ takes us from being slaves and makes us to be children! He gives us no longer "the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" He was slain and He has redeemed us unto God by His blood! And in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, we rejoice to see that it was the blood which was the price, thereof, and because He suffered, therefore our chains have dropped off from us. We are free—the Lord's freemen—free henceforth to serve Him with renewed love and renewed hearts because of the abundance of the grace which He has manifested towards us!

Now, beloved, have you ever been redeemed by the blood of Jesus? I am not talking to you now about *a* redemption effected upon the cross, but have you ever felt redemption in your own spirit from the curse of the law, from the thralldom of a guilty conscience and from the power of sin? Let me ask you, are you the Lord's freeman tonight? Oh, happy are you,

then, for you can say, "Lord, You have loosed my bonds and, therefore, I am Your servant." "We are not our own because we are bought with a price." And inasmuch as we are no more slaves to the law from henceforth, for the love we bear His name who has redeemed us with such a price, we reckon ourselves to be His servants and we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus! Ah, friends, if you were never redeemed by the precious blood, then you are still slaves—slaves to sin and Satan—slaves under the vengeance of God and slaves to the law of God. But may you never be content in slavery! May you pine after freedom, and may Jesus give it to you—give it to you tonight if it is His blessed will! In the fourth place, the blood of Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as—

IV. INTERCEDING.

"The blood of sprinkling speaks better things than that of Abel." It is said to be sprinkled within the veil, so that where the high priest could only go once a year, we may now go at all times, for the blood is there, interceding for us perpetually! Well, in fact, says one of our poets—

"The wounds of Christ for us,
Incessantly do plead."

Even after His death, remember, His heart for us poured out its flood. After death that heart was pierced and blood and water came. So, after His voice was silent and He could no longer say, "Father, forgive them," the wounds were still eloquent—and even when the suffering passed, they still continued to plead with God.

Now, soul, have you ever come to God through the intercession of the blood? You have said prayers, you have repeated forms of devotion, you have gone to church or to meeting houses. This is all well enough, but have you gone farther? For if not, all outward forms of devotion are but frivolous endeavors that may allure, but will deceive you! Did you ever come to God by the blood and did you ever, by faith, fix your eye upon "the High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us," who with our names upon His bosom, still offering the blood, stands at this moment before the Father, God, pleading for us who love Him and trust Him? Happy they who look to the interceding Savior and who feel that His blood speaks not revenge, but cries at every vein, "Mercy, mercy for the chief of sinners!" This leads me to remark that the blood of Jesus—

V. BECOMES THE MODE AND WAY OF ACCESS TO GOD.

We have boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Christ. After first cleansing the man and making him fit to come as a priest and a king unto God, then the blood, as it were, takes away the veil and opens up the pathway to God, Himself, for the forgiven and redeemed soul! Never let us attempt to come to God by anything but the blood! All other ways to God, except through the blood of Jesus, are presumptuous. All other fire that we may put upon the altar, except this, is strange fire, and the Lord's anger will go forth against us. May I never plead when on my knees before God anything but the precious merits and the dear wounds of the Man of Sorrows who is now exalted at the right hand of God. How close to God we should come if we did but always bring Christ with us! But what are our prayers when we leave Him behind? What are our devotions when we are met together, or when we

are in secret, and we go to the mercy-seat, but forget the blood that was sprinkled on it, oblivious of the new and living way through the rent body of Immanuel? Come, brothers and sisters, let us chide ourselves for sometimes having forgotten our Lord! And henceforth, be it ours never to think of drawing near to God except by this way of access—the crimson road which the blood has paved for us! To advance farther, the blood of Jesus Christ, according to the Word, is—

VI. SANCTIFYING.

Jesus sanctified His people by His own blood and, therefore, suffered outside the gate. By sanctification is usually meant in Scripture the setting apart of anything for the service of God and so making it holy. Now, the blood separates the saints from all others. It was the blood that was the distinguishing mark of Israel in Egypt. Every Egyptian house was without the blood, but every house of the seed of Abraham had the blood mark upon the lintel and the two side posts, and when God saw the blood He passed over them and spared them in the night of His furious anger. The blood, then, beloved, if you have ever had it on your soul, is to be the distinguishing mark between you and the ungodly in the day of wrath and it should distinguish you now. You should, by your life and your conversation, make yourself to appear to be as the blood has made you—to really be a separated one! We are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. We have heard the mandate—"Come you out from among them; be you separate; touch not the unclean thing." We have left the world's sin and we have left the world's religion, too! We have separated ourselves at once from the world's goodness, as well as from the world's vileness, to walk in the path of nonconformity to the world, that we may tread in the footsteps of our crucified Redeemer! And the more the blood is applied, the more the obedience of Jesus is trusted in—and the sprinkling of the blood is relied upon—the more shall we become sanctified in spirit, soul and body by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us never forget the purifying power of Jesus in the heart. Wherever He is trusted to take away the *guilt* of sin, we must next seek the water which flowed with the blood to take away the *power* of sin! And we must ask to see Him sit as a refiner to purify, yes, it must be our prayer that He would take His fan in His hand and purge our hearts as He does His floor! Refining fire, go through my soul! Oh, sweet love of Jesus, burn up the love of the world! Oh, death of Jesus, be the death of sin! Oh, life of Christ be the life of everything that is gracious, God-like, heavenly, eternal! So shall it be in proportion as we partake of the power and the efficacy of that blood! The blood, furthermore, is—

VII. CONFIRMATORY.

We must not forget this one effect of it. It is called the blood of the covenant—the blood of the testament—the blood of the testament. The covenant was not in force in the olden times until there had been a sacrifice to confirm it. And a will stands not until the death of the testator has been proved to make it valid. The heart's blood of Jesus is, as it were, the establishment of His last will and testament. Jesus, the great testator, has died, has made an end of sin and His blood is the great seal of His testament and makes it valid to us. If He had never died! Oh, dreadful, "if," only equaled in horror by that other, "if"—if He had

never risen again from the dead! But now is Christ risen from the dead! Now has Christ slept and awoke as the first fruits of them that slept! Never doubt the promise of God, for the blood confirms it! Never doubt the love of God, for He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! How shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? If you need evidence as to the eternal goodness of God, His willingness to pardon, His power to save and to bless—look to the cross of Calvary and see the bleeding Savior—and never doubt again!

Dear hearer, did the blood so come to you as to confirm your hope, or is your hope a fancy, a delusion? Do you think it needs no confirmation? Have you ever in your moments of questioning and anxiety gone over, again, to the altar where is the great victim? Have you said once more—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me!
And that You bid me come to Thee,
Oh, Lamb of God, I come!"

Have you, then, got your consolation back? Have you received the witness of God? Have you heard the voice which bears witness both in heaven and earth, the voice of the Spirit, and the water and the blood? And have you been satisfied because you needed no better confirmation than the witness of the blood of Jesus applied with power to your soul? The blood of Jesus has another effect of which we ought to think more than we do—that of—

VIII. NOURISHING, CHEERING AND SUSTAINING THE BELIEVER.

To this end the ordinance of communion with Christ in the breaking of bread and partaking of the cup of blessing has been instituted. When we come to the Lord's table, we have set before us in the broken bread, of which we eat, and in the wine of which we drink, this present fact—that the sufferings of our Master are now at this moment for our nourishment, sustenance, consolation and exhilaration. We have been washed in the blood—we are now to receive, after a spiritual sort, the precious blood of Jesus to nourish our faith, to comfort our hope, to excite in us the liveliest joy and to make us sing and be merry with holy confidence in Him who has redeemed us from all iniquity and made us unto God priests and kings, to reign with Christ forever and ever! There is no cordial for the heart like the blood of Jesus. To think of the atoning sacrifice is the readiest way to consolation. Our sorrows are not worth a thought when once compared with His! Sit down under the shadow of the cross and you will find a cooler shade than that of a great rock in a weary land. There is no pasturage for the sheep of Christ like that which grows on Calvary! There is nowhere to be found such wine that makes glad the heart of God and man, as that which comes from the sacred cup of His heart, of which believers drink by faith when they have fellowship with Him and come into near and dear communion with Him! Although we do sometimes enjoy this without any emblems—without the bread and without the wine—these are still great assistants, blessed exponents, and they graciously help our forgetfulness! We are yet in the body and we need something that shall aid this lagging flesh to see something of the Lord.

Oh, feed then on Christ and do not be content unless day by day He is your daily bread! He who has given you life must sustain that life. He

who has taught you how to rejoice must still supply you with power to continue in your daily rejoicing! The blood without cleanses. The blood within cheers, yes, sacredly inebriates the soul till the sinner drinks and forgets his sorrow and remembers his misery no more! And in the fullness of his delight he becomes sweetly oblivious, whether in the body or out of the body, as he rises into almost celestial communion with his unseen, but ever-present Lord! Once again, the blood of Jesus Christ has the effect of—

IX. UNITING CHRISTIANS TOGETHER.

Paul, speaking of Jew and Gentile, says that He "has made both one, through the blood of Christ," and surely there is nothing that unites different denominations of Christians together like the precious blood of Jesus! Brothers and sisters, we may dispute—I think we do well to dispute over important ordinances and doctrines, for wherein men err we are not to wink at their errors—and neither ask them to wink at ours. I have sometimes heard it said, "Spare such a brother." Yes, as a brother—but who am I that I should be spared if I err, or who is he that he should be spared? What are we, or what are our feelings compared with the truth of God? No, let questions be fought out as kindly, as lovingly, as valorously, as honorably as they possibly can! Truth fears not the shock of arms. Let the controversies go on. I believe that, after all, there is ten times more truth in this world, now, with all the apparent divisions of Christians, than there would have been if we had been united in a nominal union into some one great church which might, perhaps, have rotted as thoroughly as the old church of Rome did before the days of Luther! But when we come to the foot of the cross, what union there is! If the saints in prayer appear as one; if in the praise of the infinite Jehovah they are one—much more and much more tenderly are they one when they behold Jesus bleeding and dying for them! My heart melts and breaks when I hear Christ preached. He who lifted up Christ would have offended me had he preached some other part of his creed. Had he talked over some doctrine which I hold to be erroneous, he and I had differed, but when it comes to this, "He loved me and gave Himself for me—He is the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely—His blood is precious"—I feel inclined to cry, "Brother, keep to that! Praise Him louder! Give Him all the honor!—

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

While we keep to that, we are none of us heretics over that! There shall be no schisms and divisions over the matter. Son of God and Son of man, Redeemer of our souls from death and misery, all Your mother's children praise You! Every sheaf bows before Your sheaf! Sun and moon, and every star do obeisance unto You, King of kings, and Lord of lords, Head over all things unto your Church, which is Your dwelling place, the fullness of Him that fills all in all! Since here we are one, when we get together as believers, I wish we more often struck that key—the precious blood of Christ—and in our walks and talks with those Christians who differ from us in many points, let us sometimes try to turn those points aside and say, "We do agree to speak well of that dear name which is above every name, that name which charms all our fears and bids all our

sorrows cease! That name which is the joy of the believer on earth and the bliss of the saints in heaven! I close now when I have noticed that the blood of Jesus Christ may be looked upon by us every day as—

X. THE GREAT INSTRUCTOR AND THE CARDINAL WITNESS OF DIVINE TRUTH.

God is to be seen in nature and seen vividly there, but not as He is to be seen in Christ Jesus. Instruction as to the eternal power of the Godhead, some find in the skies above, in the fields around and in the sea beneath. But in the cross there is more of God than in the entire world besides! I have often felt, when I have been rambling in the Alps, that nature was too small to set forth God. The mirror is not large enough to reflect the face of the eternal. You stand in the Alps and hear the avalanche, like claps and peals of thunder resounding in the air. You gaze afar off and there it is, and it looks to you like the falling of a few flakes of snow. It is so inconsiderable that the grandeur seems to be destroyed. Though every one of those flakes may be a block of ice weighing a hundred tons, at such a distance the thing grows small. The water leaps down hundreds of feet from the crags, but up in the mountains it appears to be a little trickling creek scarcely worth notice. The very Alpine summits seem to dwindle down to small heaps of stones when one grows used to the scenery. God is too great for this earth to bear Him. The axles of this world's chariot would snap beneath the weight of deity. We talk of going from nature up to nature's God, but the top of the highest Alps is far below His footstool! We do not get any conceptions of God out of nature worthy of His august Majesty. But in contemplating the cross, in discerning, there, how God can forgive, how willing He is to save the guilty, how His justice is magnified at the same time as His grace, I am persuaded that those who have tried both forms of contemplation will tell you that this last is the better by far! You see God through the wounds of Christ as through windows of agate and gates of carbuncle—and you cry, "My Lord, and my God!"

In winding up this poor discourse of mine, let me say to you, beloved, be more in meditation upon Jesus. I say to myself—preacher, preach your Master more! Preach Him more after His own sort and endeavor to be yourself more like He! Dear hearer, live nearer to the cross. With all your study of doctrine—and you do well to study it thoroughly— make Jesus Christ the first. Believe in Him. Let Him be your creed. Speak of a body of divinity—there never was in this world but one body of divinity and that is Jesus Christ! And he that understands Jesus Christ has got the only system of theology that is worth knowing! Get right into Him. Some of the early Fathers used to study every wound. They would write a treatise on almost every different spot where He was scourged! They had some tears to let fall and some sweet songs to sing for every step along the *Via Dolorosa*. Let us not treat lightly what those nearer to the light of God treated so solemnly, but regarding the Master and thinking much of even the littles that concern Him (for the leaves of this tree of life are for the healing of the nations), let us study to understand Him and ask to be conformed to Him—even in His sufferings to be like He—and when we suffer, to see Him in our pangs! Let every grief be a glass through which to look into His life and love, and understand His grace.

I wish you all knew this, and more than this. Oh, that I could hope that all this assembled company did trust in my Master! Poor sinner, why not trust Him? You will never be saved unless you do! There is no other door of mercy for you than Jesus! Come, come, come, even though you think He will cast you away. If Christ had a drawn sword in His hand, yet I would bid you come! It were better to fall on the point of His sword than to live without Him! Come and rest upon Him. He never rejected a sinner yet, and He never can! The vilest of the vile can find mercy in Him! And all He asks—and that He gives—is that you rely on Him with all your heart and you shall be saved! God grant that you may! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Obey the second precept as you have attained to the first. When you have believed in Christ crucified, dead and buried for you, then be dead and buried with Him in baptism! Take the outward symbol of His death, burial and resurrection, and ask to have the inward spiritual grace that you, being dead to the world, and dead with Christ, and buried with Him, may rise again to newness of life through His quickening Spirit.

The Lord thus bless you, for Jesus' sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:1-16; MATTHEW 10:37-40.

Verses 1, 2. *Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.* The first Christians were not as afraid of the doctrine of election as some are now-a-days. Peter was not ashamed to address the saints as the elect of God, for so, indeed, they are, if they are saints at all. It is He that chose them, not because they *were* sanctified, but that they might *be* sanctified—chose them to eternal life through sanctification. Oh, happy are they who, by divine grace have made their calling and election sure, and now ascribe all the glory of their salvation to the sovereign choice of God! "Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied."

3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.* How full of grace every sentence is! He blesses God because God has so freely blessed us! And he abounds in thanksgiving because he sees that abundant mercy by which believers have been begotten again—born-again—made, therefore, children after a new sort and so made heirs of an inheritance very different from that upon which we enter by nature—"an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away." Brothers and sisters, if you have, indeed, been born by divine grace, to what estates are you born—to what high dignities and sacred privileges! Rejoice and bless the Lord! But, perhaps the dark fear crossed your mind that, perhaps, after all, you

may perish and miss the inheritance. Now notice the double consolation of a double keeping. The inheritance is kept. It is reserved in heaven for you and you are kept, too. It is kept for you and you are kept for it, "For you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."

6. *Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* This is your life; this is like a rainbow made up of the drops of earth's sorrow in the beams of heaven's love—a happy combination, after all.

7. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* Gilt looks very much like gold but it will not stand the fire. It curls and disappears. Oh, to be solid gold through and through! If so, you need not mind the trials of today, since they will only prepare you for the eternal glories at the appearing of Jesus Christ!

8-10 *Whom having not seen, you love in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory—receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.* Prophets knew about you. They did not taste of the grace you know, but through the vista of the future they foresaw it and they almost envied you in this gospel dispensation that you should live in so clear a light and should be fed upon such rare mercies. Oh, what prophets and kings longed for, do not let us despise! And we shall despise these mercies if we do not make the most of them by entering into the fullness of the joy which they are meant to bring to us. These prophets searched diligently.

11-12. *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.* See you not your privilege, then? You have what prophets had not! You enjoy what angels desire to see! They cannot enjoy what you do. Rightly does our hymn put it—

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love."

And you have, this very day!

13. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.* Be ready to depart to your inheritance. Do not let your garments flow carelessly and loosely, as though you had no journey before you, but, "gird up the loins of your mind."

13. *Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* That is a very blessed subject. There is a grace that was brought to you when Christ first came. There is another grace and a higher grace that is to be brought to you when Christ shall come the second time! Until that second coming of Christ, the Church on earth and in heaven cannot be perfected. The bodies of the saints wait in the grave till He comes to give them resurrection—

"O long expected day, begin!

Dawn on these realms of woe and sin."

For we wait for Your appearing, O Christ!

14-16. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation: Because it its written. Be you holy, for I am holy.* See your model. See the copy to which you are to write. You are far short of it. Try again. May the power of Jesus rest upon you and may He who has worked us to the same thing to which we have attained continue to work in us till we are like our Lord Himself!

MATTHEW 10:37-40.

***Verse* 37.** *He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.* What a wonderful sight, then, the Church is, as it passes through this world. The head of it is Christ, the cross bearer, and following in the train are all His faithful disciples, all carrying crosses still—the very picture of a Church. You know how Simon carried the cross after Christ—he is the type of all His disciples—

"Did Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me."

38, 39. *And he that takes not his cross and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.* You gain life by dying for Christ, but if you saved life by denying the faith you would in the worst sense lose all that makes existence to be life! There is an existence which is nothing but eternal death—and this is the doom of those who depart from Christ. But blessed are they who can give up this temporary mortal life for the sake of an eternal one! I have heard of one who used to often boast of what he would do if it came to his being burnt—but just before the day on which he was to be burnt alive for the faith, he recanted. He was allowed to go home. In a few months it happened that he was burnt alive in his house. Unhappy man that could not burn for Christ, but had to burn after all! "He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it."

40. *He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him who sent Me.* Think of that, you that have received Christ! You have received God, Himself, and He has come to dwell and reign with your soul!

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EXPERIENCING CONFIRMING TESTIMONY
NO. 3396

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 27, 1869.

"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God."
Psalm 48:8.

"AS we have heard, so have we seen." This is not always the case, but frequently it is the very reverse. Things are exaggerated. The imagination is largely drawn upon and we hear great things, but when we come to look at them, or try to practically enjoy them, the great things have become very small! It is so in the world generally. We have heard and were told in our youthful days by those who have been before us, that the paths of sin are pleasant, that there are great enjoyments to be found in the indulgences of evil passions, and that if we will give ourselves up to the general run and current, we shall find ourselves very smoothly floating along on a stream of happiness! Ah, how many who have sown their wild oats and looked for a happy harvest, have discovered that nothing but mischief comes of this! Jaded by the satiety of their lusts, and at last utterly destroyed by their own wickedness, they have sat down and wrung their hands in despair at finding out that things are not what they heard they were. As they have heard, so do they not see, but the very opposite—for pleasure, pain, for happiness, misery—even here, remorse—and afterwards an anguish that shall know no end!

Nor is it any better with the teachers of false doctrine. As we have heard, so have we not seen. We have sometimes been told that philosophy will civilize a nation—that the spread of education will most certainly cure the human heart and that the bias and propensity to sin will be put down by an increase of mental light. But as we have heard, so have we not seen, for philosophy has thrown many burdens upon men—but it has not touched those burdens to remove them with so much as its little finger! We hear a great deal of what is to be done for society by this scheme and by that, but nothing is done! Theories are propounded—windbags are blown out and brought forth—bubbles are blown, but we do not see much that is solid and valuable, produced! One after another of these eminent theorizers have arisen who were about to revolutionize and reconstruct society! Instead of making the causes of evil in the world to increase, they were to uproot them and turn the desert into the garden of the Lord! But so it has not been—our eyes have never seen it. Rather has the bad been made worse and the good has been impeded by those who were so pretentious and loud in their professed benevolence! Take

any of the false doctrines which are often affiliated to our holy faith and you will find that when you come to examine them and put them to the test, they do not hold water!

How often have we heard about "the dignity of human nature." How congenial the heart of man is to that which is noble, and to that which is Christ-like! We are told that we have only to hold up Christ and there is such a beauty in Him that the entire world will be sure to love Him! But as we have heard, so have we not seen, but we have seen men to be as God saw them—corrupt! There is none that does good, no, not one, and in the perfect light of Calvary, we have seen that even the perfections of Jesus will not be seen by a blind world, nor will they attract a corrupt world. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" will be the verdict of humanity even upon the perfections of the incarnate God. We have heard a great deal about the power of free will. We have heard sometimes that men come to Christ by themselves; that there is no power of irresistible grace which turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Ah, we have heard this, but we have never seen it! To this moment, though we have mingled with all classes of Christians, we did never yet meet with a single believer who declared that his conversion was the result of his own efforts and that his coming to Christ was entirely through the power of his own free will! We have been told, too, that God forsakes His people; that real saints, after all, turn back and perish! But we bless God that, though we have often heard this, we have never, never seen it—

"If ever it should come to pass,
One of His sheep should fall away!
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day!"

But being kept in safety by another and greater power than our own, and preserved in the midst of appalling temptations, we still hold to it that He does keep His people! We have heard it, and we have seen it, but the other doctrine we have heard, but, thank God, we have never seen! And so there are many other things that pass current in certain sections of Christendom as being true, which, if they were brought to a practical test, might be seen not to be so. We have heard them—heard them delivered with a glowing eloquence that might have convinced us, if we were to be convinced, but we have referred to the old book—and the old book has been more to us than all the siren-songs that sweetest oratory could raise! We have nailed our colors to the mast and could not take them down! We have found all here in this blessed Bible to be true, but man's word, when it has come into conflict or even competition with God's Word, we have found to be light as chaff and as easily consumed as the fat of rams upon the altar's fire!

Now, just for a little time I thought we would *illustrate this general truth of God that in the things of God, and in the Church of God," as we have heard, so have we seen."* Now, mark—

I. IT HAS BEEN SO ALL DOWN THE LINE OF REVELATION.

Could a man have lived a sevenfold Methuselah life and have stood at the gates of paradise, and listened to the first promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. If he could have beheld Noah shut in in the ark and marked the covenant rainbow when for the first time it spanned the clouds. If he could have lived in Abraham's day and have seen the father of that seed in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Could he have marked all the types and ceremonies which Israel saw in the wilderness, all pointing onwards to a coming Savior; if he could have listened to the prophetic utterances of David in some of those matchless Psalms which are full of the Messiah; could he have heard the notes of Isaiah when he spoke of Him who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Yes, could he have heard every prophecy and beheld every symbol, and listened to every sacred portent—when he came to behold the person of Christ, to see Him living, dying, rising, ascending and to mark the Pentecost, and to see the history of the Church right down until now—such a grave and revered man—revered and venerable above all other men through the long lapse of years that had passed over his snowy head, would say, "As I heard during the first portion of my life, so have I seen in the latter days thereof—God has always kept His promise—as was the shadow, so was the substance! As the type, so was the antitype! As the word that flowed from prophetic lips, so was the Christ who, in the fullness of time, came into this world to bless and redeem mankind!"

This is not merely a great general truth of God, but, mark you, it is true in every jot and tittle! We do not expect men, when they speak frequently, so to speak that every particle of what they say may be correct. We admit them to be fallible—we always make some allowance for some slips of the tongue. But all through these thousands of years in which God spoke of Christ and of the gospel kingdom, there never was a single trifling word that was not fulfilled!

There have been no slips of the tongue, no drops that blot the page. Everything has been accurately, minutely, precisely—what if I say, *microscopically*—fulfilled in Christ! As the casket key exactly fits the wards of the lock, so the life of Christ and the history of the Church exactly fits all the types and all the prophecies! Sometimes it has been said that if anybody doubts the inspiration of the four gospels, it would be a very pretty puzzle for him to try to write a fifth gospel which should have in it some new details that would be congruous to the rest and that would fit in with the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. That is a task we give to those wits who seem to need something to do in these days, since they are impugning everything that is held sacred by us! Let them attempt that. If this problem could have been put to the wise in all ages—here is the Old Testament and, whether it is true or not, construct the life of a man who shall fit all that. Use your poetic powers, or whatever other abilities you choose to employ. Imagine a man that shall fit the lamb, the scapegoat, the passover, Noah's ark, the Psalms of

David, the prophecies of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel—why the puzzle would have been given up in despair! It would not have been possible for the united abilities of men and angels to have discovered an ideal Messiah that would have exactly met all this! But our Lord did in every jot and in every tittle, so that as we read some parts of the Old Testament, we often say to ourselves, "This looks as if it were written after the event." We read the 22nd Psalm and if we did not know that it had been composed many, many years before our Lord came, we would look at it as history, rather than as prophecy! One can only comprehend this by admitting inspiration, and by rejoicing in the wondrous truthfulness of God! Even such little points as the casting of lots for the vesture of Christ—things which seem insignificant—God took care should be fulfilled. And though our Lord died, and as yet He had not been pierced as to His heart, at any rate, yet after death there must be a piercing of Him that they "may look on Him whom they have pierced," and weep and wail because of Him. "As we have heard, so have we seen." The life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, certainly carry out the prophecies which God had uttered before concerning Him! But now, we shall go on to speak of—

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD—CHRISTWARD AND GODWARD—AS TO OUR OWN EXPERIENCE.

Some of you have thoughts of Christ—but as dead or as far away. We have come to deal with Him as a living Savior. Now the question is, whether in so dealing with Him, we have found all true that we were told concerning Him?

Now, when we first enlisted in the Christian army, we were told from Christ's own Word that *we must count the cost and we would have to suffer* a degree of persecution. We were warned not to take upon ourselves, hastily, to carry out that for which we should have no power unless we sought it from above. We were warned, "In the world you shall have tribulation." Have we found it so? "Oh," says one, "that has been abundantly true to me! From those of my own household I first met with opposition! The gospel has set those against me that were once my fondest friends." Just so, but now that it has come to pass, you will see how sincerely He dealt with you, that He would not entrap you into His service as though it would be altogether a thing of pleasure, but He warned you that it was a conflict, that it was a pilgrimage. You have found it so and now that it has come to pass, let this help you to trust Him for the future!

But you were also told that if you trusted Him, you who were burdened with many sins, you would have them all forgiven and that this forgiveness would bring about a solid peace of mind. Have you found it so? Can you not stand up and add your name to the long roll of witnesses who say, "We looked unto Him and were lightened, and our faces were not ashamed! This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears"? I bless the Lord I can say that the joy of the pardoned sinner is a sweeter and a better thing than I ever

dreamed it to be. And the peace of conscience, which reflection upon the atonement always brings, is better and more enduring than one could have fancied have fallen to the lot of so unworthy an one as he whom Christ had called!

Our Lord Jesus told us, too, that if we came and trusted Him, *He would give us the victory over our sins*. Now, has He done that? I know you will sometimes confess that you have not conquered your sins as you would desire.

The battle is still raging—there is still a need for yonder watchtower. But, brothers and sisters, if a sin has not been conquered, has that ever been Christ's fault? Has it not been ours? "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb," is true of all the saints with regard to their struggles with sin. There is no sin that we cannot pray down and weep down if we live at the foot of the cross. The worst temper that ever a soul was plagued with is to be controlled and softened if one looks to the griefs of Christ and becomes like He in temper. It matters not how constitutional the sin may be, though you may say, "It is my easily-besetting sin"—you may be delivered from it! Christ Jesus, when He comes into the island of our nature, can drive out all the cruel and deadly reptiles that are there. Or if they remain there, He can give us abundant grace so that they can make no headway and we shall be kept as "holiness unto the Lord."

Now, you and I have read and heard from the saints of God that *our Lord Jesus, when He is really known and understood, is inexpressible sweetness itself*. They have told us, some of them—writing like Rutherford of his wonderful Master—that the joy of heaven is to be possessed, in a measure, even here below! That in contemplation on and communion with Christ, the heart can be made to dance with eternal joy and full of glory! Now, brothers and sisters, have we found it so? Oh, some of us can set to our seal that in this thing the saints of God have been true! He has ravished our souls with His presence and made our hearts to melt while He spoke into our ears the marvelous story of His love! Perhaps in our unbelief we think that this is fancy, or fanaticism, or some high-strained sentimentalism, but it is not so! It is a sober fact that when a man gets to lean upon the arm of Christ, he laughs at trouble, defies persecution—he passes through temptation all unhurt. He walks here below, but his conversation is in heaven! He sits down with the sons of men and yet he is "raised up and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." I would say to you saints who have not proceeded far in the college of Christ, who have only just begun to study His precious character and the divine virtues that flow out of Him, never be content until you have! As you have heard from the song of the canticles; as you have heard from the saints who out of their experience have told you of Christ's love, so will you find it! Do not harbor the idea that the further you go, the less will you have of enjoyment in religion. Oh, no! It has deep draughts of great bliss! The shallow draughts will sustain, but oh, it

is sacred intoxication with the love of Christ which brings the highest joy and the most divine mirth!

To go in up to the ankles in the sea of Christ's love is well, but oh, to pass up to the loins and to get still further until you find it "a river to swim in"—this is to know the true delights of godliness!

As you have heard of these things, though they seem to be too high for you and you tremble at them, yet if you will but ask for more grace that you may press forward, so you shall! There are no exceptions about Christ! He offers nothing in the market that has been proffered to catch the eye, but is not worth the purchase. His diamonds are never trashy paste. His gold is not mere gilt. You may buy bread from Him and put it in the scales and find it ounce for ounce. The water that He gives turns neither stale nor sour—it is always fresh and cool—the further you shall go in the enjoyment of it, the more shall you prize the well of water springing up in your souls unto everlasting life!

Now, I might just turn this same point around in another form and say that, *as we have heard of Christ in His life upon earth, so have we found it in dealing with Him*. When Christ was here on earth, He was all tenderness and love—and so we have found Him. We went to Him covered with the leprosy of our sin and ready to die of our iniquities. But one touch of His hand was freely given and that touch healed us! When He was on earth He was holiness, itself, and so He is now, for He will not walk with us if we fall in love with sin. He is quick to see our faults and He gently chides us till conscience awakens us and we turn from the evil with abhorrence. Christ was in this world as a very faithful friend. Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end. And we have found Him just such until now. There was never an hour in which He left us naked to our enemies. When we have been tempted, His intercession has always been like a bronze wall around us to keep us from being devoured by the foe. When we have been bewildered, He has, like a good shepherd, led us by ways that we knew not, but that He well understood. In the days of famine we have been fed. In the times of need we have been satisfied. We can speak well of His name. If any of His saints have anything to say of Him that is high and comely, that will exalt Him and set Him on high, and we, after our measure, can endorse it all! So far as our experience has gone, He is a better Christ than we thought Him to be! Oh, He is altogether precious, altogether lovely! Up to this day we have never discovered a spot in Him. We have tried Him—oh how, sadly, and our sins have tried Him—oh, how heavily! But He is always true—the same yesterday, today, and forever! We can only bless Him and praise Him, for "as we have heard, so have we seen."

How my heart desires that some of you who are here would just now, at this very moment, come to my Lord and try Him! Oh, I so remember when I first came to Him. They told me He was ready to pardon and that a *look* at Him would move the crushing burden from my weary heart. I could not think it true, but—

"I came to Jesus as I was,

Weary, and worn, and sad."

And did He disappoint me? Ah, no! I can happily join in with the rest of that verse—

"I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad!"

If any of you think that Christ will cast you out when you come, I wish you would come and try Him. It would be the beginning of a new method with Him—the turning over of a new black leaf. "Him that comes unto Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." He never did find it in His heart to do so to any sinner that has sought His mercy! And I will not believe it, though all the angels in heaven swear it, that He ever cast away a soul! I'd call them liars! It cannot be! It never shall be! While the heavens are above the earth and God is true, and Christ is God, no sinner that comes and puts His trust in Him, shall find Him unable or unwilling to save Him! Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! And as you have heard, so shall you see! Now, in the next place, I think—

III. THIS ALL STANDS GOOD WITH REGARD TO THE CHURCH OF GOD ITSELF.

Some have been apt to find fault with the Church and some Christians seem to act on the principle of getting to heaven, one by one. "Sheep," God's people are called, and I suppose one reason is because sheep are gregarious and go in flocks. But there are Christian professors who seem to like the one by one principle. Well now, speaking of the Church of God as we have seen her, she has many faults—many faults—but Jesus Christ loves her and she is His Bride. And I dare not find fault with her! If she is the Princess Royal, if she is His Imperial Highness's own betrothed one, I would rather see her with His eyes than with my own! And while it may be very striking to rail about ministers and their defects, to sneer at church members and all sorts of other things—and there may be sometimes good reason for it—yet we may say much on the other side, too. "As we have heard, so have we seen."

When we first joined the Christian Church, we were told very plainly in the Scripture *that there would be tares among the wheat;* that there would be some among us who would go out from us, because they were not of us. Christ taught us that among His 12 disciples, there was one Judas, and if some hypocrites intrude among us, it need not astonish us! We knew it would be so. He forewarned us and admonished us of it. We have heard it and so have we seen—and if the seeing of it has been painful—we can at least say that God was truthful and frank in warning us that so it would be.

Well, *there were good things spoken of the Church of God* and we have found them true, too. I expected to find in the Christian Church some holy, prayerful, devout Christian men and women—and I have found them. And I have rejoiced to be among them, to mingle with them, and to be of their company, joining with them in holy worship, the washing in the blood that has washed them! I can truly say that I have found a Peter—many a bold earnest brother like Peter; many a loving John; many

a busy Martha and some communing Marys! The Church of God always seems to me, as I have seen it, to be a vast deal too good for me to be a member of it, if I did but judge myself. And, instead of finding fault, I would join with David and say, "You are my Lord: my goodness extends not to You, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight." I know the world will often find fault and rail and tell us there are no such things as ancient Christians. I have seen as glorious Christianity as even the apostles saw, and as good works of the Holy Spirit in members of this church as ever gladdened the eyes of those apostles! I have seen suffering endured with an astonishing patience, labor done with a perseverance that was most commendable, liberality evinced with a freedom that showed that the love of Christ constrained, prayer kept up with a fervency that marked the indwelling Spirit and souls cared for, sought after and won, too, with an indefatigable love that only the love of Christ could inspire! I know we always think we live in the worst times, but we do not!

There were worse times than these and there will be again. These may not be the best, but they are a long way off from being the worst. I think it was when Dr. Newton died that the good divine who preached the funeral sermon took some such text as this, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," and he deplored that now this eminent saint was gone, they had no great divines left like the great preachers of the olden time. That went on very prettily for some time, but it was too much—for an old Methodist woman, who stood in the aisle cried out—"Glory to God, that's a lie!" And oftentimes when I hear people crying down the times and saying there are no good people left, and that Christianity is at a low ebb, and that there remains no true zeal, I can say from what I, myself, see in the people among whom I dwell, "Glory be to God, that is a lie! It is a slander upon the Church of God!" For as we have heard, so have we seen—we have seen the gracious, fair fruits of the Spirit—and we honor God by testifying to that fact!

I would, however, dear brothers and sisters that we were always conscientiously concerned never to give the lie in any degree to statements made in Scripture concerning the holy living of the saints. Alas, there are some professors who, if you could track them to their business, are so much given to loose trading that as we have heard—so can we *cannot* see! If you go into their houses—their maidservants, their children and their wives are obliged to say, "We have heard what Christian fathers, and mothers, and masters ought to be, but as we have heard so, we do not see." It all ends in talk, in profession. Now, while I stand up for it that there are many that do adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things and so prove that they are God's true people, yet do we sorrowfully confess that many walk "of whom" we would say with the apostle, "We have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Though they are professed members of the Church of Christ, their lips honor God, but

their inconsistent lives degrade the Church and bring upon it much loss of spiritual power. "As we have heard, so have we seen."

I think some of us can say that we have heard of *the Church's glorious assemblies*. We have heard that they said they were glad when they went up to the house of the Lord. We have heard that the people of God are happy in their assemblies and that they long for the place where God's honor dwells. Well, and so have we seen, for our Sabbaths have been our happiest days and we have often said—

"My willing soul would stay,
In such a frame as this,
And sit, and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

It has been so.

We have heard that the preaching of *the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and the great means of comfort and edification to the saints.* And "as we have heard, so have we seen," for oftentimes when the truth of God has been preached in our hearing, it has been as marrow and fatness—and other times a rebuke has come just as we needed it to quicken us from our spiritual sloth!

We have heard that *the ordinances of God's house have a blessing connected with them*. Baptism and the Lord's Supper—that in the keeping of His commandments there is great reward—and as we have heard, so have we seen. I am sure that the blessed Supper of the Lord, though many of His people come to the table every week, never seems to grow stale.

There is always a freshness in it. Oh, that blessed ordinance! Some, I know, make a god of it and an idolatrous mystery of it, but because they misuse it, we dare not depreciate it! It is to us none other than the very gate of heaven full often. "As we have heard, so have we seen." Let us press on in our church fellowship and increase in our love and earnestness—and then as we have heard of the Zion that travails and becomes like the mother of children—so shall we see! As we have heard that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy—so shall we see! As we have heard that there is great pleasure connected with the winning of souls for Christ—so shall we see. In a word, all the glorious things that are spoken of Zion, we shall have fulfilled to ourselves!

Brothers and sisters, before I close, I want to say that there is a dreadful side to this truth of God. As we have heard, so have we seen. There are some of you here who are not saved. You have hitherto loved your sins and have not repented. You have heard of Christ, but you have put off all thoughts of Him. Now you have heard oftentimes that He that believes not shall be condemned—and from this book you have heard that condemnation is something terrible and overwhelming, for there are words like these, "Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." And these, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." And these, "Where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." Now as you have heard, so will you see!

Depend upon it, you shall not find the pit of hell to be less awful than this book describes! God sets up no bugbear to frighten souls! They are all realities of which He speaks—and that they *are* realities, many dying sinners have been made to know before they have been dead, for their horror, their alarms their fears have been premonitions of that wrath to which they were drawing near! I have seen some death scenes which I dare not try to picture before you—and the memory of which would unman me if I were to continue to contemplate them—hearers of the gospel who had neglected Christ and who died conscious of their sins, unable, however, to seek mercy. And while we prayed with them, telling us that our prayers would never be heard, for they were given over and now they were cursing God, even while they were feeling the anguish of lost souls! Yes, and though there are some that become the advocates for evil by trying to make out the punishment of sin to be little—settle it in your souls that as it took the blood of the dying Son of God to wash out the sin of those who were pardoned—it will take an anguish such as no heart can conceive before the sinner shall have suffered for his sin what God will certainly pour upon him! Think not lightly of the doom of the lost, lest you think lightly of sin, and lightly of Christ, for as you have heard and infinitely more than you have heard, shall you see, oh, unhappy spirit, unless you will turn to Christ and believe on Him and live! Oh, that you may do so tonight, for another night may never come to you—but one long, endless night may be your portion.

But there is a bright side to it, too. The saints in heaven might all say, "As we have heard, so have we seen," only that I think they would make a great improvement in our text! 'Tis true, you heard that heaven was full of joy and mercy and so have you seen. You heard of its pearly gates and its streets of shining gold. You heard of its foundations of jasper and its walls of chrysolite and all manner of precious stones. You heard of its eternal rest and of the presence of God and the glory of the overflowing bliss—and all you heard you have seen! But I say they would make an improvement upon this, for, like the Queen of Sheba, I think their glorified spirits would say, "The half has not been told." Yes, brothers and sisters, we have heard things, but, "what must it be to be there"—to be there?! The enjoyments transcend description and though the words of Scripture portray the bliss that remains, we, alas, are dull of understanding and cannot find out all the meaning of the golden sentences! But we shall soon be there and once there we shall, as I have said before, declare, "As we have heard, so have we seen, only that the half was not told us of the splendor and the glory of the court of our heavenly Solomon." May we be there to find all true and join in the everlasting song of, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever. Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 45:1-9.

The lily psalm—a psalm of loves. Oh, that our hearts might be full of love, tonight, and while we read, may our hearts be singing to the praise of the Well Beloved!

Verse 1. *My heart is overflowing with a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.* Sometimes the heart could speak if it could move the tongue, but it is a blessed time with us when, first of all, the heart is fully warmed with love and then the fire within burns the strings that tie the tongue—and the tongue begins to move right joyously in expressing the heart's love! May it be so with us tonight who have to preach! May it be so with all our brothers who have, in public, either to preach or to pray!

2. *You are fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever.* No sooner does he begin to write about Christ than he sees Him! A warm heart soon kindles the imagination. The eye of faith is soon opened when once the heart is right. We feel the presence of Christ. We begin to speak of Him and to Him. "You are fairer than the children of men." Oh, I would, tonight, that Christ would but lift the corner of His veil and show you but one of His eyes! Your hearts would be ravished with His infinite beauty! "You are fairer than the children of men." Would God He would but speak half a word into our weary ear, and we should say, "Grace is poured into Your lips." Oh, for some sense and sight of Him! Do not our hearts hunger after this tonight?

3, 4. *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 awesome things.* The heart never glows with love to Christ unless, in consequence, there is a longing that His kingdom may be extended. It is an instinct of a loving heart, that it desires the honor of its object. We long for Christ to rule and reign simply because we love Him. Oh, that He would lay His right hand to His work in these slow times! How little is being done comparatively! Oh, for an hour of the right arm of Jesus! If He would but come Himself to the battle, and the shout of a King were heard in our camps, what victories would be won! Cry unto Him, O you that love Him. He will come to your call!

5. *Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under You.* Christ has not only power near at hand with his right hand, but far off He darts the arrows of His bow and heathens are made to feel that the gospel is mighty! Would God it were so now! Cry for it!

6. *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter.* And this we know to be spoken concerning Jesus Christ for this was quoted by the apostle "Your throne O God." Let those who will, deny His Deity. It shall be the joy of our heart to worship Him and, in express terms, to address Him who is our brother as "very God of

very God." "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter."

7. *You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.* Fellow with us and yet equal with God! Man anointed, the Christ, yet still the reigning God! Glory be to His name!

8. *All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad.* Not only is Christ precious, but everything that touches Him! There is not a garment that hangs upon His shoulder but becomes sweet by contact with Him. "All Your garments smell of myrrh." There is myrrh about the priestly robe that falls down to His feet, and about the golden belt of His faithfulness that is girt about His waist. There are myrrh, and aloes, and cassia about His crown, though it is of thorns! About every garment that He puts on, there is a sweet perfume.

9. *King's daughters were among Your honorable women: at Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.* Blessed queen of Christ—His Church. Let us never think little of her. There are some that are always crying up "the church," "the church," "the church"—but that is not the true church, that tries to take the place of Christ. It is anti-Christ! The true church has her place, however, and that is at her husband's own right hand, where she sits in the best of the best—in gold—and that the gold of Ophir, for He spares nothing for her beauty and her glory.

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A TIMELY EXPOSTULATION
NO. 3397

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Why seek you the living among the dead"
Luke 24:5.

THIS question was addressed to certain holy women who came early to the sepulcher, bringing with them the spices which they had prepared for embalming the body of our Lord. They were met by angels who reminded them that their Lord had promised to rise again, that He had so risen and that it was in vain for them to seek in the sepulcher the living, the immortal Christ. "Why seek you the living among the dead?"

The mistake they made was that of seeking for the living Savior where He could not be found. We have, all of us, made the same mistake. Some of us are making it now. We are seeking good things in the midst of evil—hoping to find satisfaction where it was never yet discovered and never will be! Seeking, but seeking in the wrong place—seeking for the living among the dead.

To illustrate this, I shall first address myself to *the people of God who sometimes fall into this error.* And then I shall have to expostulate with the *unconverted, as well as with those who are somewhat awakened to spiritual truth.* Say, now—

I. YOU CHILDREN OF GOD, CALLED OUT FROM THE WORLD, do you not sometimes set your affections upon things on the earth and seek for satisfaction here below? Have I not observed how some of you have tried *to find comfort in your wealth* and how others, in the midst of your successful efforts to extend your business, have thought to find solace on that bed of thorns, the cares of this world and the merchandise thereof? Ah, how grievous it is when the Christian becomes an idolater! Yet just as the Israelites of old—who, though they knew the true God, were found in an emergency setting up the golden calf and saying, "These are your gods, O Israel"—so, in one form or another, we may be making some created good the object of our search, setting our heart upon it and indulging expectations of solace from it—forgetting that comfort can only be found in our Lord Jesus Christ! "Why seek you"—why do you who know so much better—"why seek YOU the living among the dead?" Why do you come to the broken cistern which can hold no water, when the well springing up with crystal streams is always at your feet? Why will you go to drink of the muddy river, the Sihor, when the clear sparkling rill of the water of life is always accessible to you? You did once try to fill your belly with the husks which the swine eat, but you failed to appease the hunger that consumed you. Why return to that unprofitable employment? Oh, Christian, you have sometimes said to your fellow

man, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" I may say the same to you, if you think an immortal mind can be satisfied with mortal joys, or imagine that one who has been born from on high can ever find contentment in this poor wilderness world! The pursuit itself is a folly which is sure to bring you a strong rebuke whenever you thus fall into the error of seeking the living among the dead. Your solid comfort, your real happiness and the only joy worth having—you must find in Christ Jesus, by the power of the Spirit—and not in the things of time.

It is sadder, still, and this sometimes occurs *when the professor tries to cheer his heart by the silly vanities of worldly amusement.* There are a thousand inlets to happiness which you may look upon as free to your use—you are as welcome to enjoy them as other men. Whatever it is that is pure and lovely and uncorrupted with sin is as much yours as it is the portion of any other people under the sun. Yours are the beauties of nature, the wonders of God's handiwork and the vast domain of creation wherein are things innumerable to please the eye, to charm the ear and make the heart to heave with joy! Learn to use without abusing the bounties which providence has placed within your reach! And pray that the delights they are capable of yielding may be sanctified to your good. But there are sundry amusements, so frivolous and trifling, that if they are not, in themselves sinful, they verge upon that border where diversion is separated from dissipation by only a faint line. And as the border is always the most infested by thieves and robbers, it is well to beware of it. If the Christian wants to be clear from open transgression, let him eschew the place of temptation and avoid the appearance of evil—for whatever is not of faith is sin. What you cannot do with a clear conscience that it is right, let that alone with a wholesome fear of offense. You can peril no mistake by leaving it! You may cause yourself a thousand sorrows by entering upon it. Oh, shall you that have once leaned your heads upon the bosom of Christ profane your hearts with this wanton wicked world? Shall you that have once eaten angels' food hanker after the diet of fools and drink the intoxicating wine cup of their pleasures? Shall you be seen in the assembly where none congregate but the lightest of the light, and the gayest of the gay? Shame upon you, Christian! You have disgraced your profession. You have disgraced yourself. You are seeking the living, not only among the dead, but among the rotten and corrupt! Do you expect cheer for your passions? You shall find a scourge for your soul! If you are a child of God, you shall be driven back to the way you have strayed from with many a smarting sore and many a broken bone! If you are not a child of God, likely enough you will go from bad to worse, give up the profession which was but a vapor, and turn as a dog to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire! Thus, Christian, while I say to you, do not seek lasting comfort in earthly things, I am compelled to say to some who bear the name and wear the profession of Christians—do not seek your joy at all among the unprofitable sports and gambols in which some men delight! It is seeking the living among the dead!

Further, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, there is an evil very common to the most conscientious of those who avoid all forms of outward sin. It is the insidious evil of *seeking comfort when they are full of doubts and fears, by looking within yourselves.* I should think that experience might have cured us of this, for when we look into our own hearts—although I trust the grace of God is there—so much of imperfection, of infirmity, yes, and what is worse, of real iniquity is apparent, that a sight of the inner man is anything but likely to inspire us with consolation. What a fool is he who tries to fetch fire out of ice! But he is not much more foolish than those who try to soothe their anxieties by parleying with their feelings. Brothers and sisters, the Christian's comfort is on the cross. There hangs his hope! His hope must not be based or bottomed on anything he feels. It is pleasant to know that grace reigns in one's breast. Be thankful for it. But, alas, if that is your confidence, the next day you may doubt whether there is any grace within! And where, then, is your confidence? It is gone! It flees as a shadow. If, however, you live depending upon the cross of Jesus, you can walk with equable comfort at all times, for the cross never shifts its place, the atonement never fluctuates, it never rises or falls in value! Our union with Christ is not subject to degrees. We are always in Him accepted in the Beloved. Happy is the man who builds on that solid Rock and not upon the treacherous quicksands of his own personal emotions! If you endeavor to draw comfort from your fickle, changeable feelings, you seek for the living among the dead. You are looking for joy where it can never be found. You will gather the thorn, but not the rose. You will endure the labor, but not receive the reward. You will suffer the burning of the fire, but not be enlivened by its cheerful warmth. "Why seek you the living among the dead?"

When the believer feels that grace is at a very low ebb with him, let him take care that he does not resort to Sinai for the refreshment of his evidences. Have you not heard of some believers whose mournful sonnet has been—

> "'***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?"***

And in order to get out of that state they have said, "Now I will make a covenant with God. I will chasten myself with fasting and much prayer." Or they have had recourse to vows of their own devising, instead of going straight away to Christ as sinners—with some such language on their lips as our hymn suggests—

> ***"Just as I am, though tossed about,***
> ***With many a conflict, many a doubt,***
> ***Fighting within, and fears without,***
> ***Oh, Lamb of God. I come!"***

Instead of thus going to Christ, they set to work to be their own Savior! If Paul were here, he would say to them, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?" Beloved

brothers and sisters, make your covenant if you like, and fast if you please, and pray if you can without ceasing—the more you pray the better. But when a soul is hungry, it will not recover itself by bodily exercises, but by feeding! So what you need is not so much to give out something from yourselves as to get something into yourselves through Christ! And therefore, turn your eyes, as you did at the first, to the wounds, the glorious wounds, of your substitute, and say to Him, "My Lord, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. If I am not saved, yet will I trust in You, now, even though I never did before. I now cast myself on You." This will revive you, this will comfort you! You may set to work as you please after that, but do not seek for the living among the dead! Do not go to Moses, who is dead and was buried years ago! Do not bring yourself under the spirit of bondage, but come as a child who is not under the law, but under grace—and rest at the foot of the cross! So shall you have your spiritual vigor restored and rejoice in the Lord your God!

Once more to the believer: I do think, dear friends, we seek for the living among the dead *when we look to our fellow men to find in them some succor or support* to depend upon, or when, as the case may vary, we look to our dear children or relatives and think to find a perpetuity of comfort there. Ah, and it is very easy for some of you to think too highly of the minister. It is possible when you have received spiritual quickening and have come to be fed under some godly pastor that you may look no higher than the man, instead of looking to his Master! If so, if your faith stands in the wisdom of man, or in man's earnestness—you are looking for the living among the dead! Oh, beware of anything like that! Let us be held in respect by you for our office's sake, but nothing beyond this do we crave or counsel. To the Lord Jesus we bid you look, for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake! A more common evil, however, is for the wife to feel as if her husband could never be taken from her side. But he is mortal. I would not distress you with dreary forebodings, but I would have you remember that the living God is the only living one on whom your trust can be fixed. And you, mother, do you think that your child can never be removed? Know, then, that you are in the land of the dying, and who are you, and what are you, that they should be beyond the reach of the arrows that fly abroad, and the diseases that work insidiously, any more than the children and the friends of others? Oh, if you begin to build your nest in these trees, which have, every one of them, been marked by the woodman's axe—and must all come down—you are a silly bird, and your nest will be lost, and yourself suffer grievous damage! There is one immortal lover who shall never die! There is one eternal friend who shall never depart! There is a Father who always lives! There is a brother who sticks close forever! Earthly kinships—value them, but hold them loosely. Thank God for them, but think not that they are your freeholds. Your tenure is but on lease and a word shall suffice to terminate it! Walking through the fields, you might see most of them still yellow with the king-cups and blushing with all the flowers of this sweet summer month of June, but do not think these flowers shall long abide, for already I hear

the sound of the sharpening scythe and I know the mowers will soon be at their task—the flowers will be cut down and the green grass shall be dry. Set not, then, your love on the fleeting bounties of kindly providence as though you could embalm them and make them last for years! "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever." Fix your love on that which is constant—not on these transient things! I leave you, my brothers and sisters, with the general maxim—having applied it in various ways, you can apply it to many more in your meditations—take heed lest you seek for the living among the dead, and so spend your strength for nothing and reap the bitter fruits of weariness and disappointment! Are there not, however, among you, my hearers, full many of—

II. THOSE WHO ARE NOT THE CHILDREN OF GOD? As the apostle said in that 10th chapter of Romans which we just now read to you, "They have not all obeyed the gospel." I do not know whether the reading of that chapter touched any of your hearts. It did mine. I could scarcely help weeping as I thought of some of you. "They have not all obeyed the gospel"—I mean not all those who sit in these seats regularly, to whom we preach that gospel so frequently. Those who come into our classes are earnestly taught, but they have not all obeyed the gospel. No, there is a very large proportion who have not. Oh, grievous fact—fact which some of you will have to grieve over with terrible remorse in the day of judgment, unless the mercy of God prevents it! It is with you I want to expostulate. Some of you are *seeking for joy in sin* and you are seeking for the living among the dead, indeed!

Be thoughtful for a moment. God who made you has made certain laws, the observance of which is essential to your well-being. Suppose God had ordained that the violation of His law should make men happy, would that be wise? It is too unwise a thought for us to entertain, much less for God to design! You are disobeying God's command—then depend upon it that is the way of unhappiness! It must be so. "Oh," you say, "but it gives me present gratification." That may be. It is quite consistent with what I have said because the enchantment that allures you is the very snare that beguiles you—and then for every ounce of joy which sin can yield to a sinful spirit, there will be a ton of sorrow inflicted! I forbear in this place to mention the sins of the flesh but who does not know that for every snap of pleasure derived from indulgence of the passions, there are racks, tortures and agonies which the physician could better explain than myself. Such a measure of retribution is common in this life, but as for the life to come—could you lift for a moment the thick veil that hides the unseen world from our gaze, or could a sound pierce through the partition that infinite mercy has made too stout for the wailing and gnashing of teeth to penetrate—I think the groans, the execrations, the shrieks of madness of those who lived as votaries and died as victims of the so-called pleasure of sin would fill you with horror and wild amazement! The transgressor who eats the fruit of his own ways, fruit

that once tempted his appetite—and drinks the dregs of that wine cup, the first sip of which was so sweet to his taste—is an appalling spectacle! And this is merely the awakening of a man's conscience to his folly. The punishment of avenging justice is in reserve! Disobedience of God must be punished by God with indignation that does not relent and pain that knows no abatement! Why seek you, then, the living among the dead?

A moment's reflection might convince a man that this final scene inevitably awaits the profligate. Who would think of making his child happy in the way of constant disobedience, or of encouraging his waywardness by rewarding it? You take care, as judicious parents, that your children shall know you govern the house. And if your laws are constantly broken, you exact the penalty and the rod is put into use—or at least the chastisement is not spared. And shall not God stand up for His sovereign prerogative, enforce His own law and make men feel that they cannot violate that law without suffering the retribution He has threatened? You shall find it so to your cost if you will not credit it to your escape! I tell you that if you seek your pleasure in the theater or in the saloon of gaiety, or in what is infinitely worse, though too often in close association—in the house of shame. If you go to the chamber of the strange woman, or spend your evenings in the tavern, inflaming yourselves with strong drink, you court misery while you try to avoid melancholy! You render yourselves incapable of happiness while you strive to be merry! But ah, you might as well deliberately make a pilgrimage to the depths of hell in quest of the joys of heaven as to seek true enjoyment in the haunts of vice! The Lord, the Lord of hosts will make men see that beneath the fair skin of the world's pleasures there is a loathsome leprosy that would make them heart-sick were the latent corruption exposed! Oh, go not after such pleasures! Remember that God will require these things at your hands. Seek true pleasure, mental pleasure that never sours! Seek pure joy which will retain its fragrance, refresh others besides yourself, haunt you with no hideous ghosts, but bear sweet reflection when you come to die! Cheer your hearts with draughts from that goblet which will invigorate you when your soul's pulse is beating—the cup which flows clear to the last, whereof you may be grateful to sip when your immortal spirit is about to wing its fight to worlds unknown! Seek not for living pleasure amidst the graves and charnel houses of sin!

Let me change my tone again, for now I come to address a part of this company of people—

III. THOSE WHO ARE ANXIOUSLY CONCERNED TO BE FOUND RIGHT WITH GOD.

Some of you, dear friends, have known the evil of sin and have turned from its evil ways. But though you are desirous of being saved from the wrath to come, you are very likely seeking salvation where it is not to be obtained. A few counsels and cautions may, therefore, be welcome to you.

Do not seek salvation by rites and ceremonies, for if you do, you are seeking for the living among the dead! The old Jewish religion was full of

types—hence the forms and ceremonials that abounded in its observance—but it did not save multitudes who in the wilderness perished in their sins! And hundreds of thousands more, who had seen it all their lifetime, but never seen through its externals the realities it prefigured, died rejecting the Lord Jesus, to whose mediation it bears witness. Outward pomp and ceremony are of no avail to save the soul! Would those who are as fond of vestments and rituals try the experiment of endeavoring to heal a man who was sick by such means, they would find their medicines have no effect upon the body to restore its health. And were they to bring in a man who was sick in soul, they would soon find that all their gaudy trappings and rhythmical intonations were incapable of supplying balm to a wounded conscience! They are dead, sirs. They are dead, every one of them! The whole thing is death! It is nothing in all its beauty but the festering fungus that grows upon corruption. The whole system is trickery—a gewgaw to deceive. It is nothing but imposture, an artifice of Satan to lead the world astray! Were you baptized with water from the river Jordan, confirmed with never so much pomp and took the sacrament, or, as they say, "went to celebration" on every holy day and every unholy day likewise—and were you to expire with unction on your face and with the priest's lying absolution in your ears—you would go down to hell despite it all, if you had no truer faith, no brighter hope than these things could inspire! For other salvation is there none but that which you can find in Christ, without any priest to mediate, or any minister to intervene between you and Him. You are a priest, yourself, if you believe in Jesus. Christ is the one only Priest, the great High Priest of our profession! Get pardon from Him and let other men buckle about their priesthood and vaunt their succession as they may. Beware of them! To resort to these men for help is to seek the living among the dead!

Or, perhaps, you will go about *to work out your own salvation apart from Christ*. You have got the idea that you must pass through so much experience, weep so many tears, get into such-and-such a state of heart—and then that you must reform this habit and perform that service—and after a while you will be saved and obtain peace. The top and bottom of it is, you think you can save yourself! You would be your own Savior! Do you not know that every man, according to God's own Word, every man is accursed who does not keep the whole law, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Now, as you have not kept all things, you must be accursed! And as long as you abide under the law, you are accursed in all that you do! If you can be delivered from the law through Christ, then, and only then, may you escape from the curse, for Christ was made a curse for us by hanging upon the cross for us—and so the curse is put away and so we are redeemed there from. But so long as you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are under the law. And so long as you are under the law, you are under the curse. To try to find a blessing

where everything is under God's law, is seeking for the living among the dead!

I know not to whom these remarks may pointedly apply, but I dare say I am speaking to some of you who pant for salvation and you would give anything to be assured of your soul's acceptance! You have been praying, it may be, night and day for mercy till your knees seem as though they would grow to the floor. In your earnest pleadings your heart has been vehement till the flesh has grown faint. I am glad that you are pleading and agonizing in prayer, but there is no necessity for these long delays and for these protracted prayers. Trust Christ, who hangs on yonder cross, and you are saved! The moment you depend upon Jesus, past sin is blotted out, you are a new man as in the sight of God, your iniquity is forgiven, your transgression is covered and you are accepted in the Beloved! Hundreds of times have I tried to bring forward this theme till I sometimes fear lest it should sound flat and fail to awaken you! Yet some of you have not believed it or received it! Yet I bear you witness that if you receive not this cardinal truth of God, you must perish in your sin! Our Lord did not mince matters. He offered no three courses, but He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." What about those that believe not? He said, "He that believes not shall be damned." What if the man always goes to Church, or always comes to a meeting? There is no exemption—if he believe not, he shall be damned. But what if he always pays twenty shillings in the pound and is scrupulously honest? "He that believes not shall be damned." The gentle lips of the Savior spoke these words! They are not of my coining, they are not my construction. He said it and will prove it true. Oh, that you might trust Him, for if you trust Him, you cannot be condemned! But if you go about anywhere else to find hope and comfort for your soul, you are seeking for the living among the dead! Why continue this foolish search? Why persevere in this bootless toil?

Yet it is very possible you are *seeking for some good thing in yourself* by way of feeling and emotion. "If I felt a more broken heart," says one, "I could trust Christ." "If," says another, "I felt the terrors of the law, I could trust Christ." If! Yes, indeed! Why multiply your useless "ifs"? They are vain excuses. Do you mean you cannot trust Christ? That is a sad, though, perhaps, it is an honest confession. Do you not believe Him to be true? "Ah," says one, "I do believe that." Is it difficult, then, to trust an honest man? But you do not believe in the integrity and faithfulness of Christ! "Oh," you say, "but I do." Well, then, trust Him as the necessary consequence! Jesus Christ says that He came into the world to save sinners. And God's witness is that if we trust Christ, we shall be saved. If you believe that to be true, trust Him! Commit your soul and your soul's salvation to Him! "Oh, but I am not fit." Is there a word about fitness in the whole gospel? As you may have come fresh from the commission of some new sin, the gospel does not say to you, "Stand by a while, till you are prepared." But it says, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." I do not find the gospel telling you that you must first be better, but it is said that you are *now* to turn to Him. "Let the wicked

forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Oh, I wish you could take my Master at His word! I wish, poor guilty one, you would have done with disputing, cling to the promises and just drop into the arms of the promiser! Can you venture thus? You shall never chide yourself for temerity, or repent of your courage! It may seem a daring thing to do, but come, and welcome! Jesus casts out none that come!

When I came—and it seems fresh in my memory tonight as I mention it to you—I came all trembling in my sin. I knew I had not one good thing that could recommend me to Christ. I thought He would have said, "Go your way, I have not loved you, nor given Myself for you." But I did look to Him. I knew I had no other confidence. I did cast myself upon Him and He has not cast me away. "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." I cannot lead you to Christ—oh, that I could! There is one far mightier who can and I hope that He will do it tonight! We spoke this morning about the Holy Spirit. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might prove His own power to you now! At any rate, this I can say and this I do say—Give up that seeking your own righteousness! Give up that struggling after emotions and feeling! It is all seeking the living among the dead! The idea of your helping Christ to save you is preposterous! What could you do? As well yoke a snail with a racehorse, that they might win a prize, as for you to help Christ! You help Christ; you with your rags, and Christ with His white linen; you with your pollution, and Christ with His holiness; you with your deep condemnation, and Christ with His free forgiveness? He needs no help from you! He wants your emptiness, not your fullness—your weakness, not your power—your death, not your life! When a tree is loaded, it needs baskets, but it does not need full baskets—it needs empty baskets to hold the fruit. And Jesus Christ wants sinners—not sinners having merits—a foolish pretense—but sinners who are destitute! There is a full Christ for empty sinners, an all-bountiful Christ for you, famished sinner, now!

Ah, some of you poor people drop in here, sometimes, on an evening, and I am glad to see you. Never be ashamed to come in your working clothes. I know you think I am not talking to you, but you are the very people I am speaking to! Jesus Christ always had a kind word for the laboring man—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now, it is likely enough some of you are no better than you should be, though you have stepped in here in the crowd to hear a word. Well, it is such as you are, Christ came to save. "Not the righteous. Sinners, Jesus came to save." Oh, you chief of sinners! Come to Jesus Christ! This night He will receive every soul that comes to Him. Eternal Spirit draw them! Eternal Father, now call them by Your power and let us meet at Your right hand, every one of us, to see Your face and rejoice in Your mighty love!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 9:1-5; ROMANS 10.

Verses 1-3. *I tell the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* The apostle is evidently about to make an extraordinary statement—a statement which would probably not be believed and, therefore, he gives as a preface the most solemn assertions that are permitted to Christian men declaring that he is speaking the truth, and also that the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with his conscience that it is so—that he so loves the souls of his fellow countrymen that, though the thing could never be, yet in a sort of ecstasy of love, he could devote himself to anything so long as his countrymen might but be saved. "My kinsmen according to the flesh."

4, 5. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: Whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God forever. Amen.* The apostle never omits an opportunity of magnifying his Master! Though it did not seem to be called for by the immediate subject in hand, yet he must put in a doxology to the name of Jesus. "Who is over all the eternally blessed God forever. Amen." How any believers in Scripture ever get to be disbelievers in the Deity of Christ is altogether astounding! If there is *anything* taught in the Word of God, it is assuredly that Paul comforts himself, in a measure, by the doctrine of election which is fully spoken to in this chapter. My subject leads me to read again at the 10th chapter.

ROMANS 10.

Verse 1. *Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* The same thing over again—his deep concern for his countrymen.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* Zeal is a good thing, but like the horse without a bit, it becomes useless and even dangerous. Knowledge is the bridle in the mouth of zeal. Zeal is like fire which may burn the house which it was intended to warm unless it is carefully governed. There must be knowledge in zeal.

3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* This is a great evil in the present day. There are many persons who are evidently zealous for God, but they make a mistake in supposing that they are to be saved by their own works, their prayers, their church attendance, their chapel attendance, or something of the sort, instead of accepting the finished righteousness of Christ, which is the righteousness of God! They are insulting Christ. They are insulting God by thinking that He would have given His Son to be our

righteousness if we could have made a righteousness of our own, or given Him up to die, if we could save ourselves.

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes*. There is the point—to believe—to have faith. It is that which gives us the righteousness of which Christ is the sum total.

5. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law. That the man which does those things shall live by them.* And if any man did, or could keep the law of God, he would live by it—but no man has ever done so, or ever will. There is no hope of life by the law.

6-9. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not, in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* What a wondrous way of salvation—so near—so close to us! What an expression that is—"in your mouth." We must absolutely take it out of our mouths. God has put the bread of life so near to us that it is in our mouth! We must reject it as a man would reject food, if we perish! But, oh, for grace to receive it, to live upon it, to believe Christ, to trust Him and so to be saved!

10, 11. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.* If, then, I base my eternal salvation upon Christ, and am trusting in Him—not in my works, or prayers, or tears, or alms, or feelings, or even in my own repentance or faith—but wholly in Him, I shall never be ashamed!

12, 13. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* What a comforting text for some of you! You want salvation, but you are afraid you cannot find it. "Whoever"—what a grand word—"whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord"—that is to say in prayer, but that prayer the prayer of *faith*—he "shall be saved."

14. *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* That is the point—the believing is the vital matter!

14, 15. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.* You see all the machinery of salvation here. God provides a gospel, He sends a preacher to proclaim it, men hear it—by the Holy Spirit they believe it and they are saved. It is all in a nutshell, but oh, how blessedly suited to poor, unworthy sinners like ourselves!

16, 17. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel . For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing*

by the Word of God. It does not ever come by seeing. Faith does not come by looking upon ceremonies—by gazing upon processions and pompous rituals! It come by the simple hearing of the Word of God. It is a matter of the understanding and the work of the Holy Spirit upon that understanding. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

18, 19. *But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?* Were they not taught that God would reject them if they were disbelievers? And that He would call in the heathen? Yes, they knew it, for—

19. *First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people and by a foolish nation I will anger you.* And the heathen thus, like ourselves, were accounted dogs by the Jews, but the Lord has brought us in and made us to believe in Christ because they rejected Him! What a wonderful passage that is about the great supper which the King made, when we read, because the invited guests did not come, the King, being angry, said unto His servants, "Go you out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Even the anger of God, you see, works good to some! He was angry with the guests that did not come, but then He called us in! His anger against the Jewish people has turned to the salvation of the Gentiles, for which may God be praised! But, may Israel be gathered, too!

20, 21 *But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

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LOVE'S GREAT REASON
NO. 3398

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"We love Him because He first loved us."
1 John 4:19.

THIS is the point where all genuine Christians meet. They can all say, without exception, "We love Him." They do not agree in doctrine—it is a pity, but I suppose that as long as we are in this body, we shall, none of us, see all the truths of God at once, and each man, seeing only a portion of the truth, is most likely to think that what he does not see is not true—whereas it may be just as important as that which he is able to perceive. Well, well, amidst a thousand controversies between Calvinism and Arminianism, and all the forms that various systems have taken with regard to this, and that, and the other; still, all the elect of God, being quickened by divine grace, unite in this one declaration, "Whatever we do not believe, we do love Him." There are great diversities of experience, as well as of doctrine. Some are down in the gloom and some never seem to leave the cellars of the Lord's house—they have deep spiritual exercises, they doubt, they fear, they tremble and are afraid. Others climb up to the very roof of the palace beautiful and look abroad upon the fair scene around. Their feet are used to dancing with spiritual delight and their hearts sing sweetly before the Lord. Theirs is an experience of communion rather than of corruption. They have been with Jesus and their faces are made to shine with His company. Perhaps if I told my experience, it might differ from yours from an experimental point of view—in that we might stand wide as the poles asunder—but if we are in Christ, we can, each of us, say with equal truth and intensity, "We love Him." There we join hands! Whatever we have not felt, tasted, or known, we *do* love Him!

And you will notice, too, in this short expression that there is a force, a power in it, principally derived from the fact of the personality of this love. "We love *Him*." You know, to love an, "it," is hard work. It seems contrary to the nature and all the instincts of love. Love always seeks a living person to grasp. But when it is put, "we love Him," it reads so naturally that we feel that we can love, through the force of the divine nature within us, with all the vitality and intensity of our godliness!

We can love Him—that blessed Son of God, that condescending One, that sacrificing, dying Lamb—that ascended, reigning, coming Savior, towards whom our hearts are drawn out. "We love Him." Depend upon it, we must have more preaching about the person of Christ and our hearts must assume more and more a trustfulness and affection towards Him. A merely doctrinal religion is pretty sure to degenerate into bigotry. An experimental religion will sooner or later sink into gloom. Understand what I mean. I am not speaking either against doctrine or experience. On the contrary, I would say all I could in favor of both—and they do enter into all men's lives who live near to Christ—but still make either the one or the other the great master-thought, brood over either of them, contend for them, live for them, throw your whole force into them and you may degenerate! But when you live as unto Him; when He is the truth that you believe in; when He is the way that you tread; when He is the life that you experience, and when the doctrine, and practice, and experience all meet in Him as lines in a center—then you shall not be degraded, you shall not degenerate—but you shall rise! You shall go from glory to glory, being changed by the presence of the Lord. "We love Him," then.

But I must make one observation before I plunge into the text, namely, that in order to love this blessed person, being a person, it is clear to everyone who thinks, that there must, first of all, have been some *acquaintance* with Him and then some deep conviction concerning His excellence. We cannot love whom we do not know or esteem. If we know nothing about Christ, have no understanding of Him, have not in any degree occupied our minds with Him, we may talk about love to Him, but it will be mere talk. And after we have known Christ, by the reading or hearing of the word, blessed to us by His Holy Spirit, it will be necessary for us to be brought into an admiring confidence in Him, believing that He is the altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand, worthy of all our reliance, worthy of all our adoration and service! Then it is, when knowledge has produced faith that faith gives birth to love!

I make this remark because I have sometimes noticed that in addressing Sunday school children, it is not uncommon to tell them that the way to be saved is to love Jesus, which is not true. The way to be saved for man, woman, or child is to trust Jesus for the pardon of sin—and then, trusting Jesus, love comes as a fruit! Love is by no means the root. Faith, alone, occupies that place. And I think I have heard young persons, too, talking always about the question, "Do I love the Lord or no?"—a very proper question, but it is not the first, but the second! The question that should always come first is, "Do I *trust* the Lord or no? Do I rest entirely in what He has done for me? Am I depending upon Him for eternal life and salvation?" If that first question is answered, the second will not long remain a matter of doubt! But if you begin with the second, and neglect the first, you may involve yourselves in very serious consequences. The great gospel precept is not, "love Christ," but, "believe

in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"—not that love is less than faith, but that love, though, perhaps, first in point of excellence in some respects, comes second in point of *order*—and that faith is first to be looked to in the soul and then love will inevitably and necessarily follow.

But now to come to the text: I shall treat the first part of the sentence as *the great general confession of the whole Church*—"We love Him." And the second first part of the sentence as *the most glorious reason for that love*—"because He first loved us." I am not going to preach this evening, but only to stir you up about these points.

I. THE GREAT GENERAL CONFESSION, "WE LOVE HIM."

Now, if you are a child of God, you will say, or if you do not say it, it will be true, "We love Him." As sure as ever you have passed from darkness to light, whether you are an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian, or a Baptist, or whatever you may be, you will agree with this utterance of the one mouth of the one Church! We all without exception, who have believed in Him, love Him.

But how do we love Him? We love Him, first, *not at all as we ought to love Him*. We confess that much with shame—and *not at all as we wish to love Him*. Our conception of what is due to Christ is, no doubt, very short of what is due to Him, but we fall short even of our own conception! I am afraid that many of us are like the children at school who have a good, fair copy set them at the top of the page, and the next line is written to imitate the copy, and the next imitates the imitation of the copy and as it gets to the bottom of the page—alas, poor writing—how unlike it is to the perfect copy at the top! So what is due to Christ stands at the top—what I believe about Christ in my best moments stands next. What I actually give to Christ comes next to that—and then far down the page, how badly do I write and how far do I fall short of what my love knows I ought to give Him!—

"Yes, I love You and adore,
Oh, for grace to love You more!"

Now, remember, we never make ourselves love Christ more by flogging ourselves for not loving Him more. We come to love those better whom we love by *knowing* them better, not by talking to ourselves about the duty of loving them, for love and duty, somehow or other, do not work well together. I mean that to talk of love being squeezed and pressed out by duty is not at all congruous. Love is like the generous first drops of the honeycomb—the virgin honey which drips spontaneously because the comb is full to bursting. Such is true, genuine love. If you want to love Christ more, *think* more of Him, think more of what you have received from Him. Study His character more in the Word of God. Draw more often near to Him in prayer. Live more in holy fellowship with Him. These are the logs that shall make that oven blaze. This is the secret fuel that

shall make our soul on fire with love to Jesus! We do not love Him as we ought, nor as we wish.

But for all that, in the next place, *we do really love Him*. The devil tells us we do not, but when it comes to close quarters, we can turn to one who knows better than the devil, and we can say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." What a mercy it is that Jesus Christ does not believe our actions, for they very often say, "Jesus, we do not love You." But He reads our hearts, and our hearts still beat with this, "Oh, my God! In my very soul I do love Christ, and if it were possible I would never sin against Him! Oh, wretched man that I am, that I should live so contrary to my true life and that the thing that I would, I do not, and what I would not, that I do, for I find this law in my members, bringing me into captivity. For I have tasted of freedom and am, indeed, free, and will not be the servant of any, but will be the espoused one, the free espoused one of Christ Jesus my Lord." Yes, we do really love Him!

And we also, if we are saints at all, *love Him practically*. We delight and that is the true standard and gauge of the man—in that in which he delights. We delight in His service, in His company, in His friends. There is nothing—I feel sure some of us can say this without egotism—there is nothing that makes our soul feel so full of bliss as when we have opportunities of glorifying the name of Jesus Christ! And if we had the offer of all the kingdoms of the world, and but a grain of glory put into our hand that we might give to Christ—we would sooner have it than all the wealth of the Indies and all the royalties of all the empires! To glorify Christ is a lasting treasure which shall abide with us when the world is on a-blaze. To teach one little child the name of Jesus; to bring the tear into its little eyes about the dying Lord is better and sweeter work to us than statesmanship, itself, could be if it were dissociated from Him—

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

Some of you are very busy preaching for my Lord and I know that when you are preaching, your main desire is that He may be extolled in your hearers' hearts. Do you not pine and sigh after this? Would you not give up all the graces of oratory, and talk in the most vulgar style, if necessary, if you could win one soul for Him? I know you would, my brothers, for this is every true minister's desire! And you, too, who have been standing in the streets today, preaching at the corners, I hope—no, I feel it must be so with you if you are His at all—that you spoke out of love to His dear name and when you would have preferred to have been silent, it was love that unloosened that tongue of yours! Do you not wish you could speak better? Do you not wish you could command attention better? And it is all for Him, for His dear sake that you might paint Him better before the eyes of men! And you, dear teachers in the classes, you

who have been engaged in the Sunday school, if you are right at all, and I trust you are, you have been teaching because you wanted to make Him famous and to let Him see of the travail of His soul. And you who cannot come to the school, but have been praying for your children and talking with them, you who have been dropping your pence into the box and have each been trying to do your share of something for the Master—well, if His life is in your hearts and His blood is sprinkled on you, you can say that you desire to do all this as a practical evidence that you so love Him! All the works that you have done today, done in His Spirit, have been a repetition of this verse, "We love Him."

Now, will you do the same in your ordinary lives, for in this I fear we sometimes fail? As a servant, live as one who loves Jesus! As a master, as a workman, as a merchant, as a man of retirement and property, still let this be the guide of your steps, the order of your life, the model by which you shape your conversation, "We love Him." Let every breath prove it! Let every heaving of the lungs, every motion of the tongue and of the hand, prove the great and blessed reality of the fact that we love Him!

Brothers and sisters, we can go a step further. I trust we love Jesus Christ not only really and practically, but we *love Him supremely*. That point has often vexed good hearts. They have said, "I cannot say that I love Jesus Christ better than father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or child." No, you cannot say it, and there are a great many things we cannot say, which it were better not for us to say, which would be immodest for us to say, but they may be true for all that! They who are beautiful, talk not of their beauty, and those who love most are usually the most diffident about their love. Now, you cannot contrast loves, the one to another, as you can contrast five to eight and say which may be the greater. It is not an arithmetical problem, but I will put it to the proof with you in this way—if you had to lose that dear husband, or else lose Jesus Christ, what would you do? Why, it does not take two minutes to consider! You would not put them in the scale together for a single second! He stands out of sight, above all husbands and dearest wives! We cannot consider Him in such a relation as that. Or, put it thus—if you had to give up your hope of heaven and your interest in Christ tonight, or to lose all that you have—what would you do? Why, I think you would not need to go into that little chamber to calculate. "No," you say, "all that I have, why it is so little! It is a thing of care to me, and if it were not, if I had more, as I would be very glad to have that I might give up more, I would put it all away and say, 'Lord, I have left all that I might follow You. But in leaving it, I did but gain a greater consciousness of Your love to me and a far greater and deeper enjoyment of that love.'"

Sometimes, however, some of you young people get an opportunity of showing which you love best—whether you do love Jesus better than all things else, or not. In the case of marriage, that test often comes. And

ah, how lamentable is the fact that many a young sister, and many a brother, too, will break through Christ's law, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I know this is a perplexing and solemn point, mark you. You do, in fact, give Christ up when you take that ungodly man! And you, young man, when you seek after that Christless woman, you deny your Lord and Master—as far as you can do it, you deny Him and give Him up for the sake of earthly pleasures! For such an act as that, your conscience may well prick you, and if you are, indeed, the Lord's servant, the rod will follow you, and in your household the Lord's hand will go out against you as long as you live. You there came to the test and could not stand it! But I hope there are many, many here who could say, "Yes, with everything that beauty could present to attract my heart, and all that wealth could lay at my feet to win my regard. With all that honor could put before me to dazzle my desires, I feel that I must obey my Lord and Master. I must be a chaste virgin unto Him, and give myself to Christ and to Him alone." We love Christ, brothers and sisters—I trust we do supremely!

"We love Him," also, *always*. The love of a believer to Christ is not a thing of Sundays, nor of public meetings and prayer-meetings. "We love Him"—it is the utterance of the man sitting at the desk penning a letter, or standing in the market selling his corn, or on the exchange, dealing in his shares and stocks. "We love Him." Our love is not a spasm. It is not a mere emotion, a thing of excitement. It does not, like the salamander, live in the fire, but then die when the fire dies out. "We love Him," soberly, steadily, constantly, persistently, after a real and serious, and business-like spirit. "We love Him"—it is intertwisted with our daily life! It is part of our inmost being! It flows in the blood, it breathes in the lungs, it is everywhere about us and we could as soon cease to exist as to cease to be lovers of Christ. I mean, of course, if we are, indeed, the saved sons of God. We love Him, then, constantly.

And yet another thing, dearly beloved—*we love Him increasingly*. We do not always think so, but it is true, if we are right with God. We love Him more than ever. When we are first converted we think we shall love Jesus Christ a great deal more than we really prove to do, and much of that love, afterwards, departs, but it is only the superficial and half-fictitious love that vanishes.

Look! Mary is lighting the fire and as the straw or paper takes light at the bottom, what a great blaze there is! No sooner is the match put to it than the flames rush up the chimney. But come again in half an hour—why, there is not half the blaze, nor any crackling, nor noise! But is there less heat? Why, see, the coals have caught and the whole grate has become one glowing mass of fire! There is not half the blaze and the crackling, but there is more real, solid heat. And so is it with the growing believer! At the first, there is much of excitement, much of novelty, but afterwards there is the steady, calm warmth of a glowing soul! I can only

say brothers and sisters, that if we do not love Christ, growingly, we ought to do so. He is one that grows upon believers. The more they know Him, the better they must love Him. The longer is their experience of His faithfulness, His fullness, His freeness, His goodness and greatness, the deeper, and firmer, and broader, and higher ought to be their love of Him! And I trust that it is so.

And another thing—we love Him *and we are not ashamed to love Him—and we are not ashamed to confess it and we do not blush to bear the shame which may come to us after the avowal.* Ah, perhaps I am addressing some here—I do not know where they are—who love my Lord, but they have never said so. Oh, you that are on the rock, in the secret places of the stair, come forth and let Him hear your voice, for that voice is sweet to Him, and your face is comely in His eyes. Oh, be not ashamed to confess that you love Him! There is nothing in it of which to be ashamed. It might make an angel proud to be permitted to love Christ and to declare His love. Ashamed of saying that I love Him? No! Let the earth hear it and let it rage! Let hell hear it and let it boil over with fury! Yet is He such an One that as I cry, "I love Him," I feel it to be the grandest, greatest statement that divine grace can enable us to make! Yes, never, in any circumstances make this a thing to be shy about, but avow it in your actions and declare it by your public profession, "We love Him!"

Brothers and sisters, we bless God that the day is coming *when we shall love Him best of all.* This tenement of our body is falling away by degrees. These fetters of the flesh are rusting off. We shall soon be free and when the emancipated spirit shall see Him without a veil to hide Him, then shall our love to Him be perfected! Or if He comes before our death arrives, we shall see Him as He is and shall be like He—and then, too, shall our love rise to its transcendent maturity! It is a mercy that while other loves die like lilies, broken at the stalk, or fall like rosebuds when they burst and are full-blown, our love to Christ shall go on forever and forever increasing! And when heaven and earth shall pass away, immortal love, eternal love, shall still abide! As long as God exists, the love of God shall be shed abroad in us and our hearts shall continually love Him in return.

I might pause here to say—if it is true that you love Him, dear brothers and sisters—love His people better, love His poor better, love His cause better, love His truth better, love poor blood-bought sinners better, love the assemblies of His saints better, love His Word better, keep His commandments better, draw nearer to Him, aim to be more like He! May these practical truths, though unspoken by me, yet be lived out in your conversation. But now for the second head; we can only afford a few minutes upon it, but it is a subject which might well occupy eternity in our meditation—

II. THE GLORIOUS REASON FOR OUR LOVE.

"*We love Him—because He first loved us.*" It is personal, again, you see, personal again. "We"—"Him"—two persons—and here is the reason for it—"because He first loved us"—persons again! We do not love Christ because the minister preached, or we received his doctrines, or because we can understand that such-and-such things are in our Lord's teachings. The reason for the love springs from Himself, as it goes out after Himself. It is because of something that He did and something that He said, prior to anything that He did. "We love Him because He *first* loved us." Love is the cause of love! He loves—we love. We love second and after Him because He loves first and before us. He *first*. Now, that is an experimental truth of God. We know that He loved us before we loved Him. Just look back on your life before conversion. He loved you then. What made you love Him at all? It was because you were told that He loved you and you believed it. Law and terrors never made you love Him—they hardened you. It was a sense of blood-bought pardon that dissolved you and you saw the love of Christ in that pardon! And so, you could not help loving Him in return. This is no novelty—this is no mere theory—it is a great truth of God! I pray you turn it over. Jesus loved you when you lived carelessly, when you neglected His Word, when the knee was unbent in prayer. Ah, He loved some of you when you were in the dancing saloon, when you were in the playhouse—yes, even when you were in the brothel! He loved you when you stood at hell's gate and drank damnation at every draught! He loved you when you could not have been worse or further from Him than you were! Marvelous, O Christ, is Your strange love! What love is this that shone on us when we were the serfs and slaves of Satan, the dishwashers in the kitchen of iniquity? When nothing was too hard for some of us to do if we might but sin—and yet He loved us! And others there were of us who were as bad as this—proud, hypocritical, rotten-hearted professors who were boasting of our own self-righteousness, as proud as Lucifer, when there was not even a good thing in us—and yet we were loved with His great love, wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespass and in sins! Blessed be His name!

Now, that is a matter of experience, and it is also a matter of our firm belief and joyous confidence that Jesus loved us *before* that—in that tremendous day, the center of the two eternities, the end of one dispensation and the beginning of the next—that day in which the sun was darkened and yet for the first time began to shine, that day in which the earth did shake and heaven was established—that day in which the dead arose and the thoughts of men were discovered—in that day when He, the appointed substitute, went up to Calvary with all the sins of all His people upon Him, piled like a tremendous world—when, like another Atlas, He bore that overwhelming load upon His shoulders and afterwards heaved the whole infinite weight into forgetfulness! In that

day He gave the supreme proof of His love to us. Look at those eyes red with weeping—see how He loves! Look at those cheeks defiled with the filthy spit and bruised where the fists of the scoffers struck Him! See how He loved! Look to that dear head still scarred with the jagged wounds of the crown of thorns! Look to that matchless mouth and that tongue so parched. Look to the whole face, so marred as to be sorrow's dwelling place. Look to the whole body so utterly agonized, tortured and languishing. Look to the tender gracious hands—those crimson fountains tell the tale! Look at the feet—those scarlet rivulets declare how deep is His love! Yes, look to His side, sliced open by the soldier's spear—that precious stream of blood and water declares with double and indisputable force that Jesus loves! And we were not born then—we were not here! He loved us first.

But this grand old book bids us go farther back than that day! He loved us when, in the garden, our first parents spoiled us all and a promise was given that He should come to bruise the serpent's head. Yes, when yonder mountains were infants, when the gray old world and its ruins that speak of ages were as yet but newly formed, yes, and before that—before the sun's great flame was lit by the divine torch, before stars began to whirl in their all but boundless revolutions—when time was not, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days and He dwelt alone, the infinite Jehovah—even then, Jesus loved His people! His prescient eyes had seen them. His sovereign choice had separated them. His distinguishing grace had discriminated them and His eternal purpose had decreed them to be His forever and ever! He loved us first.

Well, if this is not a good reason for loving Him, where could such reason be found? He first loved us. Oh, cold hearts! Oh, slabs of marble! Oh, blocks of granite! Oh, icebergs! If we melt not now, when will we melt? He loved us first! That glorious thought like fire rushes through and through and through our very deepest nature and refines it, and sets us all on a glow. We *must* love Him because He *first* loved us!

Words fail me to speak about that love of His. It was a love so condescending that He stooped from heaven to reach us, laid aside the royalties of glory and took upon Himself the infirmities of earth! It was a love so lasting that the ages have never dimmed it, nor lessened it by so much as a single atom. It was a love so enduring that the ten thousand provocations of our unbelief and of our sin have never quenched it! Many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it. It was a love so generous that Jesus gave us all! He gave us even His Father and His God, for did He not say, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God"? He gave us and He gives us this day Himself! He gives us communion with Himself. He gives us His blood to wash us. He gives us His righteousness to clothe us. He gives us His life for our example, His throne for our rest at the last. Oh, generous love, nothing do You

withhold! You reserve nothing for Yourself! You give all to the beloved object. It was a love that was quite disinterested. Jesus had nothing to gain. The gain was ours. It was a love most self-sacrificing. His sufferings, how intense! His griefs, how terrible! And all for His sweet love of us who were His enemies!

I would I had a seraph's tongue but for one moment—a tongue of flame with which to speak of my Master! As I cannot have this, I must be content to say that this ocean of Christ's love is one that is not to be measured. Plunge into it! Ask that you may be swallowed up in it! Pray that it may baptize you, that you may be lost in its overwhelming floods and that henceforth for you to live may be Christ and to die may be gain! Brothers and sisters, the Lord's love is over you, and in you, and in the power of His quickening Spirit may you live through another week! And when we come together again, may our hearts retain some of the glow of the affection which I trust we have felt burning within our hearts tonight. To His name be praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:26-39.

Verse 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* Our weaknesses, our insufficiencies, our inabilities—the Spirit of God comes to be a helper to the children of God!

26. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.* We do not know our own infirmities. Perhaps we think that we are strong while we are exceedingly weak. The Spirit of God spies out the infirmities and puts the help where the strength is required. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought."

26. *But the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* Those great things in prayer that we cannot ask for, which can never be expressed in human language, the Holy Spirit translates into groans. And so we are made to groan when we cannot speak—and those groans bring us blessings which words cannot compass. Have you been into your prayer chamber lately, pleading with God, and have you felt as if you could not pray? We often pray best when we think that we are praying worst! When there is the most anguish, sighing and crying in prayer, there is most of the very essence of prayer.

27. *And He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* The Spirit knows what we need. God knows what the Spirit is asking for—and so our prayer makes the complete round and God sends us the blessing!

28. *And we know*—We know—we are sure of it.

28. *That all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* We know this for we

have proved it in our own experience. "All things work." There is nothing inactive in the providence of God. "All things work together." There is a unity in providence. God sets one thing over against another. Blessed be the name of God, all things work together for good! The purpose of God to His people is good and only good—and though this or that might be injurious—yet, all put together, they work for good to those who love God. Come, my soul, do you love God? Can you say tonight, "You know all things; You know that I love You"? All things work together for your good! Not only shall they work, but they are working—they work for your good now! And learn another sweet lesson. You are one of those whom God calls according to the sweet purpose of His electing love, for so it stands—they that love God are the same as those who are called according to His purpose! If you love God, God loves you. Your love to God, poor and faint though it is, is the assured token that He loves you with an everlasting love and, therefore, with bands of loving kindness has He drawn you.

29. *For whom He did foreknow.* That is, look upon with pleasure and delight from before all worlds; whom He did love, and call to be His own. Christ is *the* man, the archetype. He is not to be a lone man. It is not good for man to be alone, not even for *the* man! And there are to be other men called by God's grace who are to be made like He, who are to be His brothers and sisters. These, whom God foreknew, with fore-love He has ordained, determined and predestinated to be made like His Son.

29-30. *He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called.* Not with the common call with which He calls other men, but with the special call! The hen, when she is about in the yard, keeps on calling, but when she wants her own little ones to come and run beneath her wings, then she has a special cluck for them and they know it—and they come and run and hide beneath her.

30. *And whom He called, them He also justified.* He regarded them as just. He made them just through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

30. *And whom He justified, them He also glorified.* There is no break in this chain. The foreknown are predestinated, the predestinated are called, the called are justified, the justified are glorified. It is a wondrous chain! He that gets a hold of it anywhere has a hold of the whole of it, for this Scripture cannot be broken! If you are called by grace into the fellowship of eternal life, you shall be justified and glorified!

31. *What shall we then say to these things?* I do not know what we can say. Wonders of grace, mountains of mercy, mercy without limit—what shall we say to these things? This, at least we, can say—

31. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* A great many can be against us, but we reckon them as nothing at all if God is for us!

32. *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* There can be no end to the bounty of God after He has given His Son. He that has given the jewel of the universe, the very eye of heaven—will He not give to us all else really needed—and give freely, too?

33-35. *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 who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Dear children of God, feed on these words! They are like wafers made with honey, like cold waters from the rock! Eat, drink and be filled. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

35. *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* Well, these things have been tried. As it is written, "For Your sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." In Paul's day they were being hunted to the death by the thousands and tens of thousands. Were they separated from Christ's love? The enemy grew tired of persecution before the saints were wearied by it! You remember how, in the days of the Roman Empire, the Christians came to the judgment seat and confessed Christ even when they were not sought after—as if tempting their enemies to throw them to the lions, or put them to death! They were destitute of all fear and though emperors were worse than brutes, these Christians defied them, outbraved them, vanquished them! They could not put down the Christians.

36-39. *As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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GOOD TALK
NO. 3399

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Talk you of all His wondrous works."
1 Chronicles 16:9.

THIS sentence stands in connection with exhortations to offer thanksgiving unto the Lord and to make known His deeds among the people. Thus it runs, "Sing unto Him; sing Psalms unto Him; talk you of all His wondrous works."

The old typical religion of the Jews and the perverse superstition of the heathen made some places sacred and some places unclean—some actions holy and other actions, performed however well they might be—common and not to be connected in any degree with holiness. But the religion of Jesus Christ has once and for all swept away all holy places—wherever man is holy, every place is hallowed! Jesus Christ has consecrated the world by His presence and wherever man chooses to worship, there is a house for God. The religion of Jesus Christ has also swept away those distinctions which men make as to actions being necessarily religious or irreligious. Some will have it that to sing a Psalm is to worship God—a sacred thing—but to feed the sparrows is, according to them, a secular matter. To come up to a place that shall be set apart for worship and there to bow the knee in prayer is adoration of the Most High—but, according to them, to perform acts of mercy and righteousness is not a tribute of homage to God! Now, the very essence of the Christian religion is just this—that it is not a thing confined to hours, times and places, but it is a thing of *spirit*. It lies not in outward garbs or in mere words, but pervades the whole spirit of man and makes him turn his entire life into worship! Then every action he performs in its spirit and under its influence is holiness unto the Lord! God is worshiped by servants who fulfill the duties of their station, by judges who decree righteousness, by merchants who deal justly, and by children who obey their parents, and by parents who train up their children in the fear of the Lord. There is not a line to be drawn anywhere, so that you can say, "Outside of that you go beyond the sanctuary of religion and get into the outer courts frequented by the multitude." Here has been the great mistake which some Christians have made with regard to politics. They have supposed that a man could not be a Christian and a politician, too. Hence much injustice has been done. The fact is, when a man feels,

"There is nothing that belongs to man but what may be consecrated to God," and when he says, "I, being God's servant, may take all that belongs to man and devote it as holiness unto the Lord," he reaches the highest order of manhood and illustrates the highest style of Christianity. We cannot fully exhibit the spirit of Jesus Christ till we have learned that we must carry out in every place—and in every sphere—the spirit of His religion.

I make these remarks because while we are first bid to sing unto God's praise, we are next told to talk about His wondrous works. There is a praising for the assembly. There is a talking for the fireside—and both are to be holy! The praise is to be hearty, sincere, unanimous, full of animation—the talk is to be equally sincere, equally earnest, equally sacred. You are not to say, "I have done with praising God," when the hymn is over and you begin to open your mouths upon ordinary topics! But in your ordinary conversation, in the fields, by the wayside, in the streets and in your chambers, you are still to go on praising God and talking of all His wondrous works.

Shall there be a connection established between such a common word as, "talk," and such grand swelling words as "the wondrous works of God"? We wonder to find the little monosyllable in such a place! "Preach you of all His wondrous works," would seem well enough. "Show them," would seem sound theology, but *talk* you, talk you—in your ordinary, common, everyday conversation—make the wondrous works of God to be your conversation, your familiar talk! We must talk. We seem *born* to talk! We were, wretched, indeed, if we were forbidden to speak to our fellow creatures! Why, the world seems to be enlivened by continuous, not to say, incessant, talking—from the first blush of morning, on through all the bustling day and far into the shades of drowsy night—how our tongues are occupied! They run more quickly than our feet and carry less, though much mischief, sometimes, comes from their babble. They are sharper than razors, some of them, and cut deeper than swords, and kindle fire enough to set the world in a blaze! Now, this talking to which women are proverbially disposed and in which men indulge as freely as inclination prompts them—to be heard in every street, in every house and in every workshop—this it is which is to be consecrated unto God! The streams of conversation are everywhere to be drawn off from the gutters and channels in which they gather defilement—to be strained, cleansed and purified till they become fresh, clear and sparkling! Then the speech of humans—man with man, saint with saint, redeemed from the beggarly elements of common slander, envy, foolishness and vanity shall be lifted up as on eagles' wings till it is like the fellowship of the angels realizing the prediction of the Psalmist to the praise of the Lord—"They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power." Now, first—

I. THE SUBJECT HERE SUGGESTED FOR OUR COMMONPLACE TALK—HIS WONDROUS WORKS—invites notice!

Brothers and sisters, we ought to talk more about God's wondrous works *as we find them in Holy Scripture*. Do you read them? Alas, in how many a case the Bible is the least read book in the house! I am inclined to think that although there may be more Bibles in England than any other book, there is less of Bible reading than anything else in literature! The sacred volume seems to be scarcely known to many, except from chapters read in the public services, and the quotations of the minister, while alas, alas, for us, our conversation has very little in it of the records of the mighty acts of the Lord! But the old saints were known to speak to one another about the historical parts of Scripture. They dwelt full often, and never seemed happier than when they were dwelling upon it—on that story of the Red Sea, when the Lord smote Rahab and broke the head of the dragon. How they would stand together and speak of the books of the wars of the Lord, of what He did by the brook Arnon, and how He led His servants through Jordan and brought them into the Promised Land, cast out the Canaanites and slew their kings! They talked of these things, not merely as historical events, but as seeing the Lord in them all! And they so spoke and so read of them as to see in them subjects worthy of their study. I do not know how it is, but we do not get at the history of our own country in anything like the way in which one might desire, for really, the wondrous works of God which He has done here in this land are such as we ought to speak of at our firesides! We should look upon the events of history and the chronicles of each day in this light. And if, as we scanned the ample pages of history, rich with the spoils of time, we saw God's hand fashioning its contingencies and molding them into destiny—and the impress of His footsteps upon all its stupendous revolutions—we should not lack for topics of conversation, but our memories would be stored, our interest excited, our minds elevated with noble passions and our social conversation ennobled by the inexhaustible resources of wisdom as we talked of all the wondrous works of the Lord!

But, brothers and sisters, *our own history* will enable us to relate such a multitude of tender mercies as may well become incentives to gratitude and praise. How much might we tell of what the Lord has done for us personally! Here is a subject that shall never be exhausted. Talk to one another—especially to those who can understand you because they have felt the same—of the long-suffering of God when you were in your ungodly estate—the wonders of that love which tracked you with its many warnings while you were still strangers to yourselves and to God. Talk of that almighty power which, when the predestinated hour had come, laid hold upon you and made you yield! Speak of what the Lord did for you when you were in the low dungeon of your own self-

abhorrence—how He met with you when you were brought to death's door—how Jesus appeared for you and clothed you with His righteousness—and your spirit revived and your heart was glad. Shall the slave ever forget the music of his chains when they dropped from his wrists? And will you ever cease to speak of that happy day, the happiest of all days, when all the chains of your transgression were forever broken off at the love touch of your Redeemer? Oh, no! Talk still of the wondrous works of God as connected with your conversion. And since that time, however quiet your life may have been, I am sure there has been much in it that has tenderly illustrated the Lord's providence, the Lord's guidance, the Lord's deliverance, the Lord's upholding and sustaining you! You have been, perhaps, in poverty—and just when the barrel of meal was empty—then you were supplied. Talk of His wondrous works! You have been in great temptation and when you were reeling under it, or when you were slandered and no name was thought bad enough for you, His sweet love has appeared to you and helped you to rejoice in this, also, for Christ's name sake. Talk of this! You have gone, perhaps, Christian, through fire and through water—yours has been a very checkered life. You have fought with lions, or have stood in the valley of the shadow of death—but in it all God's aid has been very wonderful! There have been miracles, heaped upon miracles along your pathway! Perhaps you are like the Welsh woman who said that the Ebenezers which she had set up at the places where God had helped her were so thick that they made a wall from the very spot she began with Christ to that she had then reached! Is it so with you? Then talk—talk you of all His wondrous works! I am sure you would find such talk most interesting, most impressive, and most instructive, for the things we have seen and experienced, ourselves, generally wear a novelty and abound in interest beyond any narrative we get from books, or any unauthenticated story we pick up secondhand. Tell them how God has led you, fed you and brought you to this day—and would not let you go!

There is a topic for you—and you never shall know how large it is.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS SUBJECT IS BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE.

Were we to talk more of God's wondrous works, there would be this negative good that *we should talk less about our own works.* A man never lowers himself more than when he tries to lift himself up. There are some whose propensity is to use vain swelling words about their own doings—and they seem to be never better pleased than when they are bragging and saying, "*I* did this. *I* did that. *I* did the other." "Talk you of all *His* wondrous works." As for your puny actions, if you judge and estimate them properly, you will find more to mourn over than to boast of! Give to the Lord the glory that is due unto His name and your discretion shall not be periled.

If we talked more of God's wondrous works, *we would be free from talking of other people's works*. It is easy to criticize those we cannot rival, and carp at those we cannot emulate. He who could not carve a statue, or make a single stroke of the chisel correctly, is quick to point out where the handicraft of the greatest sculptor might have been improved. It is a poor, pitiful occupation, that of picking holes in other people's coats—and yet some people seem so pleased when they can perceive a fault that they roll it under their tongue as a sweet morsel! Why should this be? Why should you find fault with God's servants in this way? They are not your servants, but His servants—He will call them to account. He does not ask you to be thus officious. Talk you of His wondrous works and you will not speak so unkindly of His servants!

Did we talk more of God's wondrous works; *it would keep us from the ordinary frivolities of conversation*. In the olden times they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another, and the Lord listened and heard—and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name. Suppose for a moment that our ordinary conversation were taken down by an eavesdropper, as in the case mentioned by Malachi? I do not know what your conversation was about at tea-time this evening, but supposing that somebody had been listening and hearing—and that you knew for certain that it was going to be put into a book and printed—would you feel quite easy? Suppose we could have put down in a book the talk of all our people during the day—and could have it all read out? I am afraid we would find that our talk is not always such as edifies and not always seasoned with salt! In fact, some Christian people never thoroughly talk good gospel talk unless somebody is present in whose esteem it is likely to raise them, or until they get into such company as they suppose will relish it—and then they feel compelled to accommodate themselves to the occasion. The habit of thoroughly good godly talk is not common among professors. I wish it were. I wish that not only sometimes our talk were what God would have it to be, but that it were *always* so, that our common conversation were like salt ministering divine grace unto the hearers.

As there is a negative excellence about this subject of conversation, so there is also a positive excellence. Supposing we were to talk more of God's wondrous works—when the habit was acquired, *it would necessitate stricter habits of observation and of discrimination in watching the providence of God*. Memory, the treasure house of the mind, must have its goods assorted and its records indexed so that the things of which we hear and read might not only be well retained, but easily referred to. As Cowper says—

"But conversation, choose what theme we may,
And chiefly when religion leads the way,
Should flow like waters after summer showers,
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers."

Alas, the mercies of God flow by us like a river! We forget to count their multitudinous waves. We receive the mercies fresh every day and take but slight account of them! Too often they are—

"Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without mention, die."

The spirit of observing God in all things was prevalent among our Puritan ancestors. They saw God in every single drop of rain and in every ray of sunlight. They were known to talk about the most common changes of the atmosphere as coming from the hand of God! They speak of incidents which we might account trivial as connected with the decrees of Him who orders all things after the counsel of His own will. Oh, that we, too, amidst the various maze of life, could thus learn to track the course "of boundless wisdom and of boundless love"! Such conversation, brothers and sisters, would be very ennobling. Why, it would liken us to the ancient saints and the spirits before the throne of God! What is their conversation there? How they talk of God's wondrous works, God's works in creation, God's works in providence, God's works in grace! They are too taken up with the splendor of the divine presence to suffer their pure conversation to degenerate into any meaner theme. Yes, and living as we do in the presence of God, professing to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and to have been lifted up from the world into communion with Jesus Christ, it ought to be our holy ambition to let our conversation be of things that are like our standing—things that are worthy of our high calling and profession—things that have to do with our election and will help us onward to our eternal portion! We would not be so groveling, as we are, if we talked more of the wondrous things of God.

And beloved, while holding this lofty fellowship of heart and tongue, *how would our gratitude glow and what an impulse would be given to our entire life!* I do not know how you find it, but with me it is no easy matter to maintain spiritual life in the fullness of its vigor. To go week after week, month after month, and year after year, plodding on in the pilgrimage is hard work! It needs no small degree of strength, resolve and skill. If it were one tremendous leap, we could soon perform it. If it were but a spurt in the race, we might soon win the prize—but to go on, on, on—and still to keep up our zeal, still to be awake, still to be earnest—here it is one feels the need of the mercies of God to be means of grace to us, to refresh our gratitude and put fresh fuel upon the altar. Oh, brothers and sisters, we have not lived yet! We do not seem to recognize what the Christian life really means! When I instanced our conversation just now as being poor, and mean, and barren, I did but cull one mildewed leaf out of the whole field, for I fear our whole life is much alike. Lord, revive us! What means is He likely to use except He employs the rod of chastisement as the renewal of our memory of His great loving

kindness, that we may be constrained to dedicate ourselves more fully unto Him? But times flies; let me proceed, therefore—

III. TO URGE THIS TALKING, ORDINARILY AND COMMONLY, ABOUT GOD'S WONDROUS WORKS.

I have already said that it would prevent much evil and do us much good. May I not safely add that *it would be the means of doing much good to others?* If we spoke often of God's wondrous works, we might impress the sinner. We might enlighten the ignorant. We might comfort the desponding. You say, "But how are we to do it?" I reply, "How is it you have *not* done it before?" If we began early in our Christian course to make Jesus Christ our companion in the family and everywhere we went—and to take Him always with us—we would never leave off! It would become the business of our life! I have noticed that many Christian people delay in this matter for years. They cultivate habits of retirement and reticence more upon this subject than upon any other! Perhaps it is a long time after they have believed that they come forward to obey the second great command of baptism—and the same shyness happens with regard to their talking about Christ in all companies. They do love Him—at least in the judgment of charity, we trust they do. We acknowledge them, but having never began at the first to acknowledge Him openly, they cannot break the ice now. If they had then had the courage to say, "I have given Christ my tongue and mean to use it for Him. I am His servant and I mean to serve Him wherever I go," they would still have continued the profession and the practice! Brothers and sisters, is it shyness that restrains you? Take care it is shyness and not cowardice! Say to yourselves, each one of you—

"Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His name?"

What? In the presence of the noble army of martyrs who feared not to die, do you fear to speak? What? If they stood on the burning firewood for Christ, cannot you bear, if so it must be, a jeer or sarcasm? Must you be wickedly dumb when you might do so much for Christ in the circle where His providence has cast you? Oh, be ashamed of having been ashamed! Ask the Master that whatever fear you have, you may be delivered from the fear of man which brings a snare! "Talk you of all His wondrous works."

But some will object, "I have no gifts or ability." No, my brother, my sister—it does not need any ability to talk, or else there would not be so much talk in the world as there is—talk in the ordinary strain, the commonplace prattle which breaks the silence of the world. It is what everybody is doing. There is no gifted tongue requisite. There are no powers of eloquence invoked. Neither laws of rhetoric nor rules of grammar are pronounced indispensable in the simple talk that my text

inculcates, "*Talk* you of all His wondrous works." I beg your pardon when you say you cannot do this. You cannot because you will not! If you would, you could speak well of His name. Because there is no need of ability in anyone to say something for Jesus after an ordinary sort, I press it upon you!

Are you a nursemaid? Talk of His name to the little prattlers with whom you are entrusted. Or are you a crossing-sweeper? Friend, there are some you can get at that I could not! I will be bound to say the crossing-sweeper has a friend who would be frightened if I were to speak to him. "But I am so poor," you reply. "I work in the midst of such a ribald, blaspheming set." Ah, friend, but you can talk! I know you can! There are times when you can talk even to those blasphemers! It is little use talking to a drunk—it is like casting pearls before swine. But he is not always drunk! There is a time of sobriety—and then it is that you are to go to work. You are not so to talk of Christ as to stop the mill, or to interpose your religion in the way of business. That were indiscreet. But there are leisure times, there are hours for dinner, there are times when they talk to you—and then is your time to talk to them. As the profane take the liberty to force their irreligion upon you, so you take the liberty to force your religion upon them! Use your wits. Find out the proper times and then turn them to the best account. "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand, for you know not which shall prosper, this or that."

I have only one aim tonight—if I can succeed in it, I shall be very thankful—that Christian people shall talk more of the love of God at the table! At the breakfast table, at the tea table, at the dinner table—that domestic companionship and social hospitalities may be hallowed! And this without depriving them of their genial conviviality, but rather infusing into them a *higher* entertainment; that we who are masters shall talk of the things of God so that our servants shall hear of them, and that servants shall so speak of Christ that their fellows shall hear about Him. The great weapon of the Christian religion has been the public preaching of the Word, nor would I disparage it, but it will never evangelize the nations unless there is attendant with it a constant reiteration of the preached truth of God till it flows through innumerable little conduits into every circle of society! Wycliffe was but one man, but he taught others to read. One page of Matthew's gospel and the Epistle to the Romans was given to each. They went out and read it in the streets. And so was the truth of God spread until it was said that you could not meet two men on the roadside, but one of them would be a Lollard! In Luther's day it was not merely the preaching of Luther, it was the singing of the hymns and the Psalms at the spinning-wheel! It was the occupation of the solitary colporteur—it was the general chit-chatting with everybody at the blacksmith fire, in the farmyard, on the Exchange! Curiosity was excited, enquiry was prompted, the popular conversation

was inoculated! The fever of that healthful sickness—repentance toward God—was spread abroad and communicated from one to another! "Have you heard the news? Have you heard that Luther has proclaimed that men are justified by faith and not by works?" It was this that shook Rome! It is this which will shake her yet again. The waking up of Christian life throughout the entire body of the Church of God—and the enlisting of the entire life of the Christian Church in the cause of Christ is an enterprise to be consummated by the individual agency of each—and the general action of all who seek the glory of God and the welfare of man! Talk you, therefore, of all His wondrous works!

Oh, that there should be any here who never thought of God, much less talked of His wondrous works! Wondrous, indeed, is God's patience that has kept you alive! Marvelous His long-suffering that, after having neglected Him all these years, He has not cut you down! The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but you have not known God! You would not keep a dog that would not follow you. You would soon dispose of an ox that was of no service to you. Oh, why has God kept you? It is a wonder! Here is another wonder—He bids us entreat you, allure you, encourage you with a saving promise, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Take heed of this gospel! May the Holy Spirit make you yield to it. Trust Christ! Obey Him by avowing your faith in Him, and you shall be saved!

The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 142; 143.

"Maschil of David." An instructive Psalm of David, for we speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and they are a means of instruction as well as a means of utterance of praise. "A prayer when he was in the cave" and, therefore, likely to suit any of you who are in trouble—a prayer when he hid away from Saul and was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains—"A prayer when he was in the cave."

Verse 1. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.* Of course, the essence of his prayer was in his *heart*, but it often helps the heart to use the voice! It is much better to pray in silence if you will be heard by others, for we are not to pray to be heard of men, but if you have opportunity to pray aloud, I am sure you will feel it very helpful to devotion to do so. "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication."

2. *I poured out my complaint before Him.* As if it were in a vessel and he turned the vessel upside down and poured it all out. That is true prayer—it is the pouring out of what is really in—not an utterance of

words which may, perhaps, go no farther than the mere lips. But the pouring out of whatever is within, whether it is praise or complaint. "I poured out my complaint before Him"—realized His presence and then told Him my complaint.

2. *I showed my trouble before Him.* We must believe that God is, and that He is the hearer of prayer. We must be conscious that we are not only using proper words and feeling proper thoughts, but that we are doing it before Him. "I showed my trouble before Him."

3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.* I did not know it. I was so puzzled—so in a maze, like a man at his wits' end. My spirit seemed turned bottom upward, like a thing that is overwhelmed.

3. *In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.* I could not find out where the snare was, but "You knew my path." I knew the trap was cunningly laid, but I could not see it. "You knew my path." We are not ignorant of Satan's devices, but sometimes we are completely ignorant as to what devices he is using just now, but "then You knew my path."

4. *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.* It is always a bad time when friendship seems to have died out when those who we rely upon turn their backs upon us and refuse to sympathize with us in any degree. It is a sad case to be in. "No man cared for my soul."

5. *I cried unto You, O LORD.* Ah, that is the thing to do! When no man will know you, God will know you! When no man cares for you, God will care for you! Prayer is an unfailing resort! "I cried unto You, O Lord."

5. *I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.* See how he clings to his God? We never cling to God as well as when everything else fails us! To a greater or less extent, all those who yield us comfort do, in some little measure, take our heart off our God. But when it comes to being lonely, friendless, helpless, forgotten, despised, rejected and outcast, oh, then it is a blessed thing, with a two-handed faith, to lay hold on God and say, "You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living."

6. *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low.* What a blessed argument! Nothing can move God's pity like it! "I am brought very low." It is not your height that God will respect—it is your lowliness. O soul, it is not your excellence that God regards—it is your need! Not your goodness, but your lack of His goodness that He looks at! Not your fullness, but your emptiness—not your strength, but your weakness! Nothing that you have—it is your lack of everything that moves His heart! "Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low."

6, 7. *Deliver me from my persecutors: for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name.* He asks for

deliverance so that he may praise God in it! So ought we always to desire mercies with this in view—that we may praise God the better for them!

7. *The righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me.* Lord, if You are kind to me, all Your people will hear of it. When I get out of prison, they will say, one to another, "Such-and-such a brother has been cheered and comforted. His face has changed. He is no more sad." And they will come round me. They will begin to ask me how it came about. Thus I shall tell out Your praises—encourage others and get to You a great and glorious name, if You shall deal bountifully with me. Now, the next Psalm, much after the same fashion.

PSALM 143.

"A Psalm of David."

Verse 1. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness.* It is a theory held by some persons of skeptical minds that the only benefit of prayer is the good it does to *us*. That was not David's theory. Here, three times he begs to be heard and to be answered! Oh, do they think us such idiots that we would go on speaking in a keyhole with nobody to hear us? Do they think us brought so low—so destitute of wit—that we think it worth our while to speak out what is in our heart if God does not hear and does not answer? I reckon prayer to be the most idiotic of all occupations unless there is really a God to hear and a God to answer! And the benefit of prayer is not in itself so much as in the full confidence that it is a real thing—and an effective thing—that God does hear and does interpose on our behalf!

2. *And enter not into judgment with Your servant.* "I am Your servant. I am not one of the ungodly whom You will judge and cast away, but still, even though I am Your servant, enter not into judgment with me. I know You will not judge me now as a rebel and condemn me, for You have put away my sin, but even as Your servant I fear Your chastising rod if You enter into judgment with me."

2. *For in Your sight shall no man living be justified.* I have heard some living that think they would! They have said that the very root and branch of sin have been cut up in them and that they walk in the fear of God perfectly well! Ah, but I think they have not, but that these are mistaken, for still it is very true concerning the very best of men that they have need to pray, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified."

3, 4 *For the enemy has persecuted my soul: he has smitten my life down to the ground; he has made me dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.* Children of God, do not expect to be always

happy, or else you will be disappointed! You will have more troubles, if nobody else does. Depend upon it, that adversity is one of the covenant promises—"In the world you shall have tribulation," is your Master's own words to you, and you must not expect to find it untrue. You will find it true to the letter! And sometimes the troubles of life will penetrate even to your heart and make you feel desolate. When you are so, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial as though yours were a new path in which nobody ever walked before you. Ah, no! David was there! Many others have been there!

5, 6. *I remember the days of old. I meditate on all Your works. I muse on the work of Your hands. I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land. Selah.* As a child puts out its hand to its mother, so did he stretch out his hands to his God. As a thirsty land chaps—becomes dry—turns to dust in its longing after rain, so did his whole being thirst for his God!

7. *Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit fails: hide not Your face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into a pit.* "Lest I swoon away—lest I die—lest my hope should utterly expire! Come, Lord! Come, Lord and rescue me!"

8. *Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning; for in You do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto You.* Very heavy, but I lift it up. With all my might, as though it were a dead lift, I seek to raise it out of its doubt, and out of its sorrow.

9, 10. *Deliver me, O LORD from my enemies: I flee unto You to hide me. Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God: Your Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.* Or, "lead me in a straight path." So it is rendered by the best scholars.

11. *Quicken me, O LORD, for Your name's sake.* He felt as if he would die and, therefore, he says, "Quicken me: put new life into me." To whom should we go for life, but to the living God? And who can communicate with us but the same God who first made us live in His name?

11, 12. *For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of Your mercy cut off my enemies and destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am Your servant.*

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THE DAY OF ATONEMENT
NO. 3400

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"And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year."
Leviticus 16:34.

WE have taken these words for our text. The whole chapter, however, will have our attention.

I must be allowed to say at this time, though I seldom say anything in the way of an apology, that this is not the place, nor would time serve us to go into a full exposition of the very wonderful teaching of this chapter. If we may ever set any portion of Scripture before another, this is one of the most precious chapters in the whole compass of revelation and, in some respects, the most remarkable of all. It is so full of wonderfully deep teaching that, instead of a sermon, it might require a volume! And then, perhaps, we would scarcely have done more than skimmed the surface. And there are difficulties, I may also add, connected with the interpretation—very great difficulties—which have puzzled the most learned of the Reformed and of the Puritan divines. I do not at all attempt to solve those difficulties, nor profess that all I say might be able to support and carry out. I desire to give, instead of any attempt at criticism or deep explanation, a simple exposition of this chapter, bringing out of it, I hope, some truths of God which, if they do not belong to the chapter, are, nevertheless, exceedingly precious ones and will, I hope, be useful to us all.

In a remarkable way God dealt with Israel in the wilderness. There were special tokens of His peculiar presence, as in the cloudy and fiery pillars which were the emblems of His presence, and in the bright light called the Shekinah, which shone between the wings of the cherubim which overshadowed the Ark. But God cannot dwell where there is sin. He is a holy Being. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts," is the song which continually rises into His ears. In order, then, that He might dwell in the midst of Israel without compromising His character, He was pleased to appoint one day in the year which was called "the day of atonement," which should be considered to purify the camp and make it fit to be the dwelling place of Jehovah.

Now, God has promised that He will dwell among men, and He does dwell among His own people at this very time. He dwells with them in a remarkable way. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul. God is the heritage, the friend, the companion of all His people, but because of their

sin He cannot dwell with these believing men unless atonement is made. The annual atonement among the Jews was the picture of the great atonement—but the real atonement, the effectual expiation which, not once a year, but once and for all, the Lord Jesus Christ has offered—now renders it possible for God to walk with men and dwell among them!

In the ceremony of the atonement, in the chapter before us, there are four things that struck me. The first is—

I. THE WAY IN WHICH THAT REMARKABLE CEREMONY SET FORTH THE SACRIFICE MADE TO GOD'S HONOR.

My brothers and sisters, the offense of man against God was, so to speak, a stain upon God's honor. Man set himself up in rebellion against the Most High! He stood out, therefore, against divine sovereignty! He impugned the divine love. His offense blasphemed the divine wisdom. Every human sin is an attack upon the whole character and life of God—and sin, itself, is a dishonor done to the glorious attributes of Jehovah. Before God can be reconciled to man and deal with Him at all, except by way of retribution, there must be something done to restore the divine honor. Now, we have it declared in this revelation which comes to us from heaven, that Christ has fully restored the divine glory and that since He suffered on the tree, the just for the unjust, God can be gracious without a violation of His justice and He can dwell with us—with us poor fallen creatures—without the marring of the luster of any single one of His attributes! The model man has honored God more fully than sinful man ever dishonored Him! And if God was angry with the race for our sins, He is now towards the race full of tenderness and pity because of the transcendent goodness of the new head of the race, Christ Jesus our Lord, who has magnified God's law and made it honorable!

Now, this is the truth of God that was taught in the first part of the ceremony on the day of expiation. It was taught thus. Two goats were brought to the door of the tabernacle. Lots were cast and the first goat was selected to teach this lesson. The goat was brought by the people. It was their common property. It would not have sufficed—it would not have been of any use at all if it had not been so. Read the chapter and you will see. Learn from this that *the compensation to God's honor for man's sin must come from men.* It was a man in the garden who dared to rebel—it must be a man, another man, who shall honor God's law so as to set the race in a fresh relationship towards God.

The goat is given by all Israel—the atonement to God's honor must come out of our race, and hence it is that our Lord is the son of Mary, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh—qualified, being a man, to perform the obedience required of man and to right, as a man for men, the wrongs which man had done to God. Note that first.

The goat which was brought *was given up to the appointed priest*. God will have everything done according to order. The sacrifice must not be left to the whims and fancies of men. So the man who shall offer up the sacrifice to the divine honor must be appointed of God, as Aaron was. And so our Lord Jesus Christ was God's chosen One, appointed by God

to stand in the gap, and for us to vindicate the divine glory which we had tarnished by our iniquities.

This goat, being thus offered, *must* be presented to God, *but there must be something with it*. Sweet perfume must be cast upon the live coals and the sweet smell must go up before the mercy-seat. So before God can ever be satisfied for the wrong done to Him by the fall and by our common sin, there must be an offering of sweet merits unto Him which, let me say, Jesus Christ has most abundantly offered. He took His hands full of the, most blessed compound of all the graces and all the virtues beaten small, for there was an exact obedience to every jot and tittle of the divine law. Christ's obedience was perfect in its kind in the most minute respects—and this merit has been brought before our God, who is a consuming fire, and burns up every evil work. And as He lays hold upon this work of Christ, He makes a sweet smell of it—which is poured out throughout heaven and earth—"the savor of a sweet odor" in the nostrils of the Most High.

Do not let me cover up, however, what I mean, under the cloak of allegory. I mean this—that if God is to accept our race of men and all that we have done against Him and still deal with us on the footing of mercy—somebody must be found who can be so obedient, so delighting in God's will, that there shall be a sweet offering made, as morally and spiritually acceptable to God's Spirit as sweet perfume is to the nostril of man. And that has been done. When they talk in heaven of man's sin—if they ever there speak of it and wonder how God can bear with man, some bright seraph speaks of man's perfect obedience, even unto death, and they say to one another, "What man, what man is this?" and they clap their hands with joy as they say, It's He that sat at the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of David."

One man threw down the race, but another man has lifted us up! One man brought ruin by the fall—another man restored it and made the race acceptable to God. If man dishonored God, yet man has more honored Him than he dishonored Him, now that Christ has become the great representative man!

All the glory of redemption is greater than ever there could have been of dishonor to God by sin! I believe that God is more honored by the world having sinned, and having been restored by Christ, than He could have been if there had never been sin upon this planet and if a perfectly sinless race had tenanted its bounds!

After this burning of perfume, *the goat must die*. Nothing could permit the justice of God to look upon man at all until there had been something more than merit. There must be a penalty. "Die he, or justice must." Man must die, or God's justice must die. There must be blood—life poured out for sin. Now, when that goat was put to death and the blood flowed forth into the golden bowl, then, brothers and sisters, you saw before your eyes of faith, Jesus Christ put to death upon Calvary. He who needed not to have died, the perfect One, voluntarily offered Himself up as the victim to justice, suffering in His own person, so as to

compensate the justice of God. Do not imagine that Christ died to placate divine vengeance—not at all—but that it is sternly necessary if God is to govern this universe at all, that sin must be punished. The very pillars and the foundations of moral government would, not to say, be shaken, but actually be torn up if sin should be permitted to go unpunished! Now, to vindicate the justice of God, the sword is drawn and who suffers?

Not the human race. Behold, myriads of the race go streaming up to everlasting felicity. Who suffers, then? Why, a man so marvelously perfect, and withal, so majestically glorious, that His sufferings are a recompense to God for all that sin had done—and so made an effectual atonement for all the transgressions that had dishonored God! You will observe that I am speaking in very popular, comprehensive and general terms—and designedly so because I believe I am speaking the infallible truth of the mind of God! So far as God is concerned, the atonement that Christ made was universal in its worth and efficacy!

So far as the vindication of the justice of God and all His other attributes are to be considered, that vindication was absolutely complete. And whether one man had been saved, or 50 men saved, or all saved, or none saved, it would have made no difference. The work was done! God's honor was clear! God's attributes were glorified—and this was perfectly done by the putting away of Christ.

Once more: *The blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat seven times.* That was typical of Christ, who goes up into heaven in His own proper person and there displays before God, the holy angels and elect spirits, the tokens of His passion, the ensign of His suffering, taking the blood up to God that henceforth when the eternal mind thinks of sin and the dishonor done to God by sin, it might think of the sufferings of the blessed man, Christ Jesus, and see how all dishonor is forever put away! You know, when you are reading Scripture, dear friends, you find a great many passages which speak about Christ's dying for all men, and about God's having reconciled the world unto Himself. And I know you are apt to say to me, "You teach us particular redemption—that Christ only died as a substitute for some men." That I always say, and stand to—and believe to be a biblical doctrine! But do I, therefore, clip away other texts? No, not in any degree! I believe them as they stand. I count it treason to try and clip a text, or to make it say the contrary of what it does say! So far as God's honor was concerned, the death of Christ for men so obliterated human sin as such that God could, without dishonor to Himself, deal with mankind. Hence it is that the wicked live! Hence it is that they enjoy innumerable mercies! Hence it is that there is a good, strong, substantial ground for offering the gospel to every man—and a righteous reason for commanding every man to believe in Jesus Christ that he may be saved!

This was the first teaching of the day of atonement and every Jew, when he saw, ought to have understood the presentation of that blood within the veil, that now God no longer looked on the race as being a race that He must curse and must destroy, but looked upon it with

mercy and was prepared to treat it on the footing of tenderness. And that now there was a gospel presented to the sons of men. Oh, I do so love this thought, that my sin, which did dishonor to God, which did as much as say that He was not a good God, that it was better for me to hate Him than to love Him, better for me to be His enemy than to be His friend, made out as though His commandments were grievous and that it gave me pleasure to break them—all the mischief towards God that my sin could ever do is all put away by the holy life and the blessed death of Christ Jesus my Lord—and put away forever, forever, forever—so that God can now deal with me on the terms of divine grace!

But my time flies and, therefore, I come to the next point—

II. SIN IS NOW UTTERLY DRIVEN AWAY.

There was another goat—and this goat was to live and not to die—which set forth quite another truth of God. I do not think the common explanation of this is at all correct. And all the expositors I have met with are clear that it is not correct. Some have said that the scapegoat typifies our Lord Jesus bearing our sins away in His resurrection and ascending into heaven. The incongruity of the metaphor has always struck me, but there are reasons in the Hebrew text which prevent our believing that *that* could have been the meaning of it. The living goat was taken by a fit man right away into the wilderness and there it was left. What became of it afterwards, we do not know. Painters have depicted it as expiring in the midst of desolation, in the agonies of famine—a mere fancy picture! The scapegoat did not, very probably, die sooner than any other goat—and it is not at all necessary that it should. We never need enlarge a topic beyond what Scripture says. Indeed, there is often as much teaching in a type's stopping short as there is in its going on!

These two goats had each its name. One was said to be for Jehovah—that represents Christ, I say, as making recompense to God's honor! The other is said to be for Azazel, which, if I understand it at all, means, "for evil." What? Then was that other goat offered to the Devil? By no means! He is not evil, but one of the ministering spirits in the service of evil. Evil made Satan what he is. He is its slave, its chief plotter and schemer, but still not evil, itself! Did you ever notice—you must have noticed—that the wrong of evil, the sinfulness of sin, even if it were forgiven, works nothing but evil, so that if God were to forgive us all, but leave the evil in us, we should be in hell for all that because evil of itself holds hell and works towards its being realized by us. Evil is, in itself, essentially misery—it has only to work itself out and it will be so.

Now, how am I to get rid of this sin that is in me as to the evil consequences inherent in the evil? Suppose God to be perfectly reconciled to me so far, yet still there is an evil that mischief brings upon me in itself, apart from God—and how do I get rid of that? Why, through the scapegoat! The sin of the people was, first of all, transferred to this scapegoat—all confessed and all laid on the scapegoat. Then, by divine appointment, the scapegoat, being chosen by lot and the lot being guided by God, it was accepted as being the substitute for the people. The

scapegoat was then taken away. And what was done with it? Why, nothing was done with it but this—it was relinquished—it was given up! Now, can I get out what I mean? I am very much afraid I cannot. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sin of His people. And He was given up to evil, that is to say, to all the power that evil could put out against Him—first in the wilderness, tempted from all quarters, tempted by the temptations of Satan. And then in the garden, tempted in such a way as you and I never were—the powers of evil let loose upon Him as they never were upon us! Did He not say, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness"? And so dreadful was the assault of evil upon Him, the devil going forth as the type and incarnation of evil, that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! And while especially on the tree, where the conflict reached its climax, was He given up.

That cry, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" is like the cry of the goat when it is given up, quite given up, and led away. Evil was permitted to work out in Him all its own dread hatefulness and havoc, to which it must bring our spirits, unless God interposes to stop evil from making the soul become unutterably wretched, even unto death.

I do not know how to get out the thought which seems to be in my soul, but I do rejoice to think that all the evil I have ever done shall not go on to plague and vex me because it has vexed and plagued Him. That all the essential misery that lies in my past sin—which must, even if God forgave it, still come back to sting and torment me throughout all my existence—was so laid on Him and so spent all its force and venom on Him who was given up to it, that it will never touch me again!

You know, brothers and sisters, there was no other man who could have borne all that power of evil but our Lord. And it all fell on Him and yet it never stained His matchless purity and perfection of character. The misery of it came to Him, but the guilt of it could never defile Him! The misery of sin spent itself on the lonely One who was given up to its awful force, but it could do no more. The type says nothing about the scapegoat, whether it died or not, and Christ did not die because of the misery of His spirit—He died for quite another reason and in another sense—laying down His life for His people!

There is something, I think, interesting in this if we can carry it out, but there is this to be said—by that scapegoat being thus given up, *the sin of the congregation was taken away*—all taken away and all gone. And so, through Jesus Christ having borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows, the whole force and power of evil to do damning mischief against a saint has been taken away forever from every one of us who have laid our hands, by faith, upon His dear and blessed head. It is gone! The sin is gone, gone into the wilderness, where it shall never be found against us any more forever.

I must hasten on, however, for time flies. There was yet a third part of this expiation. Did you notice it? It is a grand thing when we can see God's honor clear. It is a grand thing, next, when we can see ourselves

clear as to the effects of evil by Christ's taking evil quite away. The third grand thing is to see—

III. SIN, ITSELF, MADE THE SUBJECT OF CONTEMPT.

God cannot dwell with us if sin is petted and loved. Sin must be detested and loathed. Now, read on in the chapter and you will find that the bullock and the goat which were there, and whose blood was taken into the holy place, were afterwards burned outside the camp—see the 27th verse. They were burned, and burned with ignominy, burned outside the camp in the common sewer, the kennel of the camp—and burned, too, under circumstances that imply disgust. "They shall burn in the fire, their skins and their flesh, and their dung"—put in purposely to show what a contempt was to be put upon the beasts that had been, for a while, made to take and to typify sin!

That burning outside the camp looked to a stranger like the burning of a heap of rubbish. There was a foul smell of the burning flesh and refuse. Persons, as they passed turned their heads away to avoid the terrible odor. They would say, "What is all this?" "Why, this was a sin-offering, and when the blood, which God accepted, had gone, this was what was left—the filth of sin—and the people were just being taught how they should hate, loathe and destroy it! Every man that touched it washed himself! And no man could touch any of these things that day without bathing again and again, the thing was so detestable!

Now, in the person of our blessed Lord, sin is made most detestable. Did you ever really hate sin until you learned to love Christ? I will ask you when do you hate sin the most? Why, when you love Christ the most! I believe you shall always find that in proportion as you understand and see the work of Christ, you will see in that work, as in a glass, that Christ has made sin to be the most loathsome and disgusting thing that was ever heard of, for what do the angels say—"Man sinned, did he? Oh, foolish man, to sin against his God and his Maker!" "Ah," says one of the angels, "but he did worse than that—he sinned against the God that loved him so, that He would sooner let His Only-Begotten Son die than poor man should perish!" "Oh," they say, "what a shameful thing to sin against so dear and kind a God!" If God were a tyrant, it might not seem atrocious to rebel against Him. But when He becomes so dear and tender a Father as to give His only-begotten Son—away with you, sin! Talk of the Devil! He is not black compared with you, O sin—you are the Devil's tempter, the Devil's ruin! You make him black. It is sin, sin that is so foul a thing that I can liken it unto nothing! There is nothing on earth, there is nothing anywhere in hell that can be likened unto it! Sin is made to appear exceedingly sinful and loathsome to the uttermost degree through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

Now, these are three grand things for God to have done in this world—after man sinned to have made His name as glorious as ever. After man's sin, to have set pardoned man straight, as straight as ever from his sin. And after that, to have made sin which came with the apple in its hand and which comes every day, now, with painted face, and with the cup in

its hand, filled to the brim with sweet wine, seem hateful and to be really so! Oh, it is a grand work, that which Christ has done! Blessed be His name!

Now, the last point—and I shall need your earnest consideration for a minute or two—is this. I must call your attention to—

IV. THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE DURING THE WHOLE OF THAT DAY in which this wonderful panorama was made to pass before them.

During that day *they were to afflict their souls*. Do you want to have your sin forgiven? Put away your jollity and your mirth. A repenting sinner had need to be a mourner and, brothers and sisters, when sin is put away, how the forgiven sinner afflicts his soul! He is happy! He was never more happy! Never so happy, but how grieved he is to think he ever sinned!—

"My sins, my sins my Savior!
How sad on You they fall!
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me,
Is all the grief and anguish,
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.
My sins, my sins, my Savior!
Their guilt I never knew,
Till, with You, in the desert,
I near Your passion drew.
Till with You, in the garden,
I heard Your pleading prayer,
And saw the bloody sweat drops,
That told Your sorrow there."

Oh, there is never, never such affliction of soul for sin as when you see the great atonement! Let me invite you to hate sin, tonight, you pardoned ones. Take care to do it. And you unpardoned ones, rend your hearts, but not your garments! And turn unto God with afflicted spirits and say, "Lord, through the precious atonement of which I have heard so much tonight, blot out my sins!"

The next thing concerning the people that day was that *they were to do no servile work on that day*. There was to be no hewing of wood, no drawing of water—nothing was to be done throughout all the camp by way of labor. So, when a soul comes to the atonement of Christ, it has done with all its works of righteousness and all its deeds of human merit! You can never have the atonement of Christ while you are working out your own works and trying to be saved by them. And the believer that has once come to take Christ to be his Savior will never try to get any merits of his own. Oh, he has thrown away forever the fooleries of self-righteousness! He sees the absurdity of hoping that foul, black hands can ever present a fair, white sacrifice to God. He takes his lord and he has done with his own doings!

Once more—it was to be to the people *a Sabbath unto the Lord*. That day was not the seventh day of the week, but still it was to be a kind of Sabbath. And what a glorious Sabbath the atonement always makes!

Why, I feel a Sabbath, tonight, apart from the Sabbath day. I have a Sabbath in my soul, to think that the sin of man has not, after all, done lasting damage to the throne of God. I feel so happy to think, next, that there is a special sacrifice made for the elect, by the scapegoat's having taken away their sin, so that the evil of their sin will never come on them. I feel so thankful, tonight, to think that God has made sin to appear to be exceedingly sinful. These three grand things ring a peal of bells in my soul, for now I feel content—for God is satisfied to come to God—and I can see why He should let me come to Him.

I can understand now how it is that He should let a fallen creature hold converse with His thrice holy self after His great work is done! And it is better for me, and better for you, that we should come to God by so good and reasonable, and proper, and glorious a way—rather than that we should have been permitted, had it been possible, to come by any breach of the law, or by any setting aside of the divine command.

I do not think I would have been happy had it been possible for me to go to heaven, and God's honor had thereby been sullied, for God's honor is the very happiness of a reconciled creature! And if that had suffered any loss through me, I would have been miserable. But it shall suffer no loss or stain! Christ has completely undone the mischief of the fall! Glory be to His blessed name for this!

And now, beloved in the Lord, I wish that I could speak in the name of you all and accept the man, Christ Jesus, tonight, as our representative. Remember, though He has done this much for us all, that God can dwell with us, yet He has not taken the sin of us all upon Himself, but only of so many as stand and confess their sin and trust it with Him. Come, will you do it? Poor sinner, will you do it for the first time tonight? Backslider, will you do it again? You believers that have lost some of your evidences, will you do it anew tonight? Oh, I wish I could now say these words and you could all say, "Amen," from your hearts—

"My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While, like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin."

Well, if you won't have Christ for your Savior, I will have Him for mine! And there are thousands of you here who will say, "Yes, and He shall be mine, too!" The longer I live, the more I love to rest upon Him. I did try to rest somewhere else, once, but the dream is over and now the more I think of my Lord, the more firm I feel the conviction that He is a rock that will bear the weight of my salvation! The more I think of what that glorious man, that blessed Son of God, who is as much God as He is man, has done for me, the more do I feel that if I had fifty thousand times the sin I have, I would rest on Him! And if I were as wicked as all men put together, I would rest on Him, still, believing that no amount of sin could outweigh His merit and that no extent of iniquity could ever surpass the infinite bounds of His eternal grace. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him! Come to God by Him, poor

sinner, and may God the Holy Spirit lead you, and He shall have the glory! Amen, and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 6:1-19.

Paul finishes the last chapter by saying, "That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." "What shall we say, then?" What inference shall we draw from the superabounding of grace over sin?

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" That would be a very horrible inference! It is one great instance of the shocking depravity of man that the inference has sometimes been drawn! I hope not often, for surely Satan, himself, might scarcely draw an inference of licentiousness from love. Still, some have drawn it.

2. *God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* Now he goes on by an argument to prove that those in whom the grace of God has worked the wondrous change cannot possibly choose sin, nor live in it.

3. *Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?* That is the very hinge of our religion! His death, not into His example, merely, nor primarily into His life, but, "into His death." In this we have believed—we are linked with a dying Savior and our baptism sets this forth. We "were baptized into His death."

4. *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 the newness of life.* The operations, therefore, of the Spirit of God forbid that a saved man should live in sin. He is dead. He is raised into newness of life. At the very entrance into the Church, in the very act of baptism, he declares that he cannot live as he once did, for he is dead! He declares that he must live after another fashion, for has he not been raised again in the type and raised again in very deed from the dead?

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.* A death has taken place in us and though there are relics of corruption still alive, yet they are crucified—they will have to die, they must die—they are nailed fast to the cross to die in union with the death of Christ!

7. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.* The man is dead. The law cannot ask more of a criminal than to yield his life. If, therefore, he should live again after death, he would not be one who could suffer for his past offenses. They were committed in another life and, "he that is dead is freed from sin."

8, 9. *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.* Or death will have dominion over Him no more—He will never come a second time under death, and neither shall His people. "For in that He died, He died unto sin once." There was an end of it in the sense of once and for all—no second death for Christ.

10-12. *For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.* Perhaps there were some who would say that in their spirits, truth and righteousness were supreme, but that in their bodies sin had the mastery. Yes, but that will not do. There must be left no lurking piece for sin within the complete system of our manhood—it must be hunted out and hunted down thoroughly—out of the body as well as out of the mind!

13. *Neither yield you your members as instrument 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.* We do not, I think, make enough of the passive part of our religion. We are often for doing and quite right, too, and the more active we can be the better! Still, before the doing there must come a yielding because we remember who it is that works in us, "both to will and to do of His own good pleasure," and our activities, after all are not so much our own as we deem, if they are right. They are the activities of the divine life within us—of the Spirit of God, Himself, working in us to the glory of the Father! One great point, therefore, is to yield ourselves up—our members to be weapons in God's hands for the fighting of the spiritual war.

14. *For sin shall not have domination over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.* The reigning, ruling principle, now, is not, "You must, you shall," for reward or under fear of punishment! But God has loved you and now you love Him in return and what you do springs from no mercenary or self-serving motive! You are not under law, but under grace. Yet in another sense you never were so much under law as you are now, for grace puts about you a blessedly sweet, delightful law which has power over us as the word of command never had. "I will write My law in their hearts, in their inward parts will I write them." Yes, that is the glory of the new life, the delight of him who has passed from death unto life!

15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?* Oh, this old question keeps coming up! Somebody wants to sin. Well, if he wants to sin, why does he not leave this business alone and go and sin? What has he to do with these theological questions at all? But still, he wants, if he can, to make a coverlet for his wickedness! He wants to enjoy the sweets of the child of God and yet live like an enemy of God—and so he pops in his head over and over again—"May we

not sin because of this, or that?" To which the apostle answers again, "God forbid!" Oh, may God always forbid it to you and to me! May the question never be tolerated among us!

15, 16. *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?* If you are doing the deeds of sin, you are the servants of sin and only as you are doing the will of God can you claim to be the servant of God! "Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." That becomes the index of our condition. The man, then, that lives in sin and loves it, need not talk about the grace of God—he is a stranger to it, for the mark of those that come under grace is this—that they serve God and no longer serve sin!

17, 18. *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.* "Bondservants," you have got in our new translation, for so it was, and the apostle seems to excuse himself for using such a word by saying—

19. *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.* As you submitted yourselves to sin most cheerfully and voluntarily, and yet were slaves under it, so now come and be slaves under Christ with most blessed cheerfulness and delight! Endeavor to lose your very wills in His will, for no man's slavery is so complete as his who even yields his will. Now, yield everything to Christ! You shall never be so free as when you do that—never so blessedly delivered from all bondage as when you absolutely and completely yield yourselves up to the power and supremacy of your Lord!

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SHARING CHRIST'S LIFE
NO. 3401

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"Yet a little while, and the world will see Me no more; but you will see Me. Because I live, you shall live also."
John 14:19.

THIS was and is the mark of the true believer—that he sees Jesus. When Jesus was here among men, the world saw Him in a certain sense, but yet in truth it did not see Him at all. The world's eyes saw the outside of Christ—the flesh of the man, Christ, but the true Christ the ungodly eyes could not discern. They could not perceive those wonderful attributes of character, those delightful graces and charms which made up the true spiritual Christ. They saw but the husk, and not the kernel. They saw the quartz of the golden nugget, but not the pure gold which that quartz contained. They saw but the external man—the real, spiritual Christ they could not see. But unto as many as God had chosen, Christ manifested Himself as He did not unto the world! There were some to whom He said, "The world sees Me not, but you see Me." Some there were whose eyes were anointed with the heavenly salve, so that they saw in "the man, Christ Jesus," the God, the glorious Savior, the King of kings, Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!

The blind world said of Him that He was a root out of a dry ground. And when they saw Him there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He was despised and rejected of men. But God's elect were men who saw Him as God over all, blessed forever, descending to tabernacle among men and to take upon Himself man's imperfect nature, so that He might redeem him from all iniquity and save him.

Now, to this hour, this is the mark of the true Christian. This is to be of the elect! This is the very badge and symbol of the faithful—they see Jesus. They look beyond the clouds. Other men see the cloud and the darkness and they know not what it is. But these men with more than eagle eyes, pierce through the clouds of mere sensual impressions and see the glory that was always His, even the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Beloved, have you ever seen Jesus

with the eyes of faith? Have you ever perceived the glory of His person and the beauty of His character? Have you so perceived Jesus as to trust in Him? Have you been so enamored of Him as to have yielded yourselves to be His servants forever? Do you take up His cross? Do you avow yourselves to be His followers, come what may? If so, then you are saved! But if you see not Christ with your spirit, neither do you know Him, nor shall you enjoy a portion with Him.

Blessed be God, there is this to be said—that he who has once seen Christ, shall always see Him! The eyes may sometimes gather dimness, but the light of God shall yet return. Where Christ has opened blind eyes, blindness comes not back again! He takes the cataract totally away. He does not give a transient gleam of spiritual sight and then permit the soul to go back into the darkness of its grave—the sight which He gives is the sight of things eternal—a sight which shall strengthen and grow until at the last, when death shall take away every barrier which parts us from the unseen world. We shall know even as we are known and see even as we are seen! To see Jesus is heaven begun! And heaven consummated is but to see Jesus no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face—still it is to see Jesus, to behold the King in His beauty! This, I say, is the sum and substance of life eternal—and it is true life here below.

And now our Lord, speaking to those who had seen Him, truly seen Him and in spiritual recognition, talks to them concerning life. Sometimes it is ours to speak to you of death, not necessarily with gloom, for it is illuminated with rays of heavenly light to the Christian, but here and now we desire to speak of life, the best and most divine life! We will forget the raven with its dusky wings and see only the tender, gentle dove, bearing for each one of us the olive branch of peace and victory.

We shall speak of life—life of the highest possible degree—not the life which gladdens our eyes in the sunlight when we behold the flowers of the field opening their cups; this is vegetable life; nor the life of the young lambs as they frisk and caper and dance for very gladness in the spring sunbeams. This is but animal life. Nor even the life that enables men to think and speak upon common themes of interest and perform the ordinary duties of their different callings—this is but mental and social life. We reach to something still higher—*spiritual* life—life in Christ Jesus! A life twice-created, a life which is grafted and is an advance upon the first life which we have when we are born—far surpassing the life of the flesh because that shall, by-and-by, expire—this is a life which springs from incorruptible seed and which lives forever!

The text, in talking to us about life, gives us, first, *the assurance that Jesus lives.* It then *promises us that His people shall live. And it clearly*

states that there is a link of connection between the two things—that because Jesus lives—His people shall live also. First, then—

I. JESUS LIVES.

He always lived. There never was a time when He was not. "Before the hills were brought forth I was there," He says. The eternal wisdom of God is from everlasting. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." The life, however, which we think is intended in the text, is not His divine life—His life as Deity—but His life as man, His life as Mediator between God and man. In that life He lives! We needed not to be assured of His divine life, but seeing that as a Mediator, He died, it was necessary to assure us that as a Mediator He descended into the tomb. It is well for us to be assured that as a Mediator He rose again from His grave and now lives at the right hand of the Father, no more to bleed and die.

Jesus Christ at this time lives *in His proper manhood*. He lives as to His soul—His human soul is as it was on earth. He lives as to His human body. He is a man before the throne of God and I have no doubt that He wears the symbol, of course, mightily glorified, of His sufferings—

"Looks like a Lamb that had been slain.
And wears His priesthood still."

That very Christ, who did once as a baby lie upon His mother's breast and who, afterwards, trod the waves of Gennesaret—who, after His resurrection ate a piece of broiled fish and of honeycomb—that very Christ is now before the eternal throne of God! In very soul and body the man, Christ Jesus, is there! He lives!

He lives a real life. We are so very apt to mystify and becloud everything and to suppose that Christ lives by His influence only, or lives by His Spirit. Brothers and sisters, *He* lives—the very man that died, as surely as He bled upon the tree, and in His own proper person, from five actual wounds poured out the warm life-torrents of His heart, so surely does He actually live at this present moment in the midst of unnumbered hearts that sound His praise—the delightful object of the vision of the myriads of spirits who continually adore Him! He actually lives! He really and truly lives as He lived here below!

He lives, also, actively—not in some wondrous sleep of quiet and sacred repose. He is as busy, now, as He was when here. He proposed to Himself, when He went away, a certain work. "I go to prepare a place for you," He said. He is still preparing that place for us. He also daily intercedes for His people. Oh, if your faith is strong enough, even now you can see Him standing before the throne of God, pleading His glorious merits! I think I see Him now as clearly as ever the Jews saw Aaron when he stood with his breastplate on before the mercy-seat, for remember, the

Jew never did see Aaron at all there, for the curtain was dropped and Aaron was behind the veil. And, therefore, the Jew could only see him in his fancy. But I say I see Him as clearly as that, for I see my Lord, not by fancy, but by faith! There, where the veil is torn in two, so that He is not hidden from my soul's gaze, I see Him with my name and yours upon His breast, pleading before God!

Why, gaze awhile and you may think you see Him now! Just as the Jew saw Aaron waving the censer, standing between the living and the dead and stopping the plague, even so is Christ standing at this hour between the living and the dead—and so moving the whole Deity to spare the guilty yet a little longer—while He makes intercession for them that they may live! And then comes His higher intercession for His elect, of whom He says, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world." He lives, then, an actual life of which you and I reap the daily fruits! Not a life of slumber and stillness, but an active, busy life by which He continually dispenses gifts to us!

For this reason it is well to remind you that, therefore, Jesus can only live as a man in one place. When we speak of Christ being found in every assembly of His people, we understand that of His presence in His Godhead and by His Holy Spirit, who rules on earth in this dispensation of the Spirit. But the man, Christ, can be but in one place. And He is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is absurd; it is horrible both to faith and to reason to say that Christ's body is eaten and that His blood is drunk in tens of thousands of places wherever priests choose to offer what they call, "the mass!" It is a "mass" of profanity, indeed! Our Lord Jesus Christ, as to His real, positive, corporeal presence, is not here. As to His flesh and His blood, He is not and cannot be here! He will be here one day—when He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God! But in His real person, He is now where His saints are—before the throne of God, from where, by-and-by, He will descend. Meanwhile, His spiritual presence is our joy and our gladness, but His corporeal presence—a doctrine which our faith grasps and lays hold of—His corporeal presence is before the throne of God and there He lives in proper flesh and blood as the Son of man.

Brothers and sisters, listen to a brief sketch of the biography of Christ's life in glory. When the holy women and godly men wrapped Him in spices and laid Him in the tomb, Jesus was dead. There for parts of three days and nights He tarried. He saw no corruption, but yet He was in the place of corruption. No worm could assail that Holy Thing which no sin had tainted—and yet He laid in the place where death seemed

sovereign. A while He slept, and the Church mourned, but blessed was the day when, at the first rosy dawn of light, the Savior rose!

Then could He say, "I live." His body, instinct with life, rose from its slumber and began at once to put off the grave clothes. He unwound the winding-sheets and the fine white linen and laid them carefully down. And He left them there for you and me that we might have our bed well sheeted when we come to lie in it at the last.

As for the napkin, He unwound it and laid it by itself, as though that were for us who are living, to wipe our eyes when our dear ones are taken away—since we have no cause to sorrow as they do who have no hope. And when this was done, an angel rolled away the stone and forth came the Savior—glorious, no doubt, but so much like other men that Mary "supposed Him to have been the gardener," so that there could have been no very supernatural splendor surrounding His person! He revealed Himself to many of His disciples—sometimes to as many as 500 at once. He ate with them. He drank with them. He was a man among men with them, till, when 40 days had passed, He gathered them all at Olivet, the mountain from which He had so often addressed them, and took His final leave. While He was blessing them, His hands outstretched in benediction, a cloud received Him out of their sight. And since then He has sat down at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. He is tarrying there yet a little while longer. When the fullness of time shall come—if I may go on with His biography—He will come again. "This same Jesus," said the angels, "which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in a like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." He will, therefore, come in proper person a second time, without a sin-offering unto salvation. Then will He gather His saints together who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. Then shall they reign with Him. Then shall the earth be covered with His glory. All nations shall bow before Him and all people shall call Him blessed! And then shall come the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all-in-all. But Christ shall still live, for He has received a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, without beginning of days, or end of years—a priest forever. When suns and moons shall grow dim with age and the round world shall all dissolve like the morning hoar-frost, and time shall be rolled up like a vesture, and all the ages shall have been trodden out like sparks beneath the foot of the eternal God, then shall Jesus Christ still live on, world without end! Thus have we spoken concerning Christ as living. But now, in the next place—

II. LIFE IS PROMISED TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE.

This does not mean their natural existence. They have received that from Adam and, through their sin, it has become a curse to them rather

than a blessing. Should they remain unpardoned, the fact of continued existence will become to them the most dreadful of calamities since it must be an existence in God's holy abhorrence of sin forever—driven from every glimpse or hope of forgiveness!

The life which comes to us through Christ is of this sort—I trust you know it in your own hearts—it is *spiritual life, given to us in regeneration.* When the Holy Spirit quickens a dead soul, that dead soul then receives the life of Christ! No man is alive unto God, spiritually, except through Christ. Because Christ lives, we live. When a dead soul gets into living contact with the living Savior by the power of the Spirit, then it is, that spiritual life begins. The very first evidence of spiritual life is trusting in Jesus, which shows that as the first symptom is alliance to Christ, the cause of the life must be somewhere here, namely—union with Christ! One of the very first outward signs is prayer—prayer to Christ and that, again, rises from the fact that Christ gives us of His life—and then that life goes back again to Him. Brothers, if you seek the life of other souls and desire to see them brought to God, preach Christ to them! Do you not see, "Because I live, you shall live"? Then no sinner will ever live spiritually apart from Christ! Though you and I cannot quicken them, yet we can preach the gospel to them—and faith comes by hearing! And where faith is, there is life. It is no use trying to raise the dead by preaching the law of God to them. That is only covering them up fairly with a lie in their right hand—but to preach of dying love and of rising power, to tell of pardons bought with blood and to declare that Christ died a Substitute for sinners—this is the hopeful way of bringing life to the dead! It is by such instrumentality that souls are brought to eternal life. Because Christ is alive, His elect, in due time, receive spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit and, although once they were dead in sin, they begin to live unto righteousness!

Further, *this spiritual life is preserved in us by Christ still living.* "Because I continue to live, you shall continue to live also." The text clearly means that—it bears that paraphrase. Oh, dear friends, when we once get spiritual life into us, what a thousand enemies there are who try to put it out! Many and many a time has it seemed to go hard with my soul as to whether I really had a spark of life within my spirit. Temptation after temptation have I endured until it appeared as if I must yield my hold on Christ and give up my hope! There has been conflict upon conflict, and struggle upon struggle until, at last, the enemy has got his foot upon my neck and my whole being has trembled! And had it not been for Christ's promise, "Because I live, you shall live also," it might have gone harder with me and I might have despaired and given up all hope—and laid down to die. The assurance, then, that the

spiritual life of the Christian must be maintained because Christ lives, was the only power to get me the victory! Let it teach us, then, this practical lesson. Whenever our spiritual life is very weak and we need it to grow stronger, let us get to the living Christ for the supply of His strength! When you feel you are ready to die, spiritually, go to the Savior for revived life. The text is like a hand that points us to the storehouse. You who are in the desert, there is a secret spring under your feet, and you know not where it is—this is the mysterious finger which points you to the spot! Contemplate Christ! Believe in Christ! Draw yourselves by faith nearer and nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ and so shall your life receive a divine impetus which it has not known for many a day. "Because I live, you shall live also."

And further, brothers and sisters, *we get from Christ an educated life*. Any man may be spiritually alive and yet he may not know much about the higher life. There is, in spiritual life, a scale of degrees. One man is just alive unto God. Another man may be active and vigorous. Another may be rapturously consecrated. I hope you and I will anxiously desire to get the highest form of spiritual life that is known! We do not wish to be beggars in the kingdom of Christ, but if we can, to take our place in the house of peers—to be princes through Jesus Christ. We need not be poor—Christ is willing to enrich us. We are not straitened in Him—we are straitened in ourselves. Now, Christ gives the promise, "Because I live," He says, "the highest life, far above all principalities and powers—you shall also live this higher life with Me." You may have it! You may obtain it, but brothers and sisters, if you want to get it, never go to Moses for it! Never go to yourselves for it. Do not seek to school yourselves by rules, regulations and resolutions, or by a morbid asceticism such as some men delight in! But go to the living Savior and in the living liberty which you will enjoy in communion with Him, your soul will take unto itself, wings, and mount into a clearer atmosphere! Your spirit will be braced to a higher degree of robust devotion! You will draw nearer to heaven because you have got nearer to Christ, who is the Lord of heaven! "Because I live, you shall have life: you shall have that life continued and you shall have that life yet more abundantly. I am come not only that you may have life, but more abundantly." These are your Master's words! Plead them before your Master's throne!

And now, brothers and sisters, we will go a little further. We will suppose that you are well acquainted with these forms of life, but now there comes a jerk, as it were. You are traveling along the iron road of the railway and there comes a sudden jerk and you stop. What is it? It is the thought of death! Well, but Jesus tells us, here, that that is of no consequence! It is an item in the great world of life that to you who are in

Him is scarcely worth consideration because the text overrides that and swallows it up! As it is written "death is swallowed up in victory"—it is made as though it did not exist! "Because I live, you shall live also." Your continued life of happiness, of holiness, of spirituality, of consecration and of obedience—which, indeed, is your only life worth having—is guaranteed to you in the text! Death cannot interfere with it, not even by the space of a single second! No, I tell you not even by the space of the ticking of a clock! What? A Christian die? "Because I live, you shall live also," is never suspended! There is no time for it to be suspended. Do you know what death really is? Does it take long to die? I have heard of men who have been said to be weeks in dying. Not so! They were weeks living—the dying occupied no space—that was done at once and immediately; and so with the believer. To him death is so slight a jerk that he still keeps on upon the same line! He still lives, only there is this difference, that it is as though the railway had been running through a tunnel and he now comes out of it into the open plain. His life below was the train in the tunnel, but when he dies, as we call it, there is a jerk and then it comes right out of the tunnel into the fair, open, plain country of heaven where all is clear and bright! Where all the birds are singing and the darkness is over, the mist and fogs are gone and his soul is forever blessed! "Because I live a life that cannot be suspended," Christ seems to say, "you shall live also."

At the bottom of every man's heart there is, I suppose, a fear of ceasing to be. Some infidels seem to find comfort in the thought of being annihilated, but that thought is, perhaps, the most abhorrent that ever crossed the human mind! There is a something within us that tells us we are immortal, or there is, at any rate, something which makes us hope we are, but we shrink with loathing from the idea of being annihilated! Now, at that point comes in our text and it says, "What? Annihilated? You who believe in Jesus cannot be! You shall live also, live with that higher life which you have received—a life of beauty, a life of excellence, of holiness and of God-likeness! That new life implanted within you shall never be suspended." No, never by the space of a single tick, for, "Because I live, you shall live also."

Further, brothers and sisters, our text is such a wide one that we have a hold of the fact that we are to continue to live as to our spirits and our souls. The text, beneath its sheltering wings, like a hen gathering her brood, gathers many precious truths of God. The next one is that *this very body of ours is to live, too*. It must take its time for that. It must abide in the earth, whereon it has dwelt. It is so decreed that there it should lie unless Christ should come before that time. But concerning this very body, there is no decree of annihilation. It will smolder away. It

may be taken up by the spade of the careless sexton and all the atoms of the body be scattered to the winds of heaven! But there is a life-germ within it which no human power can destroy, and over which the divine eyes perpetually watch—and when that mysterious and long-expected sound of the angelic trumpet shall ring over land and sea, through heaven and earth, and the graves shall all be opened, then shall my soul find my body yet again—fashioned after a more beautiful form, more fit for the spirit than before! More elastic, altogether free from weakness, no longer such as shall be subject to pain, sickness, accident, decay, to ultimate corruption—but a spiritual body, raised in power, in glory and in immortality! Not raised in the likeness of the first Adam in the garden, but in the likeness of the second Adam in the everlasting Paradise of God!

Courage my eyes, courage! You shall be closed for a while, but you shall see the Redeemer when He stands a second time upon the earth. Courage, my fingers and my hands! You must, for a time, lie still and motionless, but you shall not be so forever, for you, even you, shall strike the strings of those celestial harps that pour forth His praise! Courage, all you members of my body which have been sanctified to be members of Christ and made to be parts of the Holy Spirit's temple—you shall all take your part in the grand triumphal entry of Christ when He shall descend to take possession of His kingdom! "Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall behold for myself and not another." So go to your bed in the earth, poor body, and sleep there awhile. Bathe yourself like her who bathed herself in spices to make herself ready for the King—so go and get yourself prepared to meet your Lord! Take off your workday dress and put on your Sabbath garments, your bridal array and then shall you come to the King and see Him in His beauty, and crown Him with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the days of His espousals. Yes, because He lives in the body which He bore, this body shall live again also.

And so, beloved, the text amounts to this, that in body and soul the Christian shall be immortal like his Master! When our reign on earth—whether it shall last a thousand years, or a thousand ages—(we know not what the Word of God intends)—but when that glorified state on earth which I do most assuredly believe in, shall be over, and it shall be said—

"Now Jehovah's banner's furled,
Sheathed His sword because 'tis done"—

when the drama of the Mediatorial reign shall all be closed and we shall dwell under the immediate sovereignty of God once again, then, beloved, every believer shall be with Christ, eternally glorified, for here stands the irrevocable decree and the divine mandate of creation's Lord, who is also

the redeeming Lamb, "Because I live, you shall live also." Reel, you pillars of earth! Be shaken, you arches of the starry heavens! Pass away, O time, and you, you rolling worlds, dissolve into your native nothingness! But the believer must live on because Jesus lives! And until the Lord's Christ can bow His head; until He who only has immortality can expire; until God, Himself, can cease to be, no soul that believed in Jesus can lose the incorruptible life which God's own Spirit has put within it!

I want to sing, brothers and sisters, rather than to talk with you. These are words and thoughts fit for some ancient bard, or for the spirit of some inspired prophet sent from heaven! I do but lisp where even seraphs might find their loudest songs fail in the theme. Let your hearts mount! Let your souls exult! Let your spirits be glad! Do you

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

and enter into His heaven? Do you long for the evening of death when your toil shall be over, and the hour of your bliss shall have come? I shall have no time, I fear, for the third and last point, and, therefore, must only give a few hints of what I would have said.

III. THIS LIFE IS LINKED WITH CHRIST'S LIFE.

Immortal, all glorious, promised to true believers, it is bound up with the life of our immortal Lord. Why is this? First, because *Christ leads a justified life*. I scarcely know how to express my meaning. You understand that so long as Jesus was here, He lay under the charge of our sins. While He was in the world, His Father had made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all. But when He died, His death discharged all the liabilities of His elect. The handwriting of ordinances that was against us, was then taken away. When He went to Calvary as our surety, the sins of all His people were His debts—He had taken them upon Himself. But when He rose from the dead in the garden that first Easter morning He had no debts of ours! He had no longer any substitutional engagement or liability! All the debts which He had taken upon Himself as our Redeemer, He had fully and completely discharged. No officer can arrest a man for debt who has none, and Christ now lives, therefore, as a justified person. And brothers and sisters, no officer of justice can arrest any of the people for whom Christ paid their debts! How, then, shall death have any dominion over those whose debts are all discharged? How shall they be laid in prison for whom Christ was laid in prison? How shall they suffer death, which is the penalty of sin, for whom Christ has already suffered all the penalties which justice could have demanded? Because He lives the life of One who has discharged the debts of His people, they must, in justice, live!

Secondly, *Christ lives a representative life*. He is no longer Christ for Himself. As the member of Parliament represents a town, so Jesus Christ

represents all the people who are in Him. And as long as He lives, they live. He is their covenant head. As long as Adam stands, his race shall stand. When Adam falls, the human race falls. While, therefore, Christ lives, the Christly ones who are in Him, live through His representation.

In the next place, *Christ lives a perfect life*. Perhaps you do not see how this is a link between His living and your living, but it is, because we are a part of Christ. According to the Word of Scripture, every believer is a member of Christ's body. Now, a man who lives perfectly has not lost his finger, or his arm, or his hand. A man may be alive with many of his limbs taken away, but you can scarcely call him a perfect living man. But I cannot imagine a maimed Christ. I have never been able to conceive in my soul, of Christ lacking any of His members! Such a thing was never seen on earth. The barbarous cruelty of the Jews could not effect that and, by the providence of God, Pilate's officers were not permitted to cause such a thing. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken," was the ancient prophecy. They broke the legs of the first and second thief, but when they came to the matchless Lord, they saw He was already dead, so they broke not His legs. Even in His earthly body, which was the type of His spiritual body, He must suffer no maiming injury! Therefore, my brothers and sisters, because Christ lives as a perfect Christ, everyone that is one with Him must live also!

Then, fourthly, *Christ lives a blessed life*—a life of perfect blessedness and, therefore, we must live also. "Why?" you say. Why, look—there is a mother here. She is alive. She is in good health, but she is not perfectly happy, for she is a Rachel weeping for her children and will not be comforted because they are not! Time will heal her wounds, it is true, for the most affectionate heart cannot be always mourning, but our Lord Jesus Christ, in that infinitely affectionate heart of His, would not only mourn over one of His children, if lost, but He would mourn forever over it! I cannot conceive of Christ being happy and losing one of His dear children! I cannot conceive Christ to be personally blessed and yet one of the members of His own person cast into the "outer darkness." Because He lives in perfect happiness, I conceive that all who are dear to Him will be round about Him! It shall not be said that He lost one of them, nor shall one of the family be missing, but—

"All the chosen seed
Shall meet around the throne
To bless the conduct of His grace
And make His wonders known!"

And lastly, *Christ leads a triumphant life* and, therefore, you shall live also! You say again, "How is that?" Why, brothers and sisters, the triumph of Christ concerns us! This is the triumph of Christ, "Of all

those whom You have given Me, I have lost none." Now, suppose there to be heard a whisper from the infernal pit, "Aha! Aha! You lie! There is one here whom the Father gave You, but whom You did lose"? Why, Christ would never be able to speak again by way of triumph! He could never boast anymore! Then might He put down His crown! If it were but to happen in that one case, at any rate, the enemy would have got the advantage over Him and He would not have been the conqueror all along the line. But, glory be to God! He who trod the winepress with none for His assistant, came forth out of the crimson conflict, having smitten all His foes and won a complete victory! There shall not be in the whole campaign a single point over which Satan shall be able to boast!

Christ has brought many sons to glory as the captain of their salvation and never yet has He failed! And He never shall in any point, neither the least nor the greatest, neither the strongest nor the weakest. This is essential, dear friends. It is essential to the acclamations of heaven that every soul that believes in Jesus should live forever. It is essential to the everlasting harmony and to the joy of Christ throughout eternity, that all who trust in Him should be preserved and kept safe, even until the end. Therefore, says the text, "Because I live, you shall live also." So I leave this truth of God with you, only praying that those who have no part in this matter may seek Christ at this very time—and be led by the Spirit to cry mightily to Him—and His promise is, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near."

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE NAIL IN A SURE PLACE
NO. 3402

A SERMON
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"And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed and be cut down and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord has spoken it." Isaiah 22:23-25.

WE have read, in your hearing, the occasion of these words. Shebna the scribe, having become proud and vainglorious, was to be put away and his place to be occupied by a better man on whom God promised to establish His favor. When Shebna the scribe was put away, it was like the drawing out of a nail which, apparently, had been well fastened, and all that had been hanging upon it came down with its fall. Thus did Shebna's family suffer for his sin. It is just so in the world at this day. It would be well if some men who have gone into evil ways had considered this. It is not they, alone, who suffer. Such is the order and constitution of the commonwealth of manhood, that when the husband sins, the household must feel much of the smart. Oftentimes, for wife and children, there has been wrung out a cup of bitterness, of which they have been made to drink, not through their own fault, but through the fault of the head of the family. Should there be any men here who have strayed into this house, tonight, who contemplate putting forth his hand to that which is not good, though he might dare to risk the consequences for his own sake, yet, for the sake of the children of his loins and the wife of his bosom, let him pause lest, perhaps, he fill their lives with bitterness, or send them to their graves prematurely in poverty and shame.

That is not, however the subject upon which I shall talk at this time. When Shebna was removed, there was room for Eliakim. Let this furnish the key to a spiritual lesson. It has been generally propounded and admitted by commentators and expositors that Eliakim is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. While this passage literally refers to Eliakim, himself, it may, with very great instructiveness, be used as applicable to the Lord Jesus—and so I use it. The first point will be this—

I. IN ORDER TO MAKE ROOM FOR JESUS CHRIST, THERE MUST BE AN OVERTHROW OF SOMEBODY ELSE, just as in order to make room

for Eliakim, Shebna, who seemed to be like a nail fastened in a sure place, must be pulled out and there must be a downfall of his glory.

Beloved, whenever Jesus Christ comes into the heart, before He rides in state into the castle of Mansoul, there is a battle, strife, a struggle, a casting down of the image of sin, and a setting up of the cross in its place. All men, by nature, have some kind of righteousness. There is no man so vile but he still wraps himself up in his rags and cajoles himself into the belief that he has some degree of excellence, spiritual or moral. Before Christ can come into the heart, all this *natural excellence must be torn to shreds.* Every single stone of the wall upon which we have built before, must come down, and the foundations must be utterly destroyed before we shall ever build right and for eternity upon the cornerstone of Christ Jesus. All our conceit about our past righteousnesses must be completely overthrown. Perhaps we flatter ourselves that all is well because we have been baptized or have come to the communion table, like one who was visited, a few days ago, by an elder. Seeing that she was sick and, near to die, he asked her, "Have you a good hope?" "Oh, sir, yes; a good and blessed hope." "And pray," he asked, "what is it?" "Well," she said, "I have taken the sacrament regularly for 50 years." What do you think of that in a Christian country, from the lips of one who had attended a gospel ministry? Her confidence was built upon the mere fact of her having attended to an outward ceremony to which, probably, she had no right whatever! There are hundreds and thousands who are thus resting upon mere ceremonies! They have been church-goers or chapel-goers from their youth up. They have never been absent, except under sickness, from their regular place of worship. Good easy souls! Are these the boats upon which they hope to swim in eternity? They will surely sink to their everlasting destruction! Some base their confidence on the fact that they have never indulged in the grosser vices; others that they have been scrupulously honest in their commercial transactions; some that they have been good husbands; others that they have been charitable neighbors. I know not of what poor flimsy tissue men will not make a covering to hide their natural nakedness! But all this must be unraveled—every stitch of it! No man can put on the robes of Christ's righteousness till he has taken off his own. Christ will never go shares in our salvation. God will not have it said that He partly made the heavens, but that some other spirit came in to conclude the gigantic work of creation, much less will He divide the work of our salvation with any other! He must be the only Savior as He was the only Creator! In the winepress of His sufferings, Jesus stood alone—of the people, none were with Him—no angel could assist Him in the mighty work. In the fight He stood alone—the solitary champion, the sole victor! So, too, you must be saved by Him, alone, resting entirely on Him and counting your own righteousness to be dross and dung, or else you can never be saved at all! It must be down with Shebna, or else it cannot be up with Eliakim! It must be down with self, or it can never be up with Christ! Self-

righteousness must be set aside to make room for the righteousness of Jesus—otherwise it can never be ours.

We must, with equal thoroughness, be ready to give up *all confidence in our own resolutions, or vows, or endeavors* for the future and come to rest the future where we rest the past—on Christ and Christ alone. I know it is the idea of many that albeit they have slipped and fallen in the past, yet they shall be able to stand upright in the future. Have they not resolved it? Can they not do it? Are they not able to do as they will? As they have had much ability for evil, have they not an equal ability for good? So self-sufficiency talks, but when a man comes to know himself, and to know Christ, he sings another note. "Ah," said an aged saint, as he heard of men that were taken to the police station, and of some that were condemned to die, and others that were transported—"Ah," said he, "he today, I tomorrow if the grace of God did not prevent." So every truly humbled man will say, when he hears of the great offenses of others, "They today, and I tomorrow, unless grace shall intervene to keep me from following their evil example." Brothers and sisters, our only hope for the future lies in this—that those who trust Jesus are in Jesus Christ's hands and that He is able to keep that which they commit to Him. Those who trust in Jesus have this promise that the Holy Spirit shall dwell in them and walk in them—writing a law upon their hearts making their hearts new—molding their natures into the nature of Christ, causing them to hate evil and to choose that which is good. You will never kill a single evil passion through your own strivings apart from the precious blood of Christ! Those vipers within our bosom will never die till they are sprinkled with the blood of the great sacrifice—and then they all depart. Jesus comes and fills the heart and then evil is crushed beneath His foot and is utterly slain, so that Christ becomes fully formed in us, the hope of glory!

Now, it is hard for a man to give up these two things—all glorying in the past and all hope for the future in himself. It is hard to be a pauper and to knock at mercy's door and ask for alms, and yet only as paupers can we come. I do not allude exclusively to you that have been great sinners, outwardly only, but I mean you moral men and women, you that are good and excellent in a thousand ways. You must still come, just as the poor publican came, with, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." These are God's terms and He will accept you on no other. Oh, be not proud enough to kick at them, but submit yourself to the dictates of eternal love and let your vanity and self-opinion be abased that Jesus Christ may be all-in-all to you!

Before I leave this point, let me remark that as this is to be done before we come to Christ, so all our life long it is one of the things about which we must always be vigilant, for the tendency of human nature, as long as we are in this world, is to get something to rest upon in ourselves. We can hardly be indulged with the light of Jehovah's countenance before we begin to make a confidence of it—and if our

graces for a little while bud and bloom like seeming flowers, we very soon begin to compliment ourselves upon our imaginary goodness! Though every excellence is borrowed, we begin to be proud of it and to forget that in Him is all our salvation, and all confidence. This knocking down has to be persevered in, for the flesh lusts against the Spirit and yet as fast as we can, in our pride build up anything in which we can glory, the Lord sends a terrible blast of some kind or other against the wall, and sweeps it all down, that Jesus Christ may alone be exalted in our experience.

Thus much upon the first point. There must be a down-throwing, a pulling out of one nail before there can be another for us to hang upon. Now, let us turn to a second thought, which is this—

II. THE NATURE OF OUR TRUE DEPENDENCE, as set forth in the words of the 23rd and 24th verses.

The reliance of a really saved soul is upon the person, the work and righteousness of Jesus Christ only. This dependence is warranted by *God's appointment*. Turn to the 23rd verse—"*I* will fasten him as a nail in a sure place." That other nail, in the 25th verse, God never fastened, but this is one that God fastens and what God does, lasts forever! Do you, dear hearer, rest your soul's salvation alone upon Jesus? Then, mark you, He can never fail you, for if He did, then would it be true that God had been mistaken. It were blasphemy to think it! If the Lord appoints Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and yet He does not make that propitiation, then there is a mistake somewhere. If God bids me lean my whole weight upon His Son, and I do so lean, and yet am not sustained, then is there a great mistake, not on my part only, but on the part of Infinite Wisdom! But we cannot suppose that. The Lord knew what He was doing when He appointed the only-begotten to be the sinner's pillar of strength, upon which he might lean. He knew that Jesus could not fail—that as God, He was all-sufficient; that as perfect man He would not turn aside; that as a bleeding surety, having paid all the debt of our sin upon Calvary, He was able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. I come into this pulpit so continually that it is a place to which I am more accustomed than any other in the world! And this is the one cry I am always uttering in various shapes and ways—it is this one truth of God I present with unwearyingly interest—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross of Calvary, bearing upon Himself the sin of all that trust Him, and for all that trust Him, He has made a full atonement, so that their sins are forgiven! Christ has paid their debts, they are free! He was punished for them! They cannot be punished. God cannot punish the same sin twice! If He punishes Christ, He will not punish any for whom Christ died! Now, if these statements were my own invention. Did I promulgate it as coming out of my own thoughts, it were worthy of no acceptance—but inasmuch as God reveals it in His Word—oh, this is the soul and marrow of the Christian religion! Rest on it and if you are deceived, were such a thing possible, what a consolation would you have in appealing to the proclamation of divine mercy as an answer

to all the terrors that menaced you! But that can never be! Impossible! It is the truth of God, O sinner! However guilty you may be, believe this truth—that Christ is able to save you—and go and cast yourself on Him! Rest on His finished work, and as God is true, He will not, He *cannot*, turn aside from His solemn oath and promise—"He that believes in Christ is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already because he has not believed on the Son of God." The Christian's dependence, then, is of divine appointing.

Moreover, the believer's dependence *is of God's sustaining*, for note, "I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place, and He shall be for a glorious throne to His father's house." God ensures the future—that Christ shall always be to His people their glory and their defense. You know how we like good names to be attached to great compacts. In all commercial dealing, especially in large transactions, we like good and safe men to trust in, though, indeed, where are they to be found now-a-days—since the best of them are sharper than a thorn-edge? Oh, honesty, you are fled, perished, buried years ago, and the very rags you once did wear are rotten! But, here, if nowhere else, here in the gospel, we have a name in which we may trust the name of the thrice-holy God that cannot lie! And He declares that He will sustain His Son as the Savior of His people. Need I urge any rational spirit to depend where God pledges His Word? "Let God be true, and every man a liar," and if you have God's Word for it, cast yourselves unreservedly upon His Word! You shall not find Him fail you! You shall rejoice as in heaven you sing of the faithfulness of the God that spoke and the everlasting righteousness with which He fulfils every Word He has spoken!

Further still, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the believer's great foundation and confidence, is also *the Christian's fountain of glory*. "He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." All his father's house was to be ennobled through the ennobling of Eliakim, and so is the Christian ennobled through the ennobling of the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature what are we but despicable? If we consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, we are so minute as not to be worthy to be called specks in creation! If we look at our sinfulness, we are reduced still lower in the scale. And if we see our continued tendency to fresh sin, we are obliged to say, "Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him at all?" But yet man is an honorable creature when he lays hold on Christ! Then he is lifted up and made to have dominion over all the works of God's hands. All things are put under his feet in the person of Christ Jesus. There is no honor in the whole universe—no, not the honor of the angels, themselves—that can exceed the honor that is put upon the man who believes in Jesus Christ. I wish we always thought so, for indeed, it is so. In the olden times, when one was brought before the magistrate to be accused and adjudged to death for his Christianity, he blushed not to avow his soul's attachment to his Savior with open face. When they asked him what he was, he said, "A Christian." "And what is your

name?" He said, "My name is Christian." "And what is your occupation?" "My occupation is a Christian." "And what is your wealth, what are your degree and rank?" He said, "I am a Christian." And to every question they put, he gave but this one answer, "I am a Christian. I am a Christian." All the wealth and all the glory of this world are nothing compared with the glory that comes to the very meanest man who is really allied to Christ and can truly be called a Christian! Lift up your heads, you poor and needy! Rejoice, you downtrodden and oppressed, you toiling workers, you forgotten ones among the sons of men, for if your destiny is linked with the person of the once crucified, but now exalted Savior, you shall partake of His glory in the day of His appearing and forever be sharers of the splendor which eternally shall surround your Lord!

Here, then, is much to comfort us. He upon whom we depend is divinely appointed, divinely sustained, and all His glory He sheds on us! But now, pass on and note that—

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S WHOLE DEPENDENCE IS PLACED UPON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST as declared in the 24th verse. The metaphor is this—There is a pin in a palace and upon this there may be hung up suits of armor, or whatever else the owner of the palace chooses to put there. But instead of that, there are hung golden wine cups and goblets. Some of them are small vessels of not much capacity. Others of them are great flagons adapted to hold large quantities, but they are all hanging upon this bracket—all suspended there as trophies. If the nail is taken out, the smaller vessels fall, and so do the larger ones, too, for they all equally and alike hang on that nail. Their only support from falling and being bruised upon the floor is that one pin which holds them all. Such is Christ to all His people! All Christians are not alike capacious vessels of grace. Some can receive much—they are full of knowledge, zeal, hope, joy, faith. Others will never be anything but little vessels. They have believed, but their faith is mixed with unbelief. They "can do but little, they have but few talents, their knowledge is obscured, their progress in the divine life is but small. Still, for all that, they rest on nothing less than Christ. They need not rest on anything more and the great ones depend on nothing less than Christ, nor can they rest on anything more. The little cup is quite as safe, for it hangs on the nail as the flagon does. Truly, one might be ambitious to be a flagon, to hold a deeper draught for its Lord's pleasure, but the littleness of the tiniest vessel does not affect its safety. The safety of all that hang there lies in the fastness of the pin, the strength and security of the nail. Not in the littleness of the one, nor the greatness of the other is there either safety or danger, but all rest on that pin. So is it with the whole Church of God. We are all hanging upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. If we have served Him well and served Him long, yet we have nothing whereof to glory, but we cast all aside, and rest, as helpless sinners upon the blessed Savior! If we have but just begun to serve Him, and so are babes in grace, we rest entirely upon Him. If we have fallen into sin and have been backsliders,

yet still we come again and look to His merits that we may be restored. Or if we have lived a blameless life through His abundant grace, yet still, for all that, we have no other dependence than the rest of the saints, but entirely, solely rest in Jesus! This is very simple doctrine, expressed in very simple talk, but I do wish that somebody had told me this years before I heard it, for I always had the notion that I was to be saved by something I did, and something I felt. I supposed it was a great mystery, a matter that took months and years to solve, and that even then, it was attended with imminent risk and that the dreary search for this inestimable prize might end in disappointment. Oh, I wish I had been told earlier that there was nothing whatever for me to do of myself, but simply to come, just as I was, and cast myself upon what Christ had done for me, and for sinners like me, and that if I rested wholly upon Him, I would be saved from my sins and from the tendency to sin—and be made holy in Christ Jesus! Now I feel inclined to state, whenever I am talking of it, into the simplest language and the shortest sentences, in order that if there should be a lad here, a child here, that is seeking salvation, he may not be kept in darkness, as I was, month after month, and year after year, trying to know what to do to be saved! Man, woman—whoever you may be—what is to save you is done! Christ has done it all! The robe you have got to wear in heaven is already spun—you have not got to sit at the loom, working away and making a garment with which to cover your sins! The fountain in which you have to be washed you have not got to fill, nor even to drop a tear into it to make it perfect! There it is—filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and all you have to do is but to step into it by simply trusting it. Trust Christ! Rely on Christ! Depend on Christ and it is done! And you are saved! The flagons and the cups put on the nail are safe there. You that put on Jesus Christ now are safe, now, safe tonight, safe all your life and safe in glory everlasting!

Now, I should like to ask a question of two or three classes, and then send you home. There are a great many of us here tonight who are teachers of others. Some of you are deacons, elders, Sunday school teachers, street preachers. I thank God that you are a busy people and you are doing much for Christ. There is a question I want to ask of you, and of myself—Are we who teach others sure that we have believed in Christ, ourselves? Are we quite, quite sure that we are saved? It is well to ask that question! It is a very dangerous thing, indeed, for an unsaved man to begin to work for Christ, for the probabilities are that he will take for granted what he ought diligently to have proved. In many cases he never will seek to be saved, but go on, on, on, never pausing to examine himself and so, while professing to work for God, he may be a stranger to the work of God on himself! There is an old story I recollect reading somewhere of a lunatic in an asylum, who one day saw a very lean cook. Accosting him, he said, "Cook, do you make good food?" "Yes," said the cook. "Are you sure?" "Yes." "And does anybody get fat on it?" "Yes,"

again was the reply. "Then," said the man, "you had better mind what you are after, or else when the governor comes round, he will put you in along with me, for if you make good food, and yet are so thin yourself, you must be mad, for you do not eat it, or else you would get fat, too!" There is some sense in that. You teach others, you say you give them spiritual food, but why not feed on it yourselves? Master, what right have you to teach if you will not first learn? Physician, physician, heal yourself! Brother, it will go hard with you and with me if we are lost. What will become of us teachers of others if, after having led others to the river, we never drink—after bringing others the heavenly food, we perish of spiritual famine ourselves? I cannot go round to all the members of this church and all the workers, and take them by the hand and say, "My dear brother or sister, be not deceived and do not go on deceiving us." But I sometimes wish I could do that, and I wish you would take it as done tonight, for there are some awful hypocrites among us! There are some who come in and apparently behave right well, who are nothing better than abominable hypocrites, rotten through and through! And yet in our charity we never suspect them, and if we occasionally discover one, we stand amazed and say, "Lord, shall I be the next to be a Judas and betray my Master?" There never was a church in which such hypocrites have not at all times been exposed to view unless they were all in the gall of bitterness together, dead in an empty profession. And then it is no marvel that there should be little inclination to exercise discipline. Christ's twelve had a Judas, and all churches must expect to find the chaff that must be driven away into the fire when the wheat is purged by the great Master's fan. I do beseech you, my dear brothers and sisters, let not membership with this church, or any other church, assist you in self-delusion, but do—oh, how shall I put it, how shall I put it?—do, before you think about the conversion of other people, see to it that your own conversion is accomplished! Count yourself no way safe till you hang on that nail! You need not talk to others about trusting in Christ till you have first trusted yourselves!

Out of the many hearers who have listened to me so long, may there not be a great number who though taught in the doctrine of the Word have never yet been obedient to it? For a man to perish before knowing the gospel will be a dreary thing. But for him to die when he knows the gospel is something horrible—to be drowned with the life belt within reach! To perish in the dark, when the light is to be had! To die of famine, like Tantalus, with the golden apples close to one's lips! To perish of thirst with the water gurgling at one's throat! Oh, it will forever be a sound of horror in the lost ones' ears when they shall hear the echo of the Sabbath bells—if such sounds can penetrate the murky regions where lost spirits dwell—the sound, I say, of the Sabbath bells reminding them of Lord's-days wasted and neglected! The sound familiar to them when on earth of the preacher's voice as he pleaded, entreated, thundered, threatened, wept, begged men to be saved! If there could be

silence, there, and all could be forgotten, there might be a lull in the fierce hail-storm of almighty wrath! But they can never forget, for it is said, "Son, remember. Son, remember"—and they shall remember that they were called, but would not come, that they were invited, but declined the feast, that they were instructed, but shut their eyes—that they were wooed, but they hardened their necks and chose their own delusions! Oh, by the mercy of the blessed God, write not your names, my hearers, among the guilty and terrible multitude!

And may there not be some who come merely as casual hearers now and then, who, instead of gleaning anything that is good out of what we have tried to say, only remember our mistakes, our mannerisms, our faults of gesture or of style? It may be sport to some of you to sit and hear, but it is awful as death for us to stand and preach. I mean, it is no child's play for a man to feel, "I stand in God's place to that people this night, and as though God did beseech them by me, I am to pray them, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." He that can toy with his ministry and count it to be like a trade, or like any other profession, was never called of God! But he that has a charge pressing on his heart and a woe ringing in his ears, and preaches as though he heard the cries of hell behind him, and saw his God looking down upon him—oh, how that man entreats the Lord that his hearers may not hear in vain! Yet, alas, alas, by how many who come to hear, all that is good is forgotten, and only some worthless thing is treasured up? As among those who go to the goldsmith's shop, while one is looking at a pearl, and another admires a ruby, and another would gladly purchase a diamond, there may be an idiot who picks up a coal from the floor and thinks that shall be his—takes it home with him and blackens his fingers with it, and then goes his way and finds fault with the jeweler who dropped it—so are you foolish people and unwise who are attracted by nothing that is precious in the gospel, but are diligent to collect any refuse that drops in the pulpit! Oh, sirs, if you must find fault with us, do so, and welcome, as much as ever you will, but do not forget that there is the truth of God in the sentence that if you are to be saved, you must rest alone upon the work of Jesus! You need saving! You need it tonight! There may never be another occasion on which you may have an opportunity of finding salvation! The opportunity is given to you now. May the Holy Spirit give you the will as well as the occasion, and may you now say—

"I'll go to Jesus though my sins,
Have like a mountain rose!
I know His courts, I'll enter in
Whatever may oppose.
Prostrate I'll lie before His throne
And there my sins confess.
I'll tell Him I'm a wretch undone
Without His sovereign grace."

God bless these words for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 41:1-18.

God enters into a controversy with those who had fallen into the worship of idols.

Verse 1. *Keep silence before Me, O islands, and let the people renew their strength. Let them come near, then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.* He challenges them to a debate. He gives them breathing time—bids them prepare themselves and come with the best arguments that their minds could find.

2, 3. *Who raised up the righteous man from the east? Who called him to his feet, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? Who gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow? He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.* Who was it that raised up Cyrus and who made him strong to defeat the foe? Did the false gods do it? Could they claim any share therein? He puts it to them.

4. *Who has worked and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last, I am He.* Long before Cyrus was born, God thus spoke of him! It is declared what work he should do. What better proof could there be that God is God? Do the false gods foretell the future? Are their oracles to be depended upon? Yet the Lord's Word is true and stands fast forever. "I Jehovah, the first, and with the last, I am He."

5, 6. *The isles saw it, and feared: the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near and came. They helped, everyone, his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage.* When men fight against God, they get united. What a very sad thing it is that God's children should ever fall out. There is one sin that I never heard charged upon the devils—the sin of disunity. Of all the evil things we have heard, I have never heard that among the principalities of the pit there has ever been any division into sects and parties. Oh, sad that in this respect we should fall short of them! The enemies of God helped everyone, his neighbor, "and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage."

7. *So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smooths with the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering. And he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.* What a sarcastic description of god-making this is! There is the carpenter and then the goldsmith to spread the plates of gold over the wood. And then it is soldered and it has to be fastened with nails. The simple facts about the making of gods are sufficient to pour ridicule upon idolatry! God deliver us from idolatry of any shape or form, whether it comes from Rome or Canterbury! May we have no symbol—no visible object of worship, whatever—but get rid of all that and before the great invisible Spirit let us bow, worshiping Him in spirit and in truth! For the least touch of the symbolic soon lends on to the idolatrous! And what at the

first seemed harmless, soon comes to be so harmful that well does the Law say, "You shall not make unto you any graven image for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." Oh, to keep clear of this great and heinous sin!

8, 9. *But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen. The seed of Abraham, My friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are My servant: I have chosen you, and not cast you away.* The people of Israel were reserved by God that they might worship Him. While other nations went to their idols, the Israelites were to be His servants, chaste in heart towards Him. It is so with the Lord's believing people. You are elected and selected, chosen and ordained, and set apart. You may fear the Lord and not give your hearts to any other. May God grant that we may be true to this, our sacred trust. Notice how very sweetly in this text the Lord alludes to His friendship to Abraham, "The seed of Abraham, *My friend*." When the Lord makes a friend of a man, He means it, and He keeps up that friendship to His children and His children's children! Happy are they who have a father who is a friend of God! Just as David did good to Mephibosheth for the sake of Jonathan, so, doubtless, many blessings come to the children for the sake of their parents. The Lord keeps mercy to the third and fourth generation, yes, and throughout all generations to them that keep His covenant.

10. *Fear you not, for I am with you.* What cause for fear now? If I am with You, you need not fear all the men on earth, nor all the demons of the pit! Fear you not, for I am with you."

10. *Be not dismayed: for I am your God.* "*Your* God." Lay the stress there if you will, or, "your *God*, therefore your all-sufficient helper—your immutable, faithful, everlasting friend."

10-12. *I will strengthen you: yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. Behold all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and shall not find them, even them that contended with you. They that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing.* Go on, then, child of God! All your foes that resist your salvation shall disappear before your onward march. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Advance to meet your cares and God shall take your cares away. Only be you strong and of a good courage, and rest in the everlasting arm, and you shall be more than a conqueror!

13, 14. *For I, the Lord, your God, will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not: I will help you. Fear not, you worm, Jacob.* Poor worm! How can it take care of itself? Even a bird can destroy it. "Fear not, you worm, Jacob." You know what a worm does for its defense. It is all that it can do—it hides itself in the earth. Hide yourself in your God! Get you into the rock and there be hidden till the danger is past. "Fear not, you worm, Jacob."

14. *And you men of Israel: I will help you, says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.* How many times the Lord puts it, "I will help you"! How again and again He says, "Fear not"! For despondency is deeply engraved in some spirits. There are some minds that seem to gravitate that way, again and again, and again—and even the divine assurances have to be given repeatedly before they feel comfort! Have any of you been troubled because your children do not learn the first time you teach them? See how you are towards your heavenly Father! How many times He has to teach you, line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little and there a little—and if He has patience with our infirmities, we may very readily have patience with the infirmities of our little ones!

15. *Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth.* He will make poor feeble worms to be like that great corn-drag which they were accustomed to draw over the straw to bruise out the wheat.

15, 16. *You shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the LORD, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.* Truly, when mountains are beaten into chaff and blown away with the winnowing fan, there is room for rejoicing and magnifying God! If there were no difficulties, there would be no victories! If we had no trials, we should have no tests of Jehovah's strength! But out of our afflictions we get our joys. The deeper our sorrows, the higher our exultations when God helps us through them.

17 *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the LORD, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.* What a blessed promise that is! God thinks of poor and needy men. When they are in their greatest extremity, with nothing to quench their thirst, and they are ready to die, then He is pleased to make the rocks run with rivers in order that they may be supplied.

18. *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*

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THE MULTITUDE BEFORE THE THRONE
NO. 3403

A SERMON
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"After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, tribes, people and tongues stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."
Revelation 7:9, 10.

IT seems as though a dash of wonderment thrilled through his soul and a flame of admiration burst from his tongue, when John exclaims, "After this I beheld, and lo!" He had already seen much. His attention was fixed. His thoughts were strained. All of a sudden, then, a fresh scene breaks on his view and he betrays his surprise. At what, you say? Evidently he was astonished that the vision was not yet complete. Ah, brothers and sisters! In order to understand the deep things of God, we need to be patient in our contemplation. Had John turned away his eyes, relaxed his study, or withdrawn his gaze from the marvelous panorama, he would not have seen the better part of his vision! As a Jew, when he had seen the twelve tribes pass before him, he might have been tempted to say, "It is enough! There is a remnant according to the election of grace in Israel! Lord, Your servant is content! I would now open my eyes again to earth and forget these mysteries." This is what many have done practically when they have been looking at a gospel truth. They have not been desirous to see it all, though glad enough to see some part of the truth of God which seemed to suit their prejudice—they have taken their eyes away from the excellent glory before they have seen the whole of the truth, as though they were afraid of discovering too much, as though they were always glad not to learn anything beyond, for fear it would not square with what they had learned before! John, however, being patient and taught of God, continued to look—and when the august assembly of the 144,000 had passed before him, he saw a far greater multitude of the Gentile race and he heard from them a louder song than he had heard from the chosen multitude before, as they said, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb." Be steadfast, then, you searchers into the truths of God. Look long! Look earnest! Ask the Lord to let you see as much as you may. Then that petition being granted, comfort yourselves with this reflection, "What you know not now you shall know hereafter." Some things He will not tell you because you cannot bear them now, but let there be nothing hid from you because

your interest flags and you do not wish to see it! Be willing to learn and let your eyes be open to see the whole of the truth which Jesus would reveal. Turning, then, to the vision described in our text, the first thing in it that we ought to meditate upon is—

I. THE GREAT CENTER OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

It seems that all the saints and angels that John saw surrounded one common rallying place—the throne of God and of the Lamb. They were not broken up into groups, some of them considering this subject, and others investigating that. They were not divided into parties, some calling themselves by one name, and some by another. All in one group they stood, though their number was beyond all human count, and every eye was directed to one common object—yes, and every heart went with every eye—and every tongue sounded the same song, and that a song of adoration to the same One who was the center of all!

Does not this teach us *that God is the very center of heaven?* We might have guessed this, for He is center of all the new creation. Even now all those that are born-again live in Him, inheriting all the blessings of eternal life in their union to Christ, and their fellowship with Him. From Him they derive all their light—to Him and upon Him they reflect all the light, again, giving all the glory unto Him from whom they received all the grace. He who built heaven, He who supports heaven, He who chose every inhabitant in heaven, He who fashioned every inhabitant *for* heaven, He who bought every inhabitant of heaven with His precious blood, He who is the Father of all and the friend of all, may well be the center of all joy, of all observation, and of all worship in the eternal world!

Note, however, particularly, that the center of the heavenly worship is not God in the act of creation, but *God upon the throne*. Divine sovereignty is the very center of heaven! John saw God on the throne. Here, below, if we speak upon divine sovereignty too plainly, we have to encounter the objections of many who pronounce it a hard saying and ask "Who can bear it?" That the potter shall have power over the clay to do as He wills with each lump, that He should have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and do as He wills with His own, grates harshly on their ears! I know it is because hearts are hard upon earth, for in that place where every heart is right with God, they are all too glad to let Him sway the scepter. This is the very crown of their song—"The Lord God omnipotent reigns." His will is their supreme delight. They understand that His will, despotic as it may seem, and unquestioned by any creature, is a will of mercy, of tenderness, of wisdom, of holiness, and of truth! Therefore, they pay their adorations to Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is a peculiar subject of their joy—that God has a throne, that He sits upon it and that He rules over all things, and all things do His bidding. The central thought of heaven, then, is divine sovereignty.

You will remark that we are told *there was also the Lamb upon the throne*—as if to teach us that even in heaven, the glory of the reigning God, working all things according to the counsels of His will, were a sight all too bright even for those pure spirits, unless they saw side by side with Him the substitute, the Lamb of God! They see Jesus still under the form of a Sin-bearer, Jesus represented by the symbolic emblem of a Lamb, a Lamb that had been slain, Jesus the sufferer, Jesus the crucified, Jesus who once died for sin and has forever put it away by His blood. Oh, my brothers and sisters, how I love these two doctrines as I see them side by side—God, a sovereign, makes me tremble—Christ, the Lamb, makes me rejoice with trembling! God, a sovereign, overawes me! I take off my shoes, like Moses at the burning bush, but the Lamb has a voice that bids me draw near and have fellowship even with the God who is a consuming fire!

Oh, how much this ought to be the object of our thoughts on earth, seeing that it is the main object of their thoughts in heaven! We have often heard statements made by persons of what they mean to do in heaven. I read in a biography the other day of one who had not told another person certain feelings of his, as he meant to tell them in the other world. Believe me, we shall have something better to do than discourse of trifles in that upper sphere! We may even dismiss that stanza of Dr. Watts—

"And with transporting joy, recount
The labors of our feet."

It is but a poetic fiction! What are "the labors of our feet" that they should engross our attention? The reigning God will absorb our thoughts! How we can serve Him, the supreme, will occupy our minds! The Lamb who once upon the cross was slain, but now upon His throne does reign—how we can make the universe resound with His praises, how we can fly at His bidding, if He wills, from world to world, and proclaim the matchless story of His love! How we may be able to make known to angels, principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God—this, it seems to me, will engross our attention far more than any of the trifling circumstances of time, or any of the occurrences that were connected with our pilgrimage here below! Oh, dear brothers and sisters, let us, while we are sojourning on earth, keep God upon the throne uppermost in our hearts and so school ourselves in heavenly contemplation. Let us keep Christ uppermost with us in our meditations, in our conversations and in our actions. Let us be God's men! Let us be Christ's men! God upon the throne, Christ the Lamb upon the throne—let this be our central attraction. Let us count it to be our pleasure to live here, as it will be our superlative pleasure to live forever hereafter, as worshipers who do homage before the throne of God and the Lamb! We have seen the divine center, now, let us carefully mark—

II. THE DIVINE CIRCLE—the living throng that surrounded the throne of God.

They are mentioned as "a multitude that no man can number." This leads me to remark—although I cannot find words to fitly express the thought—that I will call it *the sociality of God*. He was God over all, blessed forever, self-existent, independent, needing no creature to assist Him, or to add to His glory or His happiness. But He chose to create worlds—how many we can never guess. The revelations of astronomy seem to tell us that He made them as lavishly as men might cast seed when they sow it broadcast over many acres. There they glitter in the expanse of space, and for all we know, every one of them filled with happy beings! We cannot tell. But God would not be alone. He willed not to be alone. He delighted in the habitable parts of the worlds that He chose to make. If you confine your view but to this world, you may discern that He would not be alone. He made this planet. He fitted it up to be the abode of living creatures. The divine being has been pleased to create all sorts and forms of beauty and of life—from the tiny animalcule that finds an ocean in a drop of water, up to the leviathan that makes the very deep to boil like a pot and causes the waves thereof to be hoary with his mighty lashings. God was pleased to make the eagle to fly aloft in the heavens and the fish to cut the deep. All these creatures He has fed for many generations. Upon all these He looks with interest and compassion. He hears the young ravens when they cry. What a boundless creation! If every separate world that He has made has such an amazing catalog of life, what multitudes of creatures now cluster round about the great eternal One! He dwelt alone, but He chose not to be alone. And now He has built His house and filled His mighty chambers with many mansions into which He has been pleased to put a thousand forms of life. And then He said within Himself, "I will make a creature different from all the rest I have made as yet—it shall be a spirit that can converse with me—intelligent, immortal." And He created those first-born sons of light. I know not how many they may be, but our covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit formed servants suitable for the higher will and loftier behests in the cherubim and seraphim whom He made to be like flames of fire and who cheerfully flash to do His bidding. And then, last of all, He said—and here, the divine unity comes into counsel with itself—"Let Us make man after Our own image," and He made a strange creature, matchless and altogether unique—part of which was taken from the ground and kindred with the soil, which might die if it sinned, but another part of which was immaterial, fitted to tenant any of the spheres in the great universe and should exist forever—a spirit made in the image of God! So He made us and at this day, despite sin which seemed to rob God of all His newborn servants and sons, whom He had created in the loins of Adam, He has a multitude that no man can number, who are nearer to Him than even angels are, associates and friends with Christ, His Son, brought into union with Christ, married to

Him. Is it not a marvelous subject if one could dive into it, this social character of the divine being, that He willed not to be alone, that He still continues to constantly surround Himself with ten thousand times ten thousand spirits whom He ordains to bless? Oh, that I might be among them! Does not each one of you say so? Oh, that I might tread the courts of His house! To be but a hired servant within His gates might well content me, but oh, if I might be His son and as His child, might draw near to Him!—how would I bless that glorious being from whom I sprang and into whose bosom I would leap back again—the source of my life, the sum total of my bliss, my God, my all! Think that thought over another time. I leave it with you.

Another thought rises out of the text. If there shall be in heaven a multitude surpassing all human arithmetic, out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, *how certain the gospel is to achieve yet a great success*. We are always fretting. We are in a great hurry for results. We are impatient of the issue, for we cannot see how the kingdom of God will come and gladly would we want to hasten the wheels of our Lord's chariot. Well, but our fears may be put aside and our disquietude may be allayed when we remember that as surely as Jehovah lives, Christ *must* see of the travail of His soul—and He shall see of it in the ultimate salvation of a number out of all nations that are beyond all human count! Patience, my brothers and sisters, patience, but diligence! Let us work at the same time that we wait. Let us serve, for the cause is in good hands. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the hands of Christ! He shall not have died in vain! He shall not lose the purchase of His blood! A countless multitude must be saved! As surely as He bought them, so surely will He wash them in the blood which He shed on their behalf! Perhaps the day of the Church's great growth will come when she returns to something like her primitive mode of warfare. Those who first went out to convert the world were but a handful of men—one room contained them all—yet within a few years there was not a nation upon earth that had not heard the gospel! Even to the remotest isles the truth of Jesus had been carried, and who were the men who carried it? Brothers, they were men who never framed a syllogism—men who never embellished a sermon with rhetorical art! For the most part, they were men who spoke only the language of the common people—spoke it, I doubt not, earnestly, but certainly not according to the lordly rhetoric of the schools. They were not men who strove to be intellectual. They were not deep thinkers. They were not profoundly learned. They were men who knew but this one thing—that a Savior had come into the world and that they were intent to tell men about Him! They spoke of this and of this only in burning words with tender feelings and fervent appeals to the conscience. But now-a-days, indeed, we are told that the world is to be converted by logic! That it is to be *reasoned* out of its sins! That it is to be enlightened by the tapers of human intellect until the darkness of hell

shall be scattered! Believe me, we are on the wrong tack if we think this! It is not so! "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts," and the Spirit works with the simple gospel, and only with the simple gospel! When we get back to this conviction and return to this practice, we shall begin to see the countless multitudes flocking first to the Church on earth and afterwards to the Church above. I will ask you, my brothers and sisters here who have been converted, how were you saved? How were you converted? Was it by learning? Was it by the flash of some glorious speech of some mighty master of rhetoric? I confess that if I were converted to God—and I trust I was—it was through the ministration of a very simple, humble, uneducated man. I believe the confession of the most of God's children will be such as gives the glory to the gospel, and not to the preacher's skill, art or intellect. If you have received comfort, and if you have received light, these things have come to you by the means of one who could not claim the glory, for he was but an earthen vessel—the excellence of the power was conspicuously of God and not of him! Oh, Spirit of God, bring back Your Church to a belief in the gospel! Bring back her ministers to preach it once again with the Holy Spirit, and not striving after wit and learning. Then shall we see Your arm made bare, O God, in the eyes of all the people, and the myriads shall be brought to rally round the throne of God and the Lamb! The gospel must succeed! It shall succeed! It cannot be prevented from succeeding—a multitude that no man can number must be saved!

Kindly allow me to continue on the same point the divine circle in heaven. Notice the *variety*. "Out of every nation and tribe, and people, and tongue." How did John know that? I suppose as he looked at them, he could tell where they come from. There is individuality in heaven, depend upon it! Every seed will have its own body. There will sit down in heaven not three unknown patriarchs, but Abraham—you will know him! Isaac—you will know him! And Jacob—you will know him! There will be in heaven not a company of persons, all struck off alike so that you cannot tell who is who, but they will be out of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue. I say not that they will speak the language they spoke on earth, but I do say that there will be certain idiosyncrasies and peculiar marks about them that will permit the onlooker to know, as John knew, that they are not all of one nation, but of all nations, tribes, people and tongues. I like this. The very charm of nature is its variety. If all flowers were alike, where were the glorious crown of summer? And if all bodies in the resurrection world, or even all spirits in the disembodied state could all be precisely one like another, the very beauty of heaven would be extinct in a degree. No, there they are from different tribes, nations, peoples and tongues—and this betokens individuality and gives us hope that we shall know each other in heaven even as we are known!

Yet a *unity* about them, for they all wore white robes, and they all carried palms, and they all sang the same song. There are twelve gates to the New Jerusalem, but they all lead to the same city, and there is the

same center. There were twelve foundations, but they were all laid on the one foundation. So they may be many views and notions of truth that we may hold, but they must all be bottomed on Christ Jesus and founded there. And if they are, we shall all meet in the better land. There is a variety in heaven, yet there is a unity of experience, and a unity in the gratitude they feel. May you and I be there to help to increase the variety and to certify the unity of the heavenly throng! And now for a few words of running comment on the description given of—

III. THE SACRED COMPANY, THEMSELVES, which will supply us with a third point.

They "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." That *they stood* is not meant to teach us that they do not sit or rest in heaven, for they always rest in heaven. But they stand—that is to say—they are confirmed, they are established, they are secure. Their feet shall never slide. They stand in no slippery places. They stand before the throne of God! It is the posture of action—they stand like soldiers ready for the march—like servants who but need to have it said to them, "Go," and they go. Oh, that we could on earth realize this posture of heaven! The Lord hold us up that we may stand—may our feet never slide—and oh, that we might stand with loins girt ready for whatever He shall bid us do! Alas, we need often to shake ourselves, for we lie upon the bed of sloth and we are given to slumber. If we would be like those are who see His face, we should always stand and watch, that whatever the Master says to us, we would be ready to obey.

That they stood "*before the throne*" shows that they are in the immediate presence of God. They are not excluded from His presence, they are not at a distance, but they behold His glory to peculiar advantage and He is near to them in a remarkably gracious and glorious manner. They stand before the throne of God. Yes, and this is the charm of heaven, to dwell in the presence of God! You have tasted, then, something of what heaven means, my dear brothers and sisters. Sometimes you have been near to Christ and in full fellowship with Him you have sipped of the golden cup from which you shall drink forever! You have tasted of immortal fruit that shall furnish your everlasting food. This is heaven—forever to behold His face, forever to stand like a courtier in the very court, itself, like a favorite before the throne—not in the outer courts—not in the court of the Gentiles, but inside the veil, before the throne, within the glorious mystery, the *sanctum sanctorum*, in the holy of holies, right where God, Himself, is! There shall we stand forever and forever!

That they were "*clothed with white robes*" is not a little significant. Nakedness was revealed to man by sin. Before the time when he sinned, he was naked and not ashamed. But then he strove to make himself a dress and the fig leaf was the result. But Christ has come in and clothed

us—clothed us completely. The robes spoken of here seem to have covered them from head to foot. They were "clothed with white robes"—not partly clad, but altogether clad in them. Oh, how comely that righteousness of Christ which He has worked for us, and worked in us wherewith we shall be clothed when we stand before the eternal throne of God! Brothers and sisters, rejoice to put it on tonight! Rejoice to feel that His blood and righteousness, even now—

"Your beauty are your glorious dress."

Anticipate the time when you shall be admired of men and of angels, attired in that complete garment. These robes are said to be "white robes"—white to indicate purity—and "they are without fault before the throne of God." White—as distinctive of their priestly order, "for they are kings and priests unto God forever and ever." *White*—as an emblem of triumph, for now they are victors over every foe.

But why and how came those robes to be white? Their robes are white because His robes were red—*His* robes I say. Oh, how the angels gazed with astonishment, and asked with eagerness, as they saw Him come back from Calvary, "Why are Your garments red? Why are You red in Your apparel as one that has trodden the winepress?" And He answered, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." Because the Savior bled and dyed His garments with His own blood for us, therefore, filthy as the saints' garments once were, they are now robed in pure immaculate white, whiter than any fuller could make them, glistening like the sun!

Oh, the joy of being there! May it soon come to us! It will! It may come now, while yet we are talking here—

"Soon may the hand be stretched
And dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain."

But if it were so, then sudden death would be sudden glory! Are you sure, each one of you, that it would be so? Would your departure out of this life be your entrance into the eternal life? Would the shutting of these poor eyes be the opening of nobler optics upon a brighter scene? Believer, it would be so with you! Then why are you afraid to die? No, rather, be willing at any time to gather up your feet into the bed and die—your father's God to meet—where the white-robed company see His face!

To complete the description, we will only remark that *the palms in their hands* may refer to their observing that great feast of the Lord, the feast of tabernacles, when the harvest of the earth is complete, when the sabbathism that remains to the people of God is attained and the pleasures which are at God's right hand forevermore are realized—for so of old it was ordained, as we read in Leviticus—that at this festival the Israelites should take palm branches in their hands and rejoice before the Lord their God. This seems to have been the acme of felicity in their sacred year.

I wish I had the power to describe this glorious circle—those bright ones before the throne, that you could see them! I think, as I look upon them, that I can see even now the apostolic band. I mark the goodly fellowship of the prophets. I think I see the martyrs with their ruby crowns. Do not I see the ministers and confessors of Christ, some of my own kith and kin that have gone before me—the Covenanters who bled in Scotland, and the heroes of Smithfield? There they stand, and listen!—how they sing! None shall excel them in their song of praise. You have a mother there, perhaps—a sister, or a brother, or your grandfather who, years ago "went over to the majority" to sing among that countless multitude. Oh, if I could but have a vision of all that will be there within the next hundred years, would I see myself, and would I see all this company there? Oh, if it were possible, I would gladly translate you all to heaven at once—from the tabernacle to the temple, from this place where we sing His praises at His footstool to the place where we will sing them to His face more sweetly and more loudly by far! Not one of you, oh, not one of you would we have absent! Though, friend, you may be out of sight, and almost out of hearing, one who has just managed to crowd in among the multitude that throng this house—oh, may you with all the rest of us have a place among His chosen—and may none of you find your name left out when He, for them, shall call! Are you believing in Jesus? If so, you should be there! Are you an unbeliever? If you die as you are, you must be driven from His presence—you must be destroyed from the glory of His power—all the joy and bliss that make up life must be crushed out of you and you must live banished from Him forever! And now to close. It seems that—

IV. THIS GOODLY COMPANY WHO SURROUNDED THE CENTRAL THRONE OF GOD WERE ENGAGED IN SONG.

They "cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our GOD which sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb." I was reading the other day a book containing the life of a very excellent Primitive Methodist minister, and I was greatly amused to find in his diary an allusion to myself. He says, "Went to Stroud to hear Mr. Spurgeon. He is a rank Calvinist, but a good man." I was pleased to find that I was a good man, and I was equally pleased to find that I was a rank Calvinist! And when I came to review the book I was obliged to say that our brother was quite correct about my being a rank Calvinist, and we believed that he was one, too, now that he has gone to heaven! They are all Calvinists there! Every soul of them! They may have been Armenians on earth—thousands and millions of them were—but they are not after they get there, for here is their song, "Salvation unto our God which sits upon the throne." That is all my Calvinism. I am sure that is what Calvin preached, what Augustine preached, what Paul preached, what Christ would have us preach! And this is what they sing in heaven—"Salvation unto our God which sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb." They sing in heaven that it was

God that planned salvation, 'twas God that ordained *them* to salvation, 'twas God that gave them salvation, 'twas the Lamb that brought them salvation, 'twas all of God that that salvation was carried on, and all of God that their salvation was ever perfected! They do not, one of them, say, "Stop, now! Salvation unto our God, yes, but still, free will had a hand in it." Oh, no, no, no! There never was a soul in heaven that ever thought that! They all feel, when they get there, that although God never violated their free wills, yet He made them willing in the day of His power, and that it was His free grace that brought them to come and love the Savior! I am sure, if the verse were given out in heaven, that we sometimes sing at communion, they would sing it there—

"'Twas all of Your grace we were made to obey,
While others were suffered to go
The road which by nature we chose as our way,
And which leads to the chambers of woe."

And I think they would sing that other verse that we sing at the Lord's table—

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That kindly forced me in,
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

This is how they sing in heaven, then. It is salvation—salvation all of grace! Salvation of which the glory, from first to last, must all be given to God, and to God alone. They exclude themselves! They give no boasting to themselves. They do not say, "Salvation unto our better nature; salvation to our choicer grace." No, no! But all unto the Lord, all unto the Lord from first to last! Well, brothers and sisters, some of us will not have to change our note much when we get there, for that has been the burden of our song here! It has been the theme of our ministry from our youth up, "Salvation is of the Lord." We have learned it somewhere in the same college as that in which Jonah learned that old Calvinistic theology. He had to go into the whale's belly to learn it, and when he came out, he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." And we, too, in sharp afflictions, pains, and griefs have had to learn it and have it burned into us! And we never believed it more thoroughly in our lives than we do now, that if a sinner is saved, it is God's work that saves him—and God must have all the glory of it.

I pray the Lord to convince any poor needy soul that there is salvation in Him—and enable that poor soul now to come and take it—take it by a simple act of faith. You have not got to save yourselves. Christ has saved you. You have but to trust Him and you are saved. There is nothing for you to do—nothing for you to be, but simply to be nothing—and to let Christ be all-in-all to you, to look and live, for—

"There's life in a look at the Crucified One."

God grant that you may look, and so be among the countless throng who shall sing His praises forever and ever! Amen.

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.* A perfect calm there must be till God's people are saved. Not a leaf shall stir to do them damage. Not a dash of foam upon the waters—no movement of wind, or sea, or tree.

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.* Everything exists for the servants of God! Creation is but a scaffold for the Church—and when God's Church is finished, then all may be taken down—but not till then.

4, 5. *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousands of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.* The order is not that of nature, but of grace, otherwise Reuben would have come first. And the election of God is not according to birth or blood, but according to His sovereign will. Judah, then Reuben.

5-8. *Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh 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.* And of the last and least tribe, still the same.

8. *Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.* I think many believers belong to the tribe of Benjamin—doubting fearing, little in faith and confidence—but Benjamin still has his men.

9. *After this I beheld*—The Gentile church.

9. *And, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and people, and tongues.* It will do some people good to see that sight, for they fancy that all the saints go to their place of worship! There are no good people anywhere except those that think exactly as they do. So they seem to fancy. Oh, that their eyes were opened a little, for I am afraid that some Christians are very much like the mouse that had always lived in a box and on some grand occasion climbed up to the edge of the box. He looked over and saw the vast area

of the cupboard, and said, "I had no idea the world was as big as that!" And yet it had never been outside the cupboard even then. Oh, for eyes that could see a sight like this! "After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number" (we can count pretty high, too) "of all nations, and tribes, and people, and tongues."

9. *Stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes.* Perfectly pure—perfectly happy—arrayed like priests and conquerors, for they had "palms in their hands."

9-11. *And palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne.* In the outer ring and about the elders that represent the Church, who stand in the inner ring, nearest to Christ and nearest akin to the Son of man.

11, 12. *And about the elders and four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.* Grand ascriptions of praise to make the worship perfect, as all worship should be which is presented to God—as all worship will be when we shall once get to heaven.

13. *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, Who are these?* This vast crowd—who are these?

13-17. *Who are arrayed in white robes? And where did they come from? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they who came out of the 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 who sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

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"And they spit upon Him."
Matthew 27:30.

THE night before He had "sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground," that fair visage, which was "fairer than that of any of the sons of men," had been marred by agony and grief without parallel. During that night He had no rest—He was dragged away from one tribunal to another. First, He was brought before a council of priests. Soon after He stood before Pilate and now, after the mockery of a trial, He is given up to the soldiers, that they may mock Him before His execution. 'Tis He—the world's Redeemer, the long expected Messiah—He is led out as a condemned criminal—condemned as a traitor and given up for blasphemy, that He may die the death! Do you see Him? They bring forth an old stool—they call that a throne—the monarch who sways the scepter of the universe, is placed thereon! They thrust into His hand a reed to mock that golden scepter, the touch of which has so often given mercy to rebels! And now they play the worshipper before Him. But what is their worship? It consists of ribaldry and jeer. Having made sport of His kingship, they turn to ridicule His character as a prophet. They blindfold Him and strike Him in the face, some on one cheek, and some on the other, buffeting Him with the palms of their hands! They pluck His facial hair and then they say, making fools of themselves rather than of Him whom they thought to make a fool of, "Prophesy, who is he that struck You?" "Who is this that just now plucked Your beard?" "Who is it that struck You on the cheek?" Not content with this, they loosen the blindfold and He sees. What a sight is before Him! Faces in every conceivable shape mocking Him—thrusting out the tongue or screwing it into the cheek, calling Him all the names that their low-lived dictionary could summon up, not content with heaping common scorn upon Him, but counting Him to be the very offscouring of all things. Names with which they would not degrade a dog, they use to defile Him! Then, to consummate all, they spit into His face. Those eyes, which make heaven glad, and cause the angels to rejoice, are covered with the spit of these rascal soldiers. Down His cheek it trickles. That awful brow, the nod or shake of which reveals the everlasting decrees of God, is stained with spit from the mouths of wretches whom His own hands had made, whom He could have dashed into eternal destruction had He willed!

When I muse on this, my soul is filled with sorrow. The very idea that Jesus Christ could ever have been spit upon by one in human shape appalls me! Do you remember *what sort of face it was that these soldiers*

spit into? Shall I read you a description of it? One that loved Him and knew Him well, speaks of Him thus—"My beloved is white. . . His countenance is lovely." (Solomon's Song, 5:10, etc.). It was into this dear face, a coarse brutal soldiery must void their vile spit! O Church of Christ, was ever grief like yours, that your husband should thus be defiled and that, too, for your sake? Was ever love like His that He should suffer these indignities for you? The angels crowd around His throne to catch a glimpse of that fair countenance. When He was born, they came to Bethlehem's manger that they might gaze upon that face while He was yet an infant! And all through His devious path of sorrow, He was "seen of angels." They never turned away their eyes from Him, for never had they seen a visage so enchanting! What must they have thought when gathering round their Lord? Surely they would have gladly stretched their wings to have shielded that dear face! What anger must have filled their holy souls, what grief, if grief can be known by beings like themselves, when they saw these wretches, these inhuman creatures, spitting on perfection! Oh, how they must have grieved when they saw the nasty spit about that mouth which is "most sweet," trickling down from those eyes which are "like the eyes of doves by rivers of waters," staining the cheeks which are "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," and falling on those lips which are "like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." This is a subject upon which I must meditate, even though I cannot preach. I cannot describe it to you unless your soul can now draw near to your buffeted Master, unless the Holy Spirit shall give you a near and dear—an intimate, quiet, soul-satisfying view and vision of Him. I cannot give it to you. As well might I attempt to hold a candle to show you the sun as to hope, by anything that I can say, to touch your passions or move your hearts towards my dear Lord and Master, if the vision of Him does not move you to grieve for sin, and to love Him because He suffered thus for you. All I propose tonight is to offer just a few thoughts on this startling fact in the history of our redemption.

"They spit upon Him." *Let us learn here the deep depravity of the human race.* When I see Adam in the midst of comfort putting forth his hand to take that one fruit which his Master had reserved for Himself, I see, indeed, sin and arrogance, daring assumption and a heinous crime! But I do not see so much of levity and lawlessness, there, as I do in this, that creatures should spit on the Creator! As I look through the annals of human guilt, I see strange stories of man in reckless, defiant rebellion against his divine sovereign. From that first evil hour until now, what strange monsters of guilt has the earth seen! We have heard of rapine and murder, crimes for which new names have been coined to meet the new atrocities which have been committed! Homicide, fratricide, patricide and matricide in which every sanctity of kin has been outraged. We have read of fornication and of adultery, and of lusts worse than bestial. Good God, what is not man capable of? Take but the bit from his mouth and the bridle from his jaws and to what depth of iniquity will he not descend? There is not a filthy dream that Satan ever had in the dark watches of his midnight reverie which man will not embody in act, and

carry out in all its grim and dread reality! Strange are those tales that have come from a far-off land, where the heathen worship in their darkness. They not merely bow down to blocks of wood and stone, but degrade themselves with vices into which we could never have imagined humanity could plunge! O God, my heart is heavy as a stone, and smitten with very grief when I think of what an evil thing man is! Why did You not sweep him from the world? How can You permit a viper so obnoxious to nestle in the bosom of Your providence? *Oh, why do You permit such a den of thieves* to wander abroad such a cage of unclean birds to swing in ether, and to be carried by Your power round the sun? Why do You not blast it, smite its mountains with desolation and fill its valleys with ashes of fire? Why do You not sweep the race of humans clean away and let their very name become a hissing and a scorn? But, my brothers and sisters, bad as man is, I think he never was so bad—or rather, his badness never came out to the full so much—as when gathering all his spite, his pride, his lust, his desperate defiance, his abominable wickedness into one mouthful—he spat into the face of the Son of God, Himself! Oh, this is an act that transcends every other! There are other deeds connected with the crucifixion quite as malignant, but could there be any so vile? Surely we may say of the men that drove the nails into the Savior's hands that they did but that which they were ordered to do. They were soldiers, and because they were commanded by their military superiors, therefore, they did it. But this was a gratuitous act—this was done without command, without any pressure! It was the base wickedness of their hearts. Sin saw perfection in its power, and it must spit on perfection's cheeks! The creature, the erring creature, saw its Creator in the mightiness of His condescension, putting Himself into His creature's power—and the creature spit upon Him to show how much He hated, how much He loathed, despised, abhorred, detested the very thought of Godhead—even when it was Godhead veiled in human flesh and come into the world to redeem!

And now, while you blush with me for human nature, thus foaming out its own reeking depravity, do pray remember that *such is your nature, and such is mine*. Let us not talk of things in the general, but bring them home in particular. Just such a base wretch am I, and such a base wretch are you, my dear hearer, by nature, as were those who thus insulted our Lord. I need not go far for proofs, for if we have not spit into the Savior's face, literally—that dear sorrow-scarred visage—we have, as opportunity offered, been as rude and wanton as they! Do you not remember the poor saint of God who talked to us of the things of the kingdom—and we laughed him out of countenance? Do we not remember that servant of ours who anxiously longed to serve her God, but we threw every obstacle in her way, and never missed an opportunity of venting some jest or sneer upon her? And O, most precious book of God, you legacy of my Redeemer, how often in the days of my unregeneracy have I spit on you and thrust you into a corner, that the novel of the day might have my attention? I have bidden you lie still, that I might read the

newspaper, or something more trivial, and it may be, less innocent, might occupy my mind. O, you ministers of Christ! How have our hearts despised you! And you, you lovely ones, the lowly in heart who follow Christ in the midst of an evil generation, how often have we said hard things of you, mocked your piety, despised your humility, laughed at your prayers, and made jokes at those very expressions which showed the sincerity of your hearts! In all this what have we done? Have we not really spit into the face of Christ? Come, let us weep together! Let us sorrow as those who mourn over a first-born son, whose corpse lies unburied before them. I have spit into my Savior's face, but mercy of mercies, He who stands before you tonight, self-convicted, can also add, "But He has not spit in mine. No, He has kissed me with the kisses of His love," and He has said, "Go your way; your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. I have blotted out your iniquities like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions." Melt, then, you eyes, and stream down these cheeks, you briny tears, when I remember that He, whom I once despised, has not despised me! That He whom I abhorred, has not abhorred me! And though we hid, as it were, our faces from Him, He has not hidden His face from us—but here we are, forgiven sinners—though once we assailed Him with indignity as gross as those who spat into His face!

Having propounded that melancholy fact, I pass on. May God the Holy Spirit impress each of these truths upon our minds while I merely glance at them.

Why was our Master's face full of spit? Sweet thought! Our faces were full of spots, and if the Master would save us, His face must be full of spots, too! He had none of His own—therefore those spots shall be given Him from the lips of scoffers. You know it became Him who saved us, that in everything He should be made like unto us. We were wounded. What then? "He was wounded for our transgressions." We were sick, and He, Himself, "bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows." Since we were worms, He must say, "I am a worm, and no man." And we being sinful, He must bear our sin and be numbered with the transgressors—and led away to die. In all things He must become a true substitute for those whom He came into the world to redeem!

And now, my soul, come here and look at this wondrous spectacle again. The face of your Lord Jesus Christ is filled with spit! Was ever a sight so loathsome and so disgusting as this? But mark, this is your case. Down your cheeks something worse than spit ran—from your eyes there flowed something worse than came from the lips of soldiers—and from your mouth there has gushed forth a stream which is worse than that which came upon the Savior's face. Come, look at this mirror tonight, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for the face of Christ is the mirror of your souls! What He endured mirrors forth what we were by nature. Oh, what spots there were in us! What hellish spots that streams of water could not wash away! What evils of every kind—pride, and anger, and lust, and defiance of God! Spots, did I say? Why, surely the sun has looked upon our faces and we have become black all over as the

tents of Kedar. 'Tis no more with us, now, a matter of spots—by nature we are as the Ethiopian—black, thoroughly black! But, glory be unto His name, His spots have taken away our spots! This spit has made us clean! We are black no longer! By faith we may feel, tonight, that that spit on the Savior's face has washed away the sin from ours. His shame has taken away our sin! That spitting has taken away our guilt. And now what says your Lord of us? You know what sort of face He has. Listen to Him while He describes ours. You would scarcely think that He could mean it, but certainly He does, for He has seen us often and, therefore, He should know. He says of us, O prince's daughter—"Your head (Song 7:5, 6) upon you is like Carmel, and the hair of your head like purple: the king is held in the galleries." And again He says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in *you*." When I first had that text laid home to my soul, well do I remember how it ravished my heart! I could not understand that my Lord and Master should actually look me in the face and say, "Lo, you are fair; there is no spot in you." Oh, it is a grand and noble truth of God! Faith grasps it, love dotes over it, our hearts treasure it! There is no spot left in a believer—

"Covered is my unrighteousness,
From condemnation I am free."

One bath in the precious blood takes away all spots, makes us whiter than the driven snow and we stand before God fairest among the fair, accepted in the beloved! Learn, then, O Church of Christ, this great truth of God—that the spit and the shame of the Savior's face have delivered you from the odious corruption that disfigured you, and you may, therefore, rejoice in His meekness who bore your reproach!

What Christ suffered by way of shame, we must remember, is *a picture of what we would have suffered forever* if He had not become our substitute! Ah, my soul, when you see your Lord mocked, remember that shame and everlasting contempt must otherwise have been forever and ever *your* portion. One of the ingredients of hell will be shame—to be laughed at for our folly, to be called madmen for our sin, to feel that angels despise us, that God scorns us, that the righteous, themselves, abhor us—this will be one of the flames of the pit that shall burn the spirits of men. To have no honor anywhere, not even among their base companions, is a bitter prospect, but there is no rank in hell, no being honored in the pit that yawns for the souls of men. "Shame shall be the promotion of fools, and everlasting contempt shall be their perpetual inheritance." And think, my Soul! This had been your portion, but your Master bore it for you! And now you shall never be ashamed because your master was ashamed for you! You shall not be confounded, neither shall you be put to shame, for He has taken away your reproach and borne it on His own visage! And as for your rebuke, it has entered into His own heart and He has taken it away forever—it shall never be brought to your remembrance.

Think, dear friends, of the honor which awaits the Christian, by-and-by—

"It does not yet appear

How great we must be made,
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

We shall judge the angels! The fallen spirits shall be dragged up from their infernal dens, and we shall sit as assessors with the Son of God, to say, "Amen" to that solemn sentence which shall perpetuate their fiery doom! We shall reign upon this earth a thousand years with Him, and then, clothed in white robes, our joyous spirits in our risen bodies shall enter triumphant into heaven's gates! There we shall be crowned and treated as princes of the blood. There shall angels be our waiting servants and principalities and powers shall assist us in our service of song. Before the mighty throne of blazing light, where God, Himself, reigns, we shall stand, and sing, and bow, and worship—and we, too, shall have our thrones and our kingdoms, and our crowns, and we shall reign forever and ever and ever! Then we shall look back to that face that was covered with spit and we shall say, "We owe all this to that dear disfigured face! All this glory is the result of His shame, because He hid not His face from shame and spitting." Therefore we have "washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Therefore stand we in the full blaze of heaven's own glory and, therefore, we serve Jehovah day and night in His temple! Let this sweet thought, then, dwell on your mind. Christ's shame has taken away your shame! His endurance of the spitting has secured your everlasting honor!

To draw another practical truth of God from this short but thrilling sentence, "They spit upon *Him*." *Blessed Master,* "*if I am like You, they well spit on me*." The less I am like You, the more the world will love me, but if, perhaps, these wayfarers should see something in me that shows I have been with You, they will give me the remnants of that spit which they did not spit into Your face. Oh, my Lord and Master! One prayer I offer, "Give me grace to bear that spit, thankfully to receive it, and to rejoice because I am counted worthy not only to believe on You, but to suffer for Your sake!" There are many of you, I know, who meet the quiz and hear the laughter of your old companions when you forsake them to follow Christ. In the associations you have formed, and in your family connections, you often encounter a treatment which is not pleasant to flesh and blood. Does not the evil one sometimes whisper to you, "Follow not with Christ, for this is a sect everywhere spoken against"? "Leave Him and be honored! Go not with Him, when He goes through Vanity Fair. Oh, do not suffer with Him this trial of cruel mocking." Ah, that is the song of Satan! Stop your ears to it, and listen not for a moment, but listen to this true note from heaven, "Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My name's sake, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." Take joyfully not only the spoiling of your goods, but the spoiling of your character! Sing, as our sweet hymn puts it—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee.
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
You my all from hence shall be."

Go forth outside the camp, bearing the reproach. When at any time your heart sinks within you, I would have you consider Him who "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your mind." If at any time you would hide your face from the shame and spitting, think you see Him enduring it, and then you will thrust out your face and say, "Let me be a sharer with my Master! Treat me like my Lord! If you spit on Him, spit on me! And rather than spit in His face, spit in mine! I will be glad enough if I can but shelter Him. It is my pride to suffer, my boast to be despised for His sake."—

"I nail my glory to His cross,
And pour contempt on all my shame."

Oh, this is a glory which an archangel can never know—the glory of being trampled on by the world for Jesus' sake! The honor of fellowship in suffering with Christ! And it shall be followed by a greater glory, still, when we shall reign with Him above, because we have suffered with Him below.

To conclude, let me draw one more lesson from the fact that "They spit on Him." Christian brothers and sisters, *you that love your Master, praise Him and extol Him.* How the early Church used to talk of its martyrs! After those good men, who were stretched on the rack, had their flesh torn from their bones with red-hot pincers, they were exposed to the gaze of the multitude! Naked and their limbs cut away joint by joint, they were then burned in the fire, but stood calm and dared without a sigh to declare that though they were cut into a thousand pieces, they would never forsake their Lord and Master! How did the Church ring with their praises—every Christian pulpit talked of them, every believer had an anecdote concerning them! And shall not our conversation ring with the honor of this Martyr, this glorious Witness, this Redeemer who thus suffered shame, and spitting and death on the cross for us? Honor Him! Honor Him! Honor Him, you blood-bought ones! Be not content to sing—

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

but bring it out! Make it not a matter of song, but of deed! Bring it out, and put it on His head! You daughters of Jerusalem, go forth to meet King Solomon and crown Him! Crown Him with heart and hands! Take the palm branches of your praises and go forth to meet Him! Spread your garments in the way, and cry, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," leading captivity captive, and scattering gifts for men! Talk of Him in your houses. Laud Him in your conversation! Praise Him in your songs! Waft you awhile your melodies on earth, till you shall lay aside this clay, and enter into heaven, there to give Him the fiery songs of flaming tongues! Then emulate the seraphs, and surround His throne with everlasting hallelujahs, crying, "Unto Him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!" I think I see Him now! He stands before me! I see that very face that once endured the spitting. Oh, you angels! Bring forth the crown! Bring forth the crown and let it be put upon His head this day! I see the piercings, where thorns penetrated His temple. Bring

forth the diadem, I say, and put it on His head! 'Tis done! A shout rises up to heaven, louder than the voice of many waters. And what now? Bring forth another, and another, and another crown, and yet another, and another! And now I see Him. There He stands—and "on His head are many crowns." It is not enough! You redeemed saints, bring forth more! You blood-bought ones, as you stream into heaven's gates, each one of you offer Him a new diadem! And you, my soul, though "less than the least of all saints," and the very chief of sinners, put your crown upon His head! By faith, I do it now. "Unto Him that loved me, and that washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever." From pole to pole let the echoes sound! Yes, let the whole earth, and all that dwell therein, say, "Amen!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:29-59; MARK 14:1-9; JOHN 12:1-7

Christ thus spoke to His adversaries.

Verse 29. *And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone: for I always do those things that please Him.* Brothers and sisters, what Christ could say, I trust many of His servants can also say in a like manner. "He that sent me is with me." What power, what pleasure must the presence of God give to His servants! "The Father has not left me alone." Oh, how blessed to feel that behind us is the sound of our Master's feet and that in us is the temple of His presence! We cannot, however, say as Christ did, "I always do those things that please Him," for, alas, we have the remembrance of sin this morning—and have to confess it in His sight. But let us also remember that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

30, 31. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples, indeed.* It is not a mere profession that makes a man a saint—there must be a continuance of well-doing. We bind lads apprentice for a little time, but no man belongs to Christ unless he belongs to Him forever. There must be an entire giving up of one's self, in life and unto death, to the Lord's cause.

32-34. *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: why do You say, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* There is this in the original, "Whoever makes sin." It is not exactly, "Whoever commits it," because if so, all would be the servants of sin and God would have no sons at all! But it says in the original "Whoever makes sin," that is, whoever makes it his choice, and makes it the delight of his soul—whoever does this is the servant of sin and is no son of God.

35. *And the servant abides not in the house forever, but a son abides forever.* He may be in the house and have slender privileges for a time, but these soon go away.

36. *If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.* And give you the privileges of sons!

37, 38. *I know that you are Abraham's seed, but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.* Men always act according to their natures. We shall find the polluted fountain sending forth filthy streams. We do not expect to hear sweet singing from a serpent, nor, on the other hand, do we expect hissing from the bird, but every creature is after its own kind. Christ, coming from the Father, reveals God! Ungodly men, coming from the devil, reveal the devil.

39-42. *They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him. We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.* You should see in Me a brother. You should perceive in Me the attributes of God and, being made like unto God as His sons, you would love the Godhead in Me.

43-44. *Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.* Christ does not speak very gentle words at all times. A deeply-rooted disease needs a sharp medicine—and He gives it. He uses the knife, sometimes, and if there is a deadly ulcer that must be cut away, He knows how to do it with all the sternness of which His loving heart is capable.

44. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there was no truth in him.* The first murder was committed by his suggestion. Cain was guilty of it, but Satan instigated it. He has always been a man-killer and so Christ says that inasmuch as they sought to kill Him, they were worthy sons of their parent. "There is no truth in him."

44. *When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own.* It is his own idiom. You may always know him by it.

44. *For he is a liar, and the father of it.* The father of all liars and of all lies!

45-46. *And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me?* Oh, matchless argument! Now were they silent, indeed! His whole life was before them. He had not lived in secret and yet He could appeal to his whole life—from the first day even to this time—and say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" It is this that weakens our testimony for God—that we are so imperfect and full of sin. Let us seek to imitate the Master, for the more clean we are from these imperfections, the more shall we be able to shut the mouths of our adversaries.

47, 48. *He that is of God, hears God's words. You, therefore, hear them not, because you are not of God. Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil?* Always abuse your adversary if you cannot answer him—this is always the devil's tactic! When he cannot overthrow religion, then he seeks to append shameful titles to those who profess it. It is an old and stale trick and has lost much of its force. Our Savior did not answer the accusation of His being a Samaritan, but inasmuch as what they said about His having a devil, would touch His doctrine—He answered that.

49-51. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil, but I honor My Father and you do dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you. If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never see death.* The sting of it shall be taken away—he may fall asleep—he will do so, but he shall not see death.

52-56. *Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil! Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and You say, If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father, Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets who are dead? Whom do You make Yourself to be? Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father who honors Me; of whom you say that He is your God: yet you have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like you: but I know Him and keep His saying. Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.* There is a great force in the original language here, "He was glad." There was an excessive joy which holy men had in looking forward to the coming of Christ. I do not think that we give ourselves enough room for joy in our religion. There are some persons who think it the right thing to restrain their emotions. They have no bursting forth of joy and seldom a shout of sacred song. But oh, my brothers and sisters, if there is anything that deserves the flashing eyes and the leaping feet, and the bounding heart, it is the great truth of God that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, even the chief! Let us be glad as often as we make mention of His name.

7. *Then said the Jews unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?* Why, He was hardly thirty, but sorrow had made him appear older.

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am.* Here He claims His Deity to the fullest extent! And those who can read the New Testament and profess to believe it—and yet not see Christ as a claimant of Deity—must be sinfully blind!

59. *Then they took up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.* This is always the sinner's argument against the right! First, hard words, and then stones!

MARK 14.

Verses 1-3. *After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. But they said, Not on the*

feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper. A well-known person. There were plenty of Simons and so they had to put another name to distinguish him. You remember Simon the Pharisee, in whose house Christ was anointed by a woman who washed His feet with tears. This is another Simon. Not Simon the Pharisee, but Simon the leper. A healed man, no doubt, or he could not have entertained guests. There can be no question by whom he was healed, for there was nobody else that could heal leprosy except our divine Lord. "And being at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper."

3. *As He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she broke the box and poured it on His head.* It does not need any "it," "poured on His head." The liquid nard flowed over His locks and, as it was with Aaron, it went, doubtless, down His beard to the utmost skirts of His garments.

4. *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?* Matthew says that they were disciples. Shame on them! The ointment was put to its proper use. It was more wasted when it was in the box than when it was out of it, for it was doing nothing inside the alabaster box! But when it came out, it was answering its purpose. It was perfuming all round about. "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" When lives are lost in Christ's honor, or strength is spent in His service, there is no waste. It is what life and strength are made for—that they may be spent for Him.

5, 6. *For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her, And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble her? She has worked a good work on Me.* Or *"in Me."*

7. *For you have the poor with you always.* If you help them one day, they are poor and they need helping the next. Or if you help them and leave them, leaving them because they go home to God, there are other poor people sure to come, for they will never cease out of the land. "You have the poor with you always."

7. *And whenever you will, you may do them good. But Me you have not always.* "You can only do this for Me during the few days that I shall be with you. Within a week I shall be crucified. Forty more days I shall be gone from you. Me you have not always."

8, 9. *She has done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also what she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.* And it is so to this day! Christ's gospel is preached, tonight, and this woman's love will be remembered. John also speaks of this in his 12th chapter.

JOHN 12.

Verses 1, 2. *Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper.* It was in the house of Simon

the leper, a near acquaintance, perhaps, a relative of this beloved family, for we find that Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. The two families had joined for this festival, and well they might, for in one case, someone had been healed of leprosy, and in the other case Lazarus had been raised from the dead! It was a holy, happy feast.

2, 3. *And Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus.* The other evangelist said, "anointed His head." And they are both right. She anointed His head and His feet.

3. *And wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.* Everybody perceived and enjoyed it—and understood what costly ointment it must be which loads the air with so delicate a perfume.

4. *Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which would betray Him.* I wonder whether he was son of that Simon the leper, and whether a spiritual leprosy did cling to him! That, we know, was the case.

5, 6. *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag, and took what was put therein.* Observe that the sharpest critics of the works of good men are very often no better than they should be. This Judas is indignant with what Mary does, and claims that he cares for the poor, but all the while he is a thief! Whenever a man is very quick condemning gracious men and women, you may be quite as quick in condemning him. He is usually a Judas.

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CONFESSION OF CHRIST
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"Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven."
Matthew 10:32, 33.

INCESSANTLY do we preach, and do you hear, that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, that whoever trusts in Him shall be saved. This is the great and master-duty—the believing, the trusting. It is here that salvation hinges and hangs—"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." We conceive that it is never possible to preach that truth of God too often—that this ought to be in some sense the burden of every sermon—that it is the message, above all others, which every minister of Christ is sent to deliver! There is salvation in Him and in no other. We are to insist upon it perpetually and constantly, and never are we to forget it, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief, and that, by Him, everyone that believes is justified from those things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

But, brothers and sisters, there are other matters beside faith. And while believing in Christ is the great and the main thing, yet it would be unprofitable for you—it would be unfaithful on our part—if we were to neglect other commands of Christ which come after this foundation, faith, and have a very close relation to it. Now, I am persuaded that there are in this professing Christian England, hundreds and thousands of persons who have some kind of faith in Christ, and I trust, also, a sincere one, who, nevertheless, pass over in silence the plain command of Christ about professing Him before men. And there may be some, even in this congregation gathered here, who, having given Jesus Christ their hearts, have been slow to think of the next thing which He requires, and will, perhaps, feel as though I break their quiet all too roughly when I shall try to press upon them that they go a step further and, having believed with the heart, will remember that the promise is, "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth confesses, shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The outward confession is as much commanded as the inward believing—the one the natural fruit and expression of the other.

We shall, therefore, first of all, consider *what is the duty taught here.* And secondly, *why it is a duty*. And then, thirdly, *what are the sanctions of reward and penalty appended to the performance or neglect of this duty*?

I. WHAT IS THE DUTY HERE MENTIONED?

"Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess." Observe the word. It is not "profess." It means that, but it means more. It is "confess." I take it a difference worthy of observation. To "profess" Christ may be work which anyone would do, especially in soft and silken times, when a profession may even be remunerative, when it may even add respectability to a man's character and make his path smooth! But the "confession" has this difference in it—it is a kind of thing that comes out when a sort of accusation is brought. A man professes Christ before his brethren because they will all be pleased with him for it. Another man in the midst of enemies, who will revile and persecute him, pleads guilty to the blessed impeachment of being a Christian. He confesses that what they count a crime, he counts it a virtue—while they have him brought up, as it were, before their judgment seat. The crime alleged is that this man is a follower of Christ and, therefore, to be scoffed at, to be badgered and otherwise maltreated! The man says, "I am guilty, if it is guilt. I am thus vile, and rejoice in it—and I hope to be viler in it! I confess Christ, that He is mine and I am His." I think that is an obvious difference between profession and confession—there may be other differences, but we shall not be detained with them now. This seems to me to be clear beyond dispute. To "profess" Christ is but an easy thing. To "confess" Him implies that the circumstances make that confession a deed of courage, exposing the confessing soul to peril and penalty. But he gladly accepts the suffering or the shame, and confesses that what may seem to be a foolish thing to others, is a wise thing to him. He confesses Christ.

I will also remark that in the Greek it is, "Whoever confesses *in* Me before men," by which is meant that *he makes a confession of being in with Christ*. He holds Christ's doctrines—desires to imbibe Christ's Spirit, to follow Christ's example. He does in effect say, "There are two sides, sirs. You ask me which I take—I confess that I am in with Christ for the battle of life. I am His servant, His soldier, I will follow His banner and, come what may of it, I throw down the gauge of battle to all His adversaries. I confess in Christ. You may confess in the world, you may confess your love for pleasure, for wealth, for sin, but I will make my confession in Christ." That is, without doubt, the meaning of these words. It is not the profession by taking up the name of Christian—it is the confession, under dangerous circumstances, of the whole of Christ's teaching and kingdom—and taking all the consequences thereof.

Now, when ought a man to do this? It is a duty. When and how ought he to do it? I answer that *as soon as ever a soul has believed in Christ, its next duty is to confess in Christ*. It ought never to be delayed. And where it has been, the delay ought to be made up by a speedy obedience. If you

ask me what is the first confession a man ought to make, I shall reply that according to Scripture, it is *by baptism*. As soon as ever the Philippian jailor had believed, Paul took him, the same hour of the night, and baptized him—baptized him into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! When Philip met the eunuch and had explained to him the Scriptures and so discipled him, the very next thing the eunuch said was, "See, here is water—what does hinder me to be baptized?" Everywhere throughout Scripture we read sentences like this, "They that gladly received His Word were baptized." And from the days of John, the precursor of Christ, to the conclusion of the history of the apostle, we continually find that to all believers the command was given, "Rise, and be baptized." It is the confession of Christ. Peter says that baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." It is a conscience enlightened and instructed, saying in outward symbol to God, "I desire to be buried with Christ and to rise with Christ—henceforth to be a dead man to my old self and my old sin, and being, now a new creature, wholly Christ's, to live alone for Him." Oh, how men have marred this most instructive ordinance! How they first of all put away the very ordinance, itself, in reducing it to drops of water which never could set forth as in parable or picture, a burial! How they then took away the proper subjects of it, and substituted unconscious infants for the intelligent believer in Christ, who comes forth and says, "Thus I follow Christ, who in the waters of Jordan went down and commenced His glorious Kingdom upon the earth by Himself fulfilling righteousness by His baptism there!"

I charge you, my brothers and sisters, search the Scriptures! I am preaching to you only what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. We are no inventors of this doctrine—the grand old classic of God's inspired New Testament is our warrant! And if men would cast away all mere ecclesiastical, habit, and once more bring everything to the test of the Bible, and the Bible, alone, I think they would see that the Scripture baptism is an ordinance for believers, wherein and whereby they confess Christ to be Savior, and Lord and King! And they devote themselves, their powers and influence, as well as possessions, to His service. I ask none of you to accept this merely because it is my teaching, but because it is according to the old book and, if so, accept it and obey it as Christ's law! But the next thing every believer ought to do is this—we read in the Epistle to the Corinthians, thus they gave—"They gave themselves first to the Lord and afterwards to us by the will of God." It is the duty, then, of the believer in Christ to confess his Master by giving himself up to some Christian church. Let him find out under whose ministry he will be best edified, in whose membership he can most sweetly find rest. Let him not be ashamed to go to that church and say, "Receive me, I am a brother in Christ." Let him not blush. Let our sisters never blush to acknowledge that they have trusted in the crucified, that they are His servants, that

they desire now and henceforth to dwell with His people, and to be numbered with His disciples! Some of you, I am sure, are doing very wrong and losing much benefit to your own souls, by not casting in your lot with the people of God. "When these were met together," we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "they went to their own company." Birds of a feather flock together, and if you are a bird of paradise, seek out others and say, "I cast in my lot with you—where you dwell, I will dwell, where you worship, I will worship—your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God." Let me but be numbered with them, and I would rather be a doorkeeper in their assemblies than dwell in the tents of wickedness!

There are two forms of confession in Christ, but after them, and yet at the same time, also, it behooves every Christian to make a *confession in his family*. I shall not say that you are ostentatiously to stand up and declare yourself a Christian in so many words. But I shall say that according to your position, you are to make it sufficiently known that you are a follower of Jesus. The servant in a family may have a very different way of rightly confessing Christ from that of her master. And for the child, the same method might not be suitable which ought to be adopted by the parent. To my mind, the father ought to say, "My children, our household has been ill-ordered aforetime. There has been no prayer, no gathering as a family round the home altar. But God has looked upon me in mercy and now, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. My prayer shall be for you all, that you shall he saved." And I can imagine as the good man bowed his knee that morning, a change would pass over the whole constitution of his family. They would all ask one another, "What has happened to our father? What is this strange thing?" And it may be that, as it was with the jailor at Philippi, so it would be with the whole house—"He himself believed in God, rejoicing with all his house."

But it shall be made somehow. It must be a distinct declaration made in some form or other by the Christian, that he is no longer what he was, but called out from the rest to be a follower of Jesus, "separated," as Paul puts it, "separated unto the gospel of Christ."

This confession, next, should *be seen in the whole of a man's affairs*. He is not to ticket his goods, or advertise his conversion in his shop window. But from that moment, if there has been anything of trickery, if there has been anything of foul sailing, if there has been anything in him that was according to the customs of the trade, but not according to the laws of Christ, his immediately ceasing from all that without ostentation or Phariseeism is to be his confession of Christ! Others may continue to do the same and the customs of the trade may permit it. But as for him, he cannot touch the unclean thing. If he still continues to follow out the same customs and maxims, or if, out of business, he finds his pleasure and amusements in the same places as before. Or if, in any way, he remains exactly the same man as he was aforetime as to sin and wrong, then surely he has denied Christ and let him be baptized as he may, and

join the church as he will, he is nothing but a pretender and impostor, for the life does not agree with the confession that he is Christ's! "If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, and lo, *all* things have become new!"

There is no true confession where there is not a changed spirit and a transformed life, or rather the confession is such as shall suffice to condemn the man out of his own mouth and send him out from God's presence a revealed pretender!

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you members of this church, I ask you to put it to your consciences! Do you confess Christ in your business? You working men, do you confess my Lord and Master by fleeing those vicious and evil habits that are so common among your class? Are you no longer the lover of the lewd song? Do you no longer laugh over the indecent story, or the one that covers vile language? Have you foresworn the pothouse and all the company that frequents it? And you merchants and you that call yourselves ladies and gentlemen, have you given up those frivolities, those empty vanities, those time murderers, those soul-destroyers of which the most of your class are so fond? If divine grace does not make you to differ from your own surroundings, is it really divine grace at all? Where there is not a thorough separation from the world, there is cause to fear there is no close union to Christ! The best part of our confession to Christ lies in the practically giving up everything which Christ would not sanction, and the following out of whatever Christ would ordain!

Sometimes to follow Christ thus by confessing in Him will involve persecution. And then, let me say *it will be a test point with you.* We cannot confess Christ at all unless we are willing to give up every connection, however dear—every relationship, however fond—sooner than let the conscience bow the knee to natural affection. You are to love as you never loved before those that are one with you in the flesh, but still Christ is to be above all on your bosom's throne! Oh, there are some professors who do not stand to this—they have not learned the meaning of Christ's words, "If any man loves father, or mother, or husband, or child, or wife more than Me, he is not worthy of Me. And if any man loves house or land more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." You tell me there are no persecutions now? Ah, indeed, perhaps if you followed Christ more fully, you would find out that there were! There is many a timid woman who has to play the martyr, still, and many a trembling young believer who has to find that if there are no burnings, there are trials of cruel mocking—and blessed are they that bear these things without fear, for the sake of Jesus! But if you flinch, if you are afraid of men, ah, then you count yourself unworthy and you shall not inherit the kingdom of God! Oh, to go with Christ through all weather! To bear His cross up the stiff hillside when the snowflakes sting in your face! To stand with the gentle, but heroic woman in the pillory! To wear the fool's cap for Christ,

and so have the hoots of half an age about one's brow, were glory, and honor, and immortality! And yet many forego the honor, shrink back into their ignoble cowardice, counting themselves not fit to be the followers of Jesus!

There will occasionally happen—I will only mention this and then conclude this first part—there will occasionally happen in the course of conversation, times when the confessing of Christ will become to the Christian an imperative duty—as when coarse infidelity is being avowed, or the gospel of Jesus derided.

I do not say that you are always to speak, for sometimes it would be casting pearls before swine. But I will say that if any unholy cowardice will make you hold your tongue and keep silence when you might have spoken for your Master's name, you have need to confess this sin with bitter tears and trembling, lest that denial should not be the denial of Peter, for which there is forgiveness after sore repentance—but the denial of Judas, which followed only by remorse, made him the son of perdition. Oh, stand up for Jesus! To be ashamed to acknowledge yourself a Christian, ah, then Christianity may well be ashamed of you! I know that is not the name—it is Presbyterian, Puritan, Methodist, hypocrite—oh, confess the impeachment whatever it may be! If they choose to make even the term, "hypocrite," a synonym for Christian, tell them that by the way which they call hypocrisy, even so do you in all sincerity worship the Lord God of your fathers! Be bold enough to stand in the front rank for Christ and never hide yourself behind for fear of feeble man! He is worthy to be confessed, so dare to confess Him, I beseech you! Thus much in explanation of the duty argument for it.

II. WHY IS IT A DUTY?

To be very brief, first, *the genius of the Christian religion requires it*. The genius and spirit of the Christian religion is, first, *light*. Everything is above board with Christianity. We have no mysteries which are only revealed to a special few. We are not like those teachers of philosophy who keep their tenets for the initiated. The religion of Jesus Christ, as far as men are able to comprehend it, is as plain as a pikestaff. We, my brothers and sisters, have no learned books to which to point you and say, "There is the secret locked up in the dead languages. And there in the process of reading some twenty tomes, you may fish out the secret almost as clearly as the secret of alchemy." No, but here is our secret—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made flesh, died for sinners, the just for the unjust, and whoever believes in Him shall be saved! If there is any mystery, it is only because there must be something mysterious in that which comes of God and tells of Him. But the gospel never aims at mystery!

The old church of Rome has written upon her brazen brow, "Mystery. Babylon. Mother of Harlots!" But the Church of Jesus Christ says in the language of Paul, "We use great plainness of speech." Now, where the very spirit and genius of Christianity is openness, bold display, a keeping

back of nothing—it seems to be natural that every believer in it should never keep in concealment in his own breast his conviction, but should publish upon the housetop that which he has received!

Again, the genius of our religion is *life*, as well as light. Life is sure, ultimately, to be revealed. It cannot be altogether hidden. It is sure to sprout from the seed, though buried deep in the earth. Our religion is not a thing of churches, and Sundays, and Good Fridays, and Easters, and Christmases and I know not what besides! It is a thing of everyday life, for the kitchen and the parlor, the office and factory, the court of justice, the Houses of Parliament. It intertwists itself with all the rootlets of our inner nature and comes out in all our actions of outward behavior and conversation. Hence, to hide it is impossible! "He could not be hid," should be as true of our Christian life as it was of our Lord. If it were a mere ceremony, it might be performed in and confined to crypt or sepulcher—but since religion is a principle which acts upon the entire life—it ought to be and must be confessed!

The genius of our religion is also *fire*. Light, life, fire, by which I mean energy, divine energy. The Christian is, above all, a propagandist. He it is who, having a better truth than the Pharisees ever had, excels them in the missionary spirit. He will compass sea and land to make one proselyte, for the flaming religion of Jesus Christ can never be kept in the bosom of the man who receives it. Even fire cannot be kept still, for once it falls among the stubble, the conflagration must spread. The God that answers by fire is a God who shall reign over this world! And the God of Christianity is that God of fire! Hence, beloved, since you are expected to operate upon others by your life and teaching, you must not dream of concealing your faith, for your religion requires it.

In the next place, *genuine love dictates it*. Ashamed of Jesus who bought you with His blood, forgave you all your sins, made you a child of God? Oh, by the five wounds, and by the glorious passion, and the bloody sweat and the travail of His soul, by the hands that bore your name in heaven, by the heart that beats with love for you, how can you deny Him? Beloved in the heart of Jesus—

"When you blush be this your shame,
That you no more revere His name."

But never, never be ashamed of one so dear to you. Love inspires it.

But *gratitude also requires it*. Surely, brothers and sisters, those that are converted to God owe no small gratitude to the Church of Christ, which was the instrument, in most cases, of their conversion. How can we prove that gratitude so well as by assisting that Church in all its work, that others, also, may be blessed? When I think of some Christians who say they love Christ but have never joined the Church, I put it to them, "Suppose everybody else did the same—every other Christian has the same rights as yourself—suppose, then, that all Christians should refuse to join in Church organization—how would there be any hope for the world?" "Oh," you say, "all others may do it!" No, if you may neglect

it, others may. Was it not through some minister of Christ that you first heard the gospel? Was it not through the Sunday school or through some printed word that you first came to know Christ? Repay the debt you owe to the Church by casting in your lot with your fellow Christians and seeking to do the same for some other, who, as yet, is unrenewed by grace.

Prudence, also, let me say, *suggests it to you*. "Prudence," you answer, "why, I thought it was prudence to keep out of the Church, for fear I should dishonor Christ." That is imprudence! For it is going on your own way, a road Christ never marked for you. The truest prudence is to do exactly what the Master bids, for then, if anything should come amiss, you are not accountable for it. "But," you say, "suppose I should dishonor Christ?" Yes, and suppose you are dishonoring Christ now? I think you had better run that risk than take the absolute certainty that you are dishonoring Him by your disobedience! "Well," says one, "if I were to avow myself a Christian, I should feel it such a solemn thing." Therefore, do it—for we need solemn things to keep us back from sin. "I should feel it such a bond to keep me in holiness." You require such a bond—accept it, and it shall be no more a chain to you, if you are sincere, than wings are a burden to a bird, or sails become a clog to a ship—

"Take His easy yoke and wear it,
Love will make the burden light!
Grace will teach you how to bear it,
You shall bear it with delight."

But, beloved in Christ, for your own good's sake, be not slow to do what your Master bids.

One other word will suffice. Over and above all other reasoning comes this—*Christ requires it.* Hear you His words tonight. Mine are but feeble, but let His roll in your souls like thunder, "Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven; but whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

Now, mark from the connection that denial means "whoever shall *not* confess." The two verses are put in apposition and opposition. There is a blessing to the confessor. The curse is to the non-confessor. "Whoever shall not confess Me"—for that is the denying here meant—"before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven." Will you willfully disobey the Master you profess to serve? Will you raise quibbles to His face and questions in His very presence? They are His words! They can bear no other meaning. They are not to be disputed, but to be obeyed! These are not the decrees of the Council of Trent, or you might fling them to the winds. They are not the ordinances of a bench of bishops, or you might tread them under foot. These are not the commands of any minister of any sect, or you might, if you would, reject them! But they are the royal, authoritative words of Jesus Christ Himself! I charge you, by

your loyalty to your King—I charge you by your indebtedness to your Redeemer—I charge you by your love to Him whom you call Master and Lord, if hitherto you have not confessed Him, make haste and delay not to keep His commandment and acknowledge Him, that He may acknowledge you! And never be ashamed of Him again, lest at the last He should be ashamed of you!

I shall urge no other reason. If that last convinces not, the spirit of obedience is lacking. And I would not even ask any of you to confess Christ if you did not mean to obey Him. Were it otherwise, I would say, "Stand back! Stand back! If you do not love Him, He has never washed you from your sins! If He is not your Savior. If you have never been born-again. If you are not truly His servant in the name of God, do not touch baptism, or His Supper! Never come to the communion table if you have no right there! Profess not to be a Christian if you are not! And say not, "Our Father who are in heaven," for your Father is not in heaven—you have no part or lot in this matter, you are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity and, harsh as the words may sound, these words are true, "Repent, and be converted," that you may obtain these blessings. Fly to Christ and trust in Him, for until you do, you have no right to the ordinances of God's house! There is no room for you in God's family! You are not His child, but an alien, a stranger, an outcast! May the Lord, in His mercy, bring you to know it, and then bring you to Jesus, and adopt you into His household—and you will give Him the praise!

Now, the last thing is to be treated with brevity, but great solemnity because we are to enquire—

III. WHAT ARE THE REWARDS AND PENALTIES ATTACHED TO THIS DUTY?

Here we have two sanctions. "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in heaven." Take this sentence home with you, everyone of you. What Christ is to you on earth, that you will be to Christ in heaven. I shall repeat that truth of God. Whatever Jesus Christ is to you on earth, you will be to Him in the day of judgment. If He is dear and precious to you, you will be precious and dear to Him. If you thought everything of Him, He will think everything of you. There are in my text, it appears to me, two judgment seats. There is one on which you sit and there is one before you, which is better. Shall I take the world—the world which contemns two things—it contemns civil vices and holy duties! Shall I take the world, which will call me a bigot, a fanatic, if I go with Christ? Shall I take the world with its pleasures and amusements? Shall I take it with its sins and laxities of morals, with its looseness and general trifling? Shall I take that, or shall I take my Lord and Master, and be thought a fool because I dare not, cannot do as others do? Shall I keep in the narrow path which He has mapped out? Which shall it be? I believe that salvation is of Grace, but there is such a thing as a human will, and God does not violate it. There is a time when

every man sits just on that judgment seat and, blessed be he to whom God gives grace to say—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow You."

On that judgment which you now make, sitting on that judgment seat here, humanly speaking, will depend that other judgment from the other judgment seat of the great white throne! I think I see the Master. He has come in the clouds of heaven. Listen how the silver trumpets ring! The dead are rising; the pillars of heaven are shaking; stars are falling; solemnities, unseen before, attend the dread assize and the books are opened and every soul may be judged by this one thing—did he confess Christ before men? Did he call Christ his Master in his heart, and give himself up to His cause? "Then I confess that he is Mine and though he were poor and despised, rotted in a dungeon, or was burnt at the stake amidst execrations—I confess him—he is Mine! He said that I was his and now I say in return that he is Mine! He judged that he would take Me. I judged that I have taken him. He confessed Me. I confess him!

But see the other—see the timorous wretch who knew something about Christ, but knew too much about the world—who loved the silver of Demas, or the pleasures of Jezebel—let him come forward.

What is the Master's sentence about him? It is very short, but very full, "I never knew you." They did not know Christ on earth—and now He does not know them. He is the only Savior, and that only Savior does not know them. They were the gay party, and there was much ridicule poured upon belief in Christ. The gay young lady thought that she must take her share in this, or she might be suspected of falling in with the despised people of God. She did not know Christ. No, and He will not know her in that day when the beauty will have gone from her cheeks and the grace and charm will have departed from her form! Yes, that man of business who was talking the other day with his fellows, and the conversation turning upon religion, there was some joke made against the gospel, or some of its sacred doctrines—and though he knew it was wrong and mean, he thought he must joke, too, unless he should be thought to be one of the class who follow Jesus of Nazareth! He was too respectable to know Christ, and Christ will be too respectable to know him! Let me say to all the counts and countesses, the dukes and duchesses, the royal highnesses and royal personages of all denominations that are fretting out their little hour—the true dignity will be to know Christ! And the true horror to be unknown of Him! Oh, happy shall that man be whose name was handed down from man to man amidst scorn, shame and spitting, because he took Christ's part. "Stand back, you angels!" the King will say. "Stand back, you seraphim and cherubim! Make way for him! He loved Me in the days of My scorn. He suffered for Me on earth. I know him. My Father, I confess him before You in heaven amidst the glories of My throne! I confess him before You—he is Mine." But the apostate, the turncoat, the careless, the non-

confessing, whatever are their dignities, and names, and honors, and glories here—though the world's church may count them good and offer a song for them beneath its domes—if they have not trusted Christ with their own heart and have not loved Him with their own soul, it shall be all in vain! Though they have been decorated and almost adored, Christ shall turn coldly upon them with, "I never knew you!" "But, Lord, we ate and drank in Your courts!" "I know you not! Depart from Me." "But, Lord! Are we then to be forever banished from Your presence?" "I never knew you! Your loss is eternal—your ruin must be final."

Choose you, this night, whom you will serve! By the living God, before whom I stand, I beseech you this night, decide for Christ! If God is God, serve Him. If the devil is God, serve him. One way or the other! If Jesus Christ is worthy of your love, let Him have it and take up your cross. But if He is not, then trifle with religion and go on your way.

But I cannot finish so. Consider, think and turn unto Him with full purpose of heart. Give yourselves to Him. Unite yourselves with God's people, wherever you may find them. Cast in your lot with the lovers of Jesus in whatever Christian denomination you may happen to meet with them. The Lord bless you and them—and acknowledge you in the day when He shall appear! May God add His solemn sanction, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:16-23.

Verse 16. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you, therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves.* It is a strange errand that you are sent upon—not as dogs to fight with wolves. Yet you *are* to fight with them, but you are to go as lambs in the midst of wolves! Expect, therefore, that they will rend you. Bear much, for even in that you shall conquer! If they kill you, you shall be honored in your death. As I have often said, the fight looks very unequal between sheep and wolves, yet at the present moment there are vastly more sheep in the world than wolves, the sheep having outlived the wolves. In this country, at any rate, the last wolf is gone and the sheep, with all their weaknesses, continue to multiply. "That is due," you say, "to the shepherd." And to Him shall your safety and your victory be due! He will take care of you. "I send you forth as sheep among wolves." But do not, therefore, provoke the wolves. "Be wise as serpents." Have a holy prudence. "Be as harmless as doves," but not as silly as doves.

17-19. *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall*

speak. And very remarkable were the answers given by the martyrs to those who persecuted them! In some cases they were altogether unlettered men, feeble women—unused to the quibbles and the catches which ungodly wise men use—and yet with a holy ability they answered all their adversaries and often stopped their mouths! It is amazing what God can make of the weakest of men when He dwells in them and speaks through them!

20, 21. *For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death.* Strange venom of human nature! It never grows so angry against anything as against God's truth. Why is this? False religions will tolerate one another, but they will not tolerate the religion of Christ! Is not this all accounted for by that old dark saying at the gates of Eden, "I will put enmity between you and the woman—between your seed and her seed." That enmity is sure to come up as long as the world stands.

22, 23. *And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another, for verily I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.* They had not been able to get all through Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps we shall scarcely have been able to preach the gospel in every part of the world before our Master's speedy footsteps shall be heard.

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

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FULLNESS OF JOY OUR PRIVILEGE
NO. 3406

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full."
1 John 1:4.

VERY closely does the apostle John resemble his Lord in the motive that prompted him to write this Epistle! You remember how Christ said in His last discourse to His disciples on the eve of His passion, "These things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full"—and how He counseled them, "Ask and receive that your joy may be full"—and how He prayed to the Father for them, "that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." Here, then, the beloved disciple, moved by the Spirit of God, reflects and follows out the same gracious purpose—"These things we write unto you, that your joy may be full." What an evidence of our Savior's deep attachment to His people that He is not content with having made their ultimate salvation sure, but He is anxious concerning their present state of mind! He delights that His people should not only be safe, but happy! Not merely saved, but rejoicing in their salvation! It does not please your Savior for you to hang your head as the bulrush and go mourning all your days. He would have you rejoice in Him always and for this end He has made provision and to this end He has given us precepts. Therefore it appears—

I. THAT THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY NEEDS LOOKING AFTER.

We should not find the apostle John writing to promote that which, in the natural order of things, would be sure to occur. In this object of pastoral anxiety, he seems to include the whole of the apostolic college with himself when he says, "These things we write unto you that your joy might be full," as if your joy would not be full unless inspired apostles should be commissioned of God to further it. Your joy then, I say, needs looking after. I do not doubt but you have very suggestive proofs of this, yourselves, *in your external circumstances*. You cannot always rejoice because, although your treasure is not in this world, your affliction is. Poverty will sometimes be too heavy a cross for you to sing under. Sickness sometimes casts you upon a bed on which you have not, as yet, learned to rejoice. Losses befall you in business, failures of hope, forsaking of friends and cruelty of foes—and any of these may prove like winter nights which nip the green leaves of your joy and make them fade and fall off your branches. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a necessity that you should be in heaviness through manifold

temptations. I suppose none of you are so perfectly happy as to be without some trial. Your joy will need to be looked after, then, lest floods should come in and quench it. You will need to cry to Him who alone can keep its flame burning, to trim it with fresh oil.

I suppose, too, that *you have moods and susceptibilities* which make it no easy matter to maintain perpetual joy. If you have not, I have. Sometimes there will be deep depression of spirit—you can scarcely tell why. That strong wing with which you mounted like an eagle will seem to flap the air in vain. That heart of yours, which once flew upwards like the lark rising from amidst the dew, will lie cold and heavy like a stone upon the earth, and you will find it hard to rejoice.

Besides, *sin* will stop the beginning of your holy mirth, and when you would dance for joy, like David before the ark, some internal corruption will come to hamper your delight. Ah, beloved, it is not easy to sing while you fight. Christian soldiers ought to do it—they should march to battle with songs of triumph, that their spirits may be nerved to desperate valor against their inbred corruptions, but sometimes the garment rolled in blood and the dust, and the turmoil will stop for a while the looked for shout of victory. With trials many and manifold—trials from the thorns and briars of this fallen world, trials from Satanic suggestions, trials from the uprisings of black fountains of corruption within your own polluted hearts—you have, indeed, need that your joy, to keep it full and flowing at high tide, should be guarded and supplied by an influence above your own—and fed from a celestial spring!

I dare say you have learned by this time, my beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, how exceedingly necessary it is that this joy of ours should be abundant. When full of joy, we are more than a match for the adversary of souls, but when our joy is gone, fear slackens our sinews, and, like Peter, we may be vanquished by a little maid! When our joy in the Lord is at its fullest, we can bear that the fig tree should not blossom, that the herd should be cut off from the stall and the flocks from the field, but how heavy our sorrows are to bear, how impatient we become when the chains that link heaven and earth are disarranged, or the communication in any way intercepted. If we can see the Savior's face without a cloud between, then temptation has no power over us, and all the glittering shams that sin can offer us are eclipsed in their brilliance by the true gold of spiritual joy which we have in our possession. Oh, what rapture!—

"I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Thus the Christian, by his holy joy, outbraves temptation and is strong to endure a martyrdom of vice. Why, you can do anything when the joy of the Lord is within you! Like a roe or a young hart, you leapt over the mountains of Bether. The mountains cannot appall you—you

make a stepping-stone across the brook. The heaviest tempests which lower over you cannot chill nor dampen your courage, for your song pierces it, and your soul mounts above it all into the clear blue of fellowship with your God! But when this joy is gone, then are we weak, like Samson when his hair was shorn. We become the slaves of temptation and if we do not yield to its treacherous enticements, at any rate, it harasses us, and so enervates the power with which we were known to glorify our God. The Christian's joy needs looking to. If any of you have lost the joy of the Lord, I pray you do not think it a small loss. I have heard of a minister who said that a Christian lost nothing by sin—and then he added—"except his joy." And one replied, "Well, and what else would you have him lose?" That is quite enough! To lose the light of my Father's countenance. To lose my full assurance of interest in Christ. To lose my heaven below—oh, this is a loss great enough! Let us walk carefully, let us walk prayerfully so that we may realize perpetual joy and peace even to the fullest! Let none of us be content to sit down in misery. There is such a thing as getting habituated to melancholy. My bias is toward that state of mind, but, by the grace of God, I resist it. If we begin to give way to this foolishness, we shall soon weave forged chains for ourselves which we cannot readily snap. Take your harp from the willows, believers. Do not let your fingers forget the well-known strings. Come, let us praise Him. If we have looked black in the face for a while, let us brighten up with the thoughts of Christ! At any rate, let us not be easy till we have shaken off this lethargic distemper and once again come into the normal state of health in which a child of God should be found—that of spiritual joy!

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY LIES MAINLY IN THINGS REVEALED, otherwise it would not find its fitting sustenance in inspired words.

If the Christian's joy lay in the wine vat and in the barn, in the landed estate, or the hoarded purse, it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance, that peace should prevail and trade should prosper—and forthwith the heritor and the merchant have all that heart could wish. But the Christian's joy is not touched by these vulgar things. These commonplace satisfactions do not suit the noble mind of the believer! He thanks God for all the bounties of the basket and the barn, but he cannot feast his soul upon stocks or fruits that perish with the using. He needs something better! The apostle John seems to tell us this when he says, "And *these* things write I unto you"—nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ—"And *these* things we write unto you, that your joy may be full." From which I infer that *everything which is revealed to us in Scripture has for its intention the filling up of the Christian's joy.*

What is Scripture all about, then? Is it not, first and foremost, *concerning Jesus Christ*? Take this book and distil it into one word, and I

will tell you what it is—it is JESUS! All this is but the body of Christ. I may look upon all these pages as the swaddling-bands of the infant Savior, and if you unroll Scripture, you come to Jesus Christ, Himself. Now, beloved, is not Jesus Christ the sum and summit of your joy? I hope we do not utter a falsehood when we sing, as it is our custom—

"Jesus the very thought of Thee,
With rapture fills my breast,
Tho' sweeter far Your face to see,
And in Your bosom rest."

Jesus—man yet God—allied to us in ties of blood. Why, here is mirth! Here is Christmas all the year round! In the nativity of the Savior there is joy for us—the babe born in Bethlehem—God has taken man into communion with Himself! Jesus the Savior—here is release from the groans of sin! Here is an end to the means of despair! He comes to break the bars of brass and to cut the gates of iron in sunder—

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease!
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, 'tis health, 'tis peace!"

Scripture, surely, has well taken its cue! Would it make us joyful, it has done well to make Christ its head and front.

All the doctrines of the Bible have a tendency, when properly understood and received, to foster the Christian's joy. Let us mention one or two of them. There is that ancient, much-abused, but most delightful doctrine of election, that "all worlds before," Jesus elected His people and looked with eyes of infinite love upon them as He saw them in the glass of futurity. What? Christian, can you believe yourself "loved with an everlasting love," and not rejoice? Was it not the doctrine of election that made David dance before the ark? When Michel sneered at him for dancing, he said, "It was before the Lord who had chosen me before your father (Saul), and all his house." Surely to be chosen of God, to be selected from the mass of mankind and made favorites of the heart of Deity—this ought to make us, in our worst moments, sing with joy of heart! Oh, that doctrine of election! I wish some of you would acquaint yourselves with it in the Psalmody of the Church, rather than in the wrangling of the schools! It is a tree that puts forth its luxuriance in the tropical climate of divine love—but it looks dwarfed and barren in the arctic regions of human logic! Then there are the doctrines which like living waters, drop from this sacred and hidden fountain. Take, for instance, that of redemption. To be bought with a price—a price whose efficacy is not questionable—bought so that we are now the property of Jesus, never to be lost! Bought not with that general redemption which holds to the sinner's eye a precarious contingency, but bought with an effectual ransom which saves every blood-bought sinner because he was redeemed—his own proper self, of God's own good will! Oh, here is occasion for song!—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,

Wandering from the fold of God—
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."

Can you see the blood-mark on yourself, and not rejoice? Oh, Christian, surely your joy ought to be full! Or turn to the doctrine of justification and consider how, through faith, every believer is "accepted in the beloved," and stands, wrapped in Jesus' righteousness, as fair in God's sight as if he had never sinned. Why, here is a theme for joy! Know and acknowledge your union with Christ—

"One with Jesus,
By eternal union one!"

Members of His body, "of His flesh, and of His bones," and what?—not a song after this? How sweet the music ought to be where this is the theme! Then, too, to mention no more, there is one doctrine which is like a handful of pearls—that of eternal preservation unto glory which is to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ. You are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." You shall be with Him where He is. You shall behold His glory. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Oh, can you put on this robe of splendor and go up to the throne where Christ has already made you sit representatively in His own person, and can you not begin, tonight, your song which shall never end? Truly we have but to mention a truth of God and you can think it over for yourselves—every doctrine of revelation is to the Christian a source of joy!

Well, and *every part of Christian experience is to further our joy*. "Why," says one, "all a Christian's experience is not joyful." I grant you that, but remember that all a Christian's experience is not Christian experience! Christians experience a great deal which they do not experience as Christians—but experience it because they are not such Christians as they ought to be! I believe that much of that groaning which some people think such a deal of, is rather of the devil than of the Spirit of God. Certainly that unbelief which some people seem to look upon as such a precious flower, is rank herbage, never sown in us by the hand of God the Holy Spirit! Beloved, there is a mourning which comes from the Spirit of God that is a joyful mourning, if I may use such a strange expression. Sorrow for sin is sweet sorrow. I would never wish to miss it. I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that it would be his only regret in going to heaven that he could not repent any more. Oh, repentance, true evangelical repentance, is not that half-bitter thing which comes from the law! It is a sweet genial thing. I do not know, beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when I am weeping for sin at the foot of the cross! I find that to be one of the safest and best places where I can stand. I have sometimes thought that the raptures of communion I have known are not altogether so deep—though they may be higher—not, I say, so deep as the pensive joy of weeping over pardoned sin, when—

"Dissolved by His goodness, I fall to the ground

And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found!"

Yes, sorrow for sin is a part of the Christian's experience which helps to fill his joy. And though your cares and anxieties, dear friends, with regard to the things of this world may be very distressing, yet remember, in every drop of gall which your Father gives you to drink, there is, if you can find it, a whole sea of sweetness! God sends you trials to wean you from the world—a happy result, however grievous the process! Oh, that I might never desire to suck of the breasts of *her* consolation anymore! Oh, to come to Christ, and find my all in Him! Believe me, beloved, our joy ends where the love of the world begins. If we had no idols on earth—if we made neither our children, nor our friends, nor our wealth, nor ourselves our idols—we should not have half the trials that we have. Foolish loves make rods for foolish backs. God save us from these, and when He does, though the means may seem severe, they are intended to promote our joys by destroying the eggs of our sorrows. But there is much of a Christian's experience that is all joy, and must be all joy. For instance, to have faith in Christ, to rest in Him—is not that joy? To sing from one's heart—

"***I know that safe with Him remains,***
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour."

Is not that joy? And even that humbler note—

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

has the germ of heaven in it! Truly, there can be no more delightful place for the soul to stand than close to the cross, covered with the crimson drops of blood and clasping Christ Himself! And then hope is another part of the Christian's experience. What a fountain of joy it is! We are saved by hope. Sweetly does the Psalmist express himself, "My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your Word." To the followers of Christ there is a full assurance of hope—"which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." Above all things, Christian fellowship is the chief auxiliary of Christian joy. Read the verse that immediately precedes our text, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Ah, now we hit the mark! This is the center of the target. Fellowship with Christ is the summum bonum—it fills up the measure of joy! All other graces and gifts may help to fill our cup of blessedness but fellowship with saints in their fellowship with the Father and the Son—surely this, of itself, must suffice to fill our vessels to the very brim! Fullness of joy! Did you ever prove it, my beloved? I think some of you have. No, I know you have! You could not have contained more joy—you were full to overflowing! Do you know that a little joy is healthful? Be it relief from anxiety, pleasure after pain, or even a cheerful thought in breasts to sorrow prone. But to have a

fullness of joy, joy that pulsates through our every nerve and paints the entire universe of God's goodness before our eyes in a meridian glow, this is a myriad of blessings in one! If I held in my hand a glass, and poured water into it till it were full, right to the very brim, till it seemed as if the least touch would make it run over—well, that is how the Christian sometimes is. "Why," he says, "I could not feel happier! If anyone should make me rich, if I could have all that the worldling craves, I could not be any happier! I am rich to all the intents of bliss since You, God, are mine." It is not every man that can go home and say, "There is nothing on earth I want, and there is nothing in heaven that I yearn after beyond the endowments my God has already bestowed on me! "Whom have I in heaven but You, and who is there upon earth I desire beside You?" Go, you that pine for joy, and traverse the wide earth round in fruitless search—my soul sits down at the foot of the cross and says, "I have found it here!" Go, like the swallow. Fly across the purple seas to find another summer now that this is over—my soul would stop just where she is—living at the foot of the cross, my sun is in its solstice, and stands still forever—never stirring, never moving—without parallax or shadow of a tropic! Evermore the same—bright and full and glorious! Oh, Christian, this is a blessed experience! May you know it all your life!

Never doubt, my dear friends, *that every precept in the Word of God is intended to further the Christian's happiness*. When I read the ten commandments, I understand them to be just and salutary directions not to do myself any harm. The spirit of the law seems to be benevolent in its warnings. If I were commanded not to put my finger into the fire, and did not know that fire would burn, I ought to be thankful for the prohibition. If I were commanded not to plunge into the sea, not having known before that the sea would drown me, I should be thankful for the interdict. God's precepts are designed to enlighten our eyes and preserve our feet from falling. They forbid what is dangerous, hurtful. God never denies His servants anything that is really for their good. His laws are freed-men's rules—they are never fetters to the Christian. And as for the precepts of our blessed Christianity, they, every one of them, promote our happiness! Let me take one or two of them. "Love one another." That is the first. Well, now, when are you happiest? When you feel spiteful and bitter towards everybody else, or when you feel charity towards the faulty, and love towards your fellow servants? I know when I feel best. There are some people who seem to have been suckled upon vinegar—wherever they go, they always see some defect. Were there to be men on earth again such as Chrysostom and others of his day, who have been portrayed in history, or like the Nazarites of Jeremiah's plaintive hymn, "Purer than snow and whiter than milk," they would say, "Ah, well, though their reputation is unsullied, we do not know what they do in secret!—we cannot scan their motives!" Some people are always in a cynical, suspicious humor, but they who "love one another" can see

much to rejoice in everywhere. We are told in Scripture to "serve the Lord with diligence," and I am sure it is "the diligent soul" that is made fat. The do-nothing people are generally those who say—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supplies."

It ought to be a wretched land to lazy people! Those that will not work, neither shall they eat, neither in spiritual things or in temporal shall they be fed. If, in the winter, you complain of cold, get to the plow and you will soon be full of warmth! Sit you down, groan, and complain, and blow on your blue fingers and you shall soon find the cold will starve you yet more and more. Holy activity is the mother of holy joy! And growth in grace, again—why, when is a man happier than when He grows in grace? To be at a standstill, to contract one's self—why, this is misery! To force one's understanding, like a Chinese foot into a Chinese shoe, is torture! But to have a mind that is capable of learning, to be able to sometimes say, "There, I was wrong"—to be able to feel that you know a little more today than you did yesterday because God, the Holy Spirit has been teaching you, why, this is joy! This is happiness! This is such as God would have us know!

All the writings of Scripture, whether they are doctrinal, experimental, or practical, have the drift which John indicates in these words, "That your joy may be full!" Having thus shown that the Christian's joy needs looking after and that it is mainly fed upon things revealed in Scripture, the inference clearly must be that—

III. WE SHOULD CONSTANTLY READ THE SCRIPTURES.

Read the Scriptures *in preference to any other book*. What a deal of reading there is now-a-days! But how large a proportion of what you call, "popular literature," is mere chaff-cutting—nothing more! Why, I am really ashamed to state the fact that I am bound, as a Christian minister, to denounce. You cannot publish a religious newspaper, or a religious magazine, as a rule, to make it pay, without a religious novel in it—and these religious novels are a disgrace to the Christianity of the 19th century! People's minds must be in an odd state when they can eat nothing but these whipped-creams and syllabubs—for people who would be healthy, should sit down to something solid, and their stimulants should be consistent with sobriety. You will never attain the mental growth of men and women by feeding on such stuff as that! You may make lackadaisical people in the shape of men and women, but the thinking soul with something in it, the woman who would serve her God as a true helper to the Christian ministry, the young man who would proclaim Christ and win souls need some better nutriment than the poor stuff that modern literature deals out so plentifully. Oh, my dear friends, read the Bible in preference to all such books! They only deprave your taste. If you want these books, have them. We would not deny pigs their proper food and I would not deny any person living that which his taste goes after, provided it does not shock decent morals. I lament the taste

rather than the indulgence of it! If you have a soul that can appreciate the pleasures of wisdom, eschew the trifles of folly. And if you have been taught to love verities, and substantial truths, you scarcely need that I should say, "Search the Scriptures." Search them diligently and frequently!

Prefer the Scriptures to all religious books. In our books and our sermons—we will say it of all of them—we do our best to give you the truth of God, but we are like the gold-beaters whose brazen arms you can see out over their doors—we get a little bit of gold and we hammer it out. Some of my brothers are mighty hands at the craft. They can hammer out a very small piece of gold so as to cover a whole acre of talk. But the best of us, those who would seek to bring out the doctrines of grace in love, are poor, poor things. Read the Bible for yourselves more, and confide less in your glossaries. I would rather see the whole stock of my sermons in a blaze, all burned to ashes, than that they should keep anybody from reading the Bible. If they may act as a finger pointing to certain chapters—"Read this! Read this!"—I am thankful to have printed them. But if they keep you away from your Bibles—burn them! Burn them! Do not let them lie on the top of the Scriptures—put them somewhere at the bottom, for that is their proper place. So with all sorts of religious books—they are a sort of mixture—their human thinking dilutes divine revelation. Keep to the revelation of God, pure and simple.

And, *when you read your Bible, read it in earnest.* There are several ways of reading the Bible. There is a skimming over the surface of it—content with the letter. There is also diving into it and praying yourselves down deep into the soul of it—that is the way to read the Bible! Do not always read it one verse at a time. How would Milton's *Paradise Lost* be understood if read by little snatches selected at random? You would never scan the purpose or design of the poem. Read one book through. Read John's gospel. Do not read a bit of John and then a bit of Mark, but read John through, and get at John's drift. Remember that Matthew, though he wrote of the same Savior as Luke, is not more various in his style than he is distinct in his aim and, in a certain sense, independent of the testimony he bears. The four evangelists are four separate witnesses, each giving a special contribution to the doctrine as well as the history of Christ. Matthew, for instance, shows you Jesus as a King. You will notice that most of his parables begin with "a king." "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened." Mark shows you Christ as the servant. Luke shows you Christ as man, giving sketches of His childhood. And His parables begin with, "A certain man," while John teaches you Christ in His Godhead, with a starting point far different from the other three, which have been styled the synoptical gospels. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Try, if you can, to get a hold of what the books mean, and pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you into the drift and aim of the sacred

writers in so writing. I would like to see my Church members, all of them, good, hard, solid Bible students. Beloved, I would not be afraid of all the errors of Popery, infidelity, Socinianism, Plymouth Brethrenism, or any other "ism" if you were to read your Bibles! You will thus keep clear of the whole lot. There is no doubt about your standing firm to the good old faith which we seek to teach you, if you do but keep to Scripture—the book, the one book, the book of books, the Bible! That studied, not hurriedly, but with a determination to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to observe the analogy of faith, you shall find a well-spring of delight and holy joy which men of letters who dabble in the proudest classics might envy, for Isaiah is better than Homer, and David is richer than Horace. But better still, you shall stand while others fall!

IV. BUT ARE WE ALL BELIEVERS? IS THIS BOOK JOY TO ALL OF US?

That is a significant pronoun in the text, "These things we write unto you that *your* joy may be full." To whom writes he? Is it to *you*? Young woman, does the Scripture write to *you* that *your* joy may be full? Young man, does the Scripture speak to you to fill *you* with holy joy? You do not know whether it does or not—you do not care about it. Then, it does *not* speak to you. You get plenty of joy elsewhere. Well, it does *not* speak to you. It does not intrude upon you. It leaves you alone. It offers you no joy. You have enough. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

But there are some of you here who need a joy, and you have not found it. You are uneasy. You cannot find a tree to build your nest. You are like the needle, when it is turned away from its pole—you cannot be quiet. You have got a horseleech in you, that is always crying, "Give! Give!" You are uneasy. Oh, dear friend, I am glad to hear it! May that uneasiness go on increasing. May you become weary of heart, and heavy-laden of spirit, for I have a whisper for you. Jesus Christ has come into the world to call to Himself all those who labor and are heavy-laden! And when you are sick and weary with the world, come to Him, come to Him! What? You have been turned out, have you? The world has got all it could out of you and thrust you away? Now, Jesus Christ will have you. Come to Him! Come to Him! He will receive you. So you are burnt out, are you? All the goodness that was in you is burned up and you have now become nothing but smoking flax—a stench in the estimation of your once flattering companions? You are nowhere. They do not like you. You are mopish and miserable. Oh come to Him! Come to Him, come to Him! He will not quench you. Your music is all over, is it? You were like a reed, like one of Pan's pipes. You could give out some music, once, but you got bruised and you cannot make one sound or note of joy. Well, poor soul, come to Him! Come to Him! He will not break you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—

"Weary souls that wander wide
From the central source of bliss,

Turn to Jesus' wounded side
Look to that dear blood of His."

Here is peace, here is joy in Christ Jesus! Oh, if you are sick of the world, come to my Master! May God the Holy Spirit bless this sickness and make you come because you have nowhere else to go! Jesus Christ will receive the devil's castaways. The very sweepings of pleasure, the dregs of the intoxicating cup, those who have gone so far that now their friends reject them, Jesus Christ accepts! May He accept me, and accept you—and then in Him our joy shall be full! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 66:1-15.

Verse 1. *Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands.* Let not Israel alone do it. Take up the strain, you nations. He is the God of all the nations of the earth. "Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands."

2-4. *Sing forth the honor of His name: make His praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible are You in Your works! Through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You. All the earth shall worship You and shall sing unto You. They shall sing to Your name. Selah.* I still must always cling to the belief that this whole world is to be converted to God, and to lie captive at the feet of Christ in glorious liberty! Do not fall into that lethargic, apathetic belief of some that this is never to be accomplished—that the battle is not to be fought out on the present lines, but that there is to be a defeat—and then Christ is to come. No, foot to foot with the old enemy will He stand, till He has worsted him and until the nations of the earth shall worship and bow before Him!

5, 6. *Come and see the works of God: He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in Him.* Where God is most terrible to His enemies, He is most gracious to His friends! As Pharaoh and his hosts went down beneath the terrible hand of God, the children of Israel lifted up their loudest hallelujahs and sang unto the Lord, who triumphed gloriously! And so shall it be to the end of the chapter. God will lay bare His terrible arm against His adversaries but His children shall, meanwhile, make music! "There did we rejoice in Him."

7-9. *He rules by His power forever: His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah. O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard. Who holds our soul in life and allows not our feet to be moved.* Loudest among the singers should God's people be! If others can restrain their praise, yet let the love of Christ so compel us that we must give it a tongue and tell forth the majesty of our God! It is He alone who keeps us from Hell—which holds our soul in life! It is He alone who keeps us from falling foully. Yes, and falling finally, "and allows not our feet to be moved."

10. *For You, O God, have proved us.* All God's people can say this. It is the heritage of the elect of God. "You have proved us."

10-11. *You have tried us, as silver is tried. You brought us into the net.* Entangled, surrounded, captive, held fast. Many of God's people are in this condition.

11. *You laid affliction upon our loins.* It was no affliction of hand or foot, but it laid upon our loins—a heavy, crushing burden.

12. *You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water.* It was the full ordeal. One was not enough. Fire destroys some, but water is the test for others—but God's people must be tried both ways. "We went through fire and through water, but"—. Blessed "*but.*"

12. *But You brought us out into a wealthy place.* Out of the fire and out of the water they came because God brought them! And when He brought them, it was not to a stinted, barren heritage, but into a wealthy place. Oh, beloved, when we think of where the covenant of grace has placed every believer, it is a wealthy place, indeed!

13-15. *I will go into Your house with burnt offerings: I will pay You my vows which my lips have uttered, and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. I will offer unto You burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams. I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.* The best, I think. "The best of the best will I bring You, O my God. I will bring You my heart. I will bring You my tongue. I will bring you my entire being!

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PETER'S PRAYER
NO. 3407

A SERMON
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"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."
Luke 5:8.

THE disciples had been fishing all night. They had now given up fishing—they had left their boats and were mending their nets. A stranger appears. They had seen Him, probably, once before, and they remembered enough of Him to command respect. Besides, the tone of voice in which He spoke to them and His manner at once ruled their hearts. He borrowed Simon Peter's boat and preached a sermon to the listening crowds. After He had finished the discourse, as though He would not borrow their vessel without giving them their hire, He bade them launch out into the deep and let down their nets again. They did so and, instead of disappointment, they at once took so vast a haul of fish that the boats could not contain all and the net was not strong enough and began to break. Surprised at this strange miracle—overawed, probably by the majestic appearance of that matchless One, who had worked it, Simon Peter thought himself quite unworthy to be in such company—and fell on his knees and cried this strange prayer—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." So I desire that, first of all, we shall hear—

I. THE PRAYER IN THE WORST SENSE WE CAN GIVE TO IT.

It is always wrong to put the worst construction on anyone's words and, therefore, we do not intend to do so except by way of license and, for a few moments only, to see what might have been made out of these words. Christ did not understand Peter so. He put the best construction upon what he said, but if a caviler had been there, a wrong interpretation would have been to this sentence—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The ungodly virtually pray this prayer. When the gospel comes to some men and disturbs their conscience, they say, "Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you." When some troublesome preacher tells them of their sins—when he puts a burning truth of God into their conscience and awakens them so that they cannot sleep or rest—they are very angry with the preacher and the truth that he was constrained to speak. And if they cannot bid him get out of their way, they can at least get out of his way, which comes to the same thing! And so the spirit of it is, "We do not want to give up our sin. We cannot afford to part with our prejudices, or with our darling lusts

and, therefore, depart—get out of our way—leave us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come to torment us before our time?" Peter meant nothing of this sort, but there may be some here who do and whose avoidance of the gospel, whose inattention to it, whose spite and hatred of it, all put together virtually make up this cry, "Depart from us, O Christ!"

Alas, I fear *there are some Christians* who do, in fact—I will not say intentionally—really pray this prayer! For instance, if a believer in Christ shall expose himself to temptation—if he shall find pleasure where sin mingles with it, if he shall forsake the assemblies of the saints and find comfort in the synagogue of Satan—if his life shall be inconsistent, practically, and he also shall become inconsistent by reason of his neglect of holy duties, ordinances, private prayer, the reading of the Word and the like—what does such a Christian say but, "Depart from me, O Lord"? The Holy Spirit abides in our hearts and we enjoy His conscious presence if we are obedient to His monitions. But if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us and, before long we shall have to ask—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?"

Why does the Holy Spirit withdraw the sense of His presence? Why, but because we ask Him to go! Our sins ask Him to go! Our unread Bibles do, as it were, with loud voices ask Him to be gone! We treat that sacred guest as if we were weary of Him and He takes the hint and hides His face and then we sorrow and begin to seek Him again. Peter does not do so, but we do. Alas, how often ought we to say, "Oh, Holy Spirit, forgive us that we so vex You, that we resist Your admonitions, quench Your promptings and so grieve You! Return unto us and abide with us evermore."

This prayer in its worst is *sometimes practically offered by Christian churches*. I believe that any Christian church that becomes divided in feeling, so that the members have no true love, one to another, that lack of unity is an act of horrible supplication! It does as much as say, "Depart from us, You spirit of unity! You only dwell where there is love—we will not have love! We will break Your rest—get away from us!" The Holy Spirit delights to abide with a people that is obedient to His teaching, but there are churches that will not learn—they refuse to carry out the Master's will or to accept the Master's Word. They have some other standard, some human book—and in the excellences of the human composition they forget the glories of the divine! Now I believe that where any book, whatever it may be, is put above the Bible, or even set by the side of it, or where any creed or catechism, however excellent, is made to stand at all on an equal basis with that perfect Word of God, any church that does this, in fact says, "Depart from us, O Lord." And when it comes to actual doctrinal error, particularly to such grievous errors as we hear of, now-a-days—such as baptismal regeneration and the doctrines that are congruous thereto—it is, as it were, an awful imprecation and seems to say, "Begone from us, O gospel! Begone from us, O Holy Spirit! Give us outward signs and symbols, and these will suffice us! But depart from us, O Lord—we are content without You." As for ourselves, we may

practically pray this prayer as a church. If our prayer meetings should be badly attended; if the prayers at them should be cold and dead; if the zeal of our members should die out; if there should be no concern for souls; if our children should grow up untrained in the fear of God; if the evangelization of this great city should be given over to some other band of workers, and we should sit still, and if we should become cold, ungenerous, listless, indifferent—what can we do worse for ourselves? How, with greater potency, can we put up the dreadful prayer, "Depart from us—we are unworthy of Your presence! Begone, good Lord! Let 'Ichabod' be written on our walls! Let us be left with all the curses of Gerizim ringing in our ears."

I say, then, the prayer may be understood in this worst sense. It was not so meant—our Lord did not so read it—we must not so read it concerning Peter. But let us, oh, let us take care that we do not offer it thus, practically, concerning ourselves!

But now in the next place we shall strive to take the prayer as it came from Peter's lips and heart—

II. A PRAYER WE CAN EXCUSE AND ALMOST COMMEND.

Why did Peter say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? There are three reasons. First, *because he was a man;* secondly, *because he was a sinful man;* and again, *because he knew this and became a humble man*.

So, then, the first reason for this prayer was that *Peter knew that he was a man* and, therefore, being a man, he felt himself amazed in the presence of such an One as Christ. The first sight of God—how amazing to any spirit even if it were pure! I suppose God never did reveal Himself completely—could never have revealed Himself completely to any creature, however lofty in its capacity. The infinite must overwhelm the finite. Now, here was Peter, beholding, probably for the first time in his life in a spiritual way, the exceeding splendor and glory of the divine power of Christ! He looked at those fish and at once he remembered that night of weary toil, when not a fish rewarded his patience. And now he saw them in masses in the boat—and all done through this strange man who sat there, having just preached a still stranger sermon, of which Peter felt that never man spoke like that before and he did not know how it was, but he felt abashed! He trembled, he was amazed in the presence of such an One. I do not wonder if we read that Rebecca, when she saw Isaac, came down from her camel and covered her face with her veil. If we read that Abigail, when she came to meet David; she alighted from her donkey and threw herself upon her face, saying, "My Lord, David!" If we find Mephibosheth depreciating himself in the presence of King David and calling himself a dog—I do not wonder that Peter, in the presence of the perfect Christ, should shrink into nothing and, in his first amazement at his own nothingness and Christ's greatness, should say he scarcely knew what, like one dazed and dazzled by the light, half-distraught and scarcely able to gather together his thoughts and put them connectedly together! The very first impulse was as when the light of the sun strikes the eyes and it is a blaze that threatens to blind us!

"Oh, Christ, I am a man—how can I bear the presence of the God that rules the very fishes of the sea and works miracles like this?"

His next reason was, I have said, *because he was a sinful man* and there is something of alarm mingled with his amazement. As a man he stood amazed at the shining of Christ's Godhead! As a sinful man, he stood alarmed at its dazzling holiness. I do not doubt that in the sermon which Christ delivered, there was such a clear denunciation of sin, such laying of justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet—such a declaration of the holiness of God—that Peter felt himself unveiled, discovered, his heart laid bare! And now came the finishing stroke. The One who had done this could also rule the fishes of the sea! He must, therefore, be God! And it was to God that all the defects and evils of Peter's heart had been revealed and thoroughly known! And almost fearing with a kind of inarticulate cry of alarm because the criminal was in the presence of the Judge—the polluted in the presence of the immaculate—he said, "Depart from me, for I am *a sinful man*, O Lord."

But I have added that there was a third reason, namely, that *Peter was a humble man*, as is clear from the saying, because he knew himself and confessed bravely that he was a sinful man. You know that sometimes there have been persons in the world who have suddenly found some king or prince come to their little cottage—and the good housewife, when the king, himself, was coming to her, has felt as if the place itself was so unfit for him that, though she would do her best for his majesty, and was glad in her soul that he would honor her hovel with his presence, yet she could not help saying, "Oh, that Your Majesty had gone to a worthier house, had gone on to the great man's house a little ahead, for I am not worthy that Your Majesty should come here." So Peter felt as if Christ lowered Himself, in coming to him, as if it were too good a thing for Christ—too great, too kind, too condescending a thing—and he seems to say, "Go up higher, Master! Sit not down so low as this in my poor boat in the midst of these poor dumb fishes. Sit not down here, for You have a right to sit on the throne of heaven in the midst of angels that shall sing Your praises day and night! Lord, do not stop here—go up, take a better seat, a higher place—sit among more noble beings who are more worthy to be blessed with the smiles of Your Majesty."

Don't you think he meant that? If so, we may not only excuse his prayer, but even commend it, for we have felt the same. "Oh," we have said, "does Jesus dwell with a few poor men and women that have come together in His name to pray? Oh, surely, it is not a good enough place for *Him*—let Him have the whole world and all the sons of men to sing His praises! Let Him have heaven, even the heaven of heavens! Let the cherubim and seraphim be His servants and archangels loose the laces of His shoes! Let Him rise to the highest throne in glory and there let Him sit down, no more to wear the crown of thorns, no more to be wounded and despised and rejected, but to be worshiped and adored forever and ever." I think we have felt so and, if so, we can understand what Peter felt, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Now, brothers and sisters, there are times when these feelings, if they cannot be commended in ourselves, are yet excused by our Master and have a little in them, at any rate, which He looks upon with satisfaction. Shall I mention one?

Sometimes a man is *called to an eminent position of usefulness* and, as the vista opens before him and he sees what he will have to do—and with what honor his Master will be pleased to load him—it is very natural and I think it is almost *spiritual* for him to shrink and say, "Who am I that I should be called to such a work as this? My Master, I am willing to serve You, but oh, I am not worthy." Like Moses, who was glad enough to be the Lord's servant and yet he said, and he meant it so heartily, "Lord, I am slow of speech. I am a man of unclean lips, how can I speak for You?" Or, like Isaiah, who was rejoiced to say, "Here am I, send me!" But who felt, "Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! How shall I go?" Not like Jonah, who would not go at all, but must go off to Tarshish to escape working at Nineveh! Yet perhaps with a little seasoning of Jonah's bitters, too, but mainly a sense of our own unworthiness to be used in so great a service, we seem to say, "Lord, do not ask me to do that! After all, I may slip and dishonor You. I would serve You, but lest by any means I should give way under the strain, excuse Your servant and give him a humbler post of service." Now, I say we must not pray in that fashion, but still, while there is some evil there, there is a sediment of good which Christ will perceive in the fact that we see our own weakness and our own unsuitableness. He won't be angry with us, but separating the chaff from the wheat, He will accept what was good in the prayer and forgive the bad.

Sometimes, again, dear friends, this prayer has been almost on our lips *in times of intense enjoyment*. Some of you know what I mean, when the Lord draws near unto His servants and is like the consuming fire—and we are like the bush that seemed to be altogether on a blaze with the excessive splendor of God realized in our souls! Many of God's saints have, at such times, fainted. You remember Mr. Flavel tells us that riding on horseback on a long journey to a place where he was to preach, he had such a sense of the sweetness of Christ and the glory of God, that he did not know where he was—and he sat on his horse for two hours, together—the horse wisely standing still! And when he came to himself he found that he had been bleeding freely through the excess of joy. And as he washed his face in the brook by the roadside he said he felt, then, that he knew what it was to sit on the doorstep of heaven and he could hardly tell that if he had entered the pearly gates, he would have been more happy, for the joy was excessive. To quote what I have often quoted before, the words of Mr. Welsh, a famous Scotch divine who was under one of those blessed deliriums of heavenly light and rapturous fellowship, exclaimed, "Hold, Lord! Hold! It is enough! Remember, I am but an earthen vessel, and if You give me more, I die!" God does sometimes put His new wine into our poor old bottles and then we are half inclined to say, "Depart, Lord! We are not yet ready for Your glorious presence." It does not come to saying that—it does not amount to all that

in words—but still, the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, and the flesh seems to start back from the glory which it cannot bear as yet. There are many things which Christ could tell us, but which He will not because we cannot bear them now.

Another time, when this has passed over the mind, not altogether rightly, not altogether sinfully, like the last two, is *when the sinner is coming to Christ* and has, indeed, in a measure believed in Him, but when, at last, that sinner perceives the greatness of the divine mercy, the richness of the heavenly pardon, the glory of the inheritance which is given to pardoned sinners! Then many a soul has started back and said, "It is too good to be true, or, if true, it is not true to me." Well do I remember a staggering fit I had over that business! I had believed in my Master and rested in Him for some months—and rejoiced in Him—but one day, while reveling in the delights of being saved and rejoicing in the doctrines of election, final perseverance and eternal glory—it came across my mind, "And all this for *you*, for such a dead dog as *you*—how can it be so?" And for a while it was a temptation stronger than I could overcome! It was just saying, spiritually, "Depart from me, I am too sinful a man to have You in my boat—too unworthy to have such priceless blessings as You bring to me!"

Now, that, I say, is not altogether wrong and not altogether right. There is a mixture there, and we may excuse and somewhat commend, but not altogether. There are other times in which the same feeling may come across the mind, but I cannot stay now to specify them. It may be so with some here, and I pray them not to concern themselves utterly, nor yet to excuse themselves completely, but to go on to the next teaching of this prayer—

III. A PRAYER THAT NEEDS AMENDING AND REVISING.

As it stood, it was not a good one. Now let us put it in a different way. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Would it not be better to say, "*Come nearer to me*, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? It would be a more brave prayer and a more tender prayer—more wise and not less humble, for humility takes many shapes. "I am a sinful man," here is humility. "Come nearer to me." Here is faith which prevents humility from degenerating into unbelief and despair! Brothers and sisters, that would be a good argument, for see—"Since, Lord, I am a sinner, I need purifying. Only Your presence can truly purify, for You are the refiner and You purify the sons of Levi. Only Your presence can cleanse, for the fan is in Your hand and You alone can purge Your floor. You are like a refiner's fire, or like fuller's soap—come nearer to me, then, Lord, for I am a sinful man and would not be always sinful. Come, wash me from my iniquity that I may be clean. And let Your sanctifying fire go through and through my nature till You burn out of me everything that is contrary to Your mind and will." Dare you pray that prayer? It is not natural to pray it. If you can, I would say to you, "Simon Barjona, blessed are you, for flesh and blood have not taught you this." Flesh and blood may make you say, "Depart from me"—it is the Holy Spirit, alone, that under a

sense of sin, can yet put a divine attraction to you in the purifying fire and make you long, therefore, that Christ would come near to you!

Again, "Come near to me, Lord, since I am a man and, being a man, am weak—and nothing can make me strong but Your presence. I am a man so weak that if You depart from me, I faint, I fall, I pine, I die! Come near to me, then, O Lord, that by Your strength I may be encouraged and be fitted for service. If You depart from me, I can render You no service whatever. Can the dead praise You? Can those with no life in them give You glory? Come near me, then, my God, though I am so feeble! And as a tender parent feeds his child, and the shepherd carries his lambs, so come near to me."

Do you not think he might have said, "Come near to me, Lord, and abide with me, for I am a sinful man," in the recollection of how he had failed when Christ was not near? All through that night he had put the net into the sea with many a splash—and had drawn it up with many an eager look as he gazed through the moonlight—and there was nothing that rewarded his toil. In went the net again—and now when Christ came and the net was full to bursting—would it not have been a proper prayer, "Lord, come near to me and let every time I work, I may succeed! And if I am made a fisher of men, keep nearer to me, still, that every time I preach Your Word, I may bring souls into Your net and into Your Church that they may be saved"?

What I want to draw out from the text, and I shall do so better if I continue bringing out these different thoughts—is this—that it is well when a sense of our unworthiness leads us not to get away from God in an unbelieving, petulant despair, but to get nearer to God! Now, suppose I am a great sinner. Well, let me seek to get nearer to God for that very reason, for there is great salvation provided for great sinners! I am very weak and unfit for the great service which He has imposed upon me—let me not, therefore, shun the service or shun my God, but reckon that the weaker I am, the more room there is for God to get the glory! If I were strong, then God would not use me, because then my strength would get the praise for it. But my very unfitness and lack of ability and all that I lament in myself in my Master's work is but so much elbowroom for omnipotence to come and work in! Would it not be a fine thing if we could all say, "I glory not in my talents, not in my learning, not in my strength, but I glory in infirmity because the power of God does rest upon me"! Men cannot say, "That is a learned man—and he wins souls because he is learned." They cannot say, "That is a man whose faculties of reasoning are very strong and whose powers of argument are clear—and he wins sinners by convincing their judgments." No, they say, "What is the reason of his success? We cannot discover it. We see nothing in him different from other men, or perhaps, only the difference that he has less of gifts than they." Then glory be to God! He has the praise more clearly and more distinctly—and His head who deserves it—wears the crown!

See, then, what I am aiming at with you, dear brothers and sisters. It is this— do not run away from your Master's work, any of you, because

you feel unfit—but for that reason do twice as much! Do not give up praying because you feel you cannot pray, but pray twice as much, for you need more prayer and, instead of being less with God, be more! Do not let a sense of unworthiness drive you away. A child should not run away from its mother at night because it needs washing. Your children do not stay away from you because they are hungry, nor because they have torn their clothes—they come to you because of their necessities! They come because they are children, but they come more often because they are needy children—because they are sorrowful children! So let every need, let every pain, let every weakness, let every sorrow, let every sin drive you to God. Do not say, "Depart from me." It is a natural thing that you should say so and not a thing altogether to be condemned, but it is a glorious thing, it is a God-honoring thing, it is a wise thing to say, on the contrary, "Come to me, Lord. Come still nearer to me, for I am a sinful man and without Your presence I am utterly undone."

I shall say no more, but I would that the Holy Spirit would say this to some who are in this house, who have long been invited to come and put their trust in Jesus, but always plead as a reason for not coming that they are too guilty, or that they are too hardened, or too something or other! Strange that what one man makes a reason for coming, another makes a reason for staying away! David prayed in the Psalms, "Lord have mercy and pardon my iniquity, for it is great." "Strange argument," you will say. It is a grand one! "Lord, here is great sin and there is now something that is worthy of a great God to deal with! Here is a mountain sin, Lord, have omnipotent grace to remove it! Lord, here is a towering Alp of sin—let the floods of Your grace, like Noah's flood, come 20 cubits over the top of it! I am the chief of sinners— here is room for the chief of Saviors." How strange it is that some men should make this a reason for staying away! This cruel sin of unbelief is cruel to yourselves—you have put away the comfort you might enjoy. It is cruel to Christ, for there is no pang that ever wounded Him more than that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling. Believe, believe that He never is so glad as when He is clasping His Ephraim to His breast! As when He is saying, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." Trust Him! If you could see Him, you could not help it. If you could look into that dear face and into those dear eyes, once red with weeping over sinners that rejected Him, you would say, "Behold, we come to You! You have the words of eternal life! Accept us, for we rest in You alone. All our trust on You is stayed." And that done, you would find that His coming to you would be like rain on the mown grass, as the showers that water the earth and, through Him, your souls would flourish, your sackcloth would be taken away and you would be girt about with gladness and rejoice in Him, world without end! The Lord Himself bring you to this. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:1-27.

We shall, tonight, read a chapter which, I suppose, the most of us know by heart. But as often as I have read it, I do not remember ever reading it without seeing some fresh light in it. May it be so tonight!

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* A rare crowd they must have been, when it is said *all* the publicans and sinners! All sorts of sinners came in such numbers that it seemed as if the city had sent out all its hosts of sinners. And these drew near—came as close as they could for fear of losing a single word! They made the inner ring about the Savior. He had a bodyguard of sinners and certainly there are none that will ever glorify Him as these people will do.

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners and eats with them.* They stood further off. Not to listen, but to murmur. Here was the old fable of the dog in the manger. They did not want Christ, themselves, but they murmured that other people should have Him. They despise Him. They thought themselves too righteous to need a Savior. Yet they murmured when the physician came to His patients to give them the healing medicine!

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* They were hardly worth His trouble. But though He spoke it to them, others who are not of that sort have sucked sweetness out of it ever since! We are told this is a parable, but on looking at it we find it to be *three*. Have you ever seen a picture in three panels and the whole of the panels necessary to complete the picture? So it is here. Different views of the great work of divine grace suiting different persons, so that if we do not see through one glass, we may use a second, and a third!

4-7. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.* Not that one repenting sinner is of more esteem in heaven than 99 saints who have been kept by the power of God. No, not so, but there is a greater stir of joy in heaven at the time of the sinner's repentance than there is over all the ninety-nine. And you know how that is. You may have many children and you may love them all alike, yet if one is ill you take far more notice of him just then—and all the house is ordered with a view to that sick child. He may not be the best child you have, but still, for the time being, there is more thought of him because he is ill. And if you should happen to have in your family a boy that has greatly grieved you and has gone astray, I am sure that if he were to repent, you would feel intense joy over him. But it would not be true that you thought more of him than of his brothers and of his sisters who are with you and are obedient to you. We must not learn from a passage more than it teaches. At the same time, let us learn as much as we can from it. It sets heaven on a blaze of joy when one single penitent turns to his Father!

8. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it?* Eastern houses generally are very dark and if you need to find anything, you must light a candle. Now, this is one piece of money out of *ten*, as the sheep was one out of a *hundred*. The woman does not stand counting over the other nine, but she leaves them in the box and lights a candle and begins to make a stir. No doubt other people who were in the house would say, "What an inconvenience this dust is." She must find her piece of money. So sometimes in a congregation, we feel it necessary to have special services and it makes a little stir—and there are some good souls who are inconvenienced and they do not like all the dust. Oh, it matters not what dust we make, as long as we find the lost piece—and if a soul is found, we can put up with some irregularities as long as the precious thing is discovered and brought to its owner!

9, 10. *And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.* Here follows this most wonderful of all parables—the truest picture of man's folly and lost estate that was ever sketched—and at the same time the most wonderful picture of the mercy and love of God that was ever painted!

11, 12. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to His father, Father, give me the portion of goods that fall to me. And he divided unto them his living.* In the East the younger son has a smaller portion of the estate compared with the elder. But it is a usual thing—certainly not an unusual thing—to let him have his portion while his father is yet alive, that he may make use of it and be able, by his industry, to increase it till he becomes a substantial person—a custom not altogether without wisdom in it if there must be a distinction between elder and younger sons. You remember how Abraham gave portions to his sons by Keturah and sent them away, whereas Isaac had nothing because he was the heir and had everything. So this younger son asks for his portion and the father divided to them his living.

13. *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* His heart was distant from his father. Therefore he did not feel at ease until he put himself at a distance where he could do just as he liked—could do that which he knew his father would not approve of and what he would not like to do in his father's house. And is not this a true picture of the man who is not a friend of God? He wants to do as he likes. He desires to be independent and as he knows that what he likes to do will not please God, he tries to forget God. He gets into a far country by his forgetfulness. He says in his heart. "No God." He wishes there was no God. He gets as far away from God as he can. Then it is that he wastes his substance. Did you ever look at an ungodly life as the wasting of precious substance? It is just that! The love which ought to go to God is wasted in lust. The energy that ought to be spent in righteousness is wasted upon sin. The thought, the ability that ought to

be laid at Jesus' feet is all used for selfish pleasure—and so it is wasted. He wasted his substance in riotous living.

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need.* "Began to be in need." What a change! At home with his father, then with plenty to waste—and now in need. Those two words, "in need," describe the condition of every ungodly man! After a time, he is in need—in need of everything that is good and worth having. His soul is a pauper. He is in need.

15. *And he sent and joined himself to a citizen of that country.* A gentleman with whom he had spent a fortune. Many a time had this citizen sat at his table and drank his best wines. And what does this fine fellow do for him?

15. *And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* A very low occupation anywhere, but in Judea a peculiarly degrading occupation. He sent him, a Jew, into the fields to feed swine!

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.* It does not say that he would have stopped his hunger with the husks, for that could not be done. He would only fill his belly—fill it up, as it were, with anything just to choke his sense of need. And there are many men that know that the world cannot satisfy them, but it could at least take their thoughts off a little from their inward need and so they gladly fill up their belly with the husks that the swine do eat.

16. *And no man gave unto him.* He gave to them—he spent all his money with them. He was a fine fellow, then, so they said. But now no man gave to him. And what a mercy it was, for if they had given him all he needed, he would not have gone back to his father! There is nothing like a little gracious starvation to fetch a man home to Christ. And it is a blessed providence and a blessed work of the Spirit of God when a man at last is starved till he must go home to God!

17-20. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and went to his father.* "And when he came to himself." He had been beside himself before. There are two things upon which ungodly men are very ignorant—God and themselves. "He arose and went to his father." That was the best of all. He stopped not with resolutions, but he actually did the deed! This was the turning point with him. He arose and went to his father.

20, 21. *But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* But the father interrupted the prayer. He would not let him conclude it. "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

22-24. *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the*

fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry, For this, my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. What a change between being in need and, "let us eat and be merry."—

"Wonders of grace to God belong."

There is no wishing to fill his belly with husks, now! But the word is passed round, "Let us eat and be merry."

25. *Now his elder son was in the field.* There is a great deal of questioning about who this man was—this eldest son. Why, dear me, I have known him! I have the misfortune to meet him every now and then. He is a very capital man—one of the best of men, but he does not care about revivals, or about having a great many converted. He is very suspicious about such things—he does not care about making so much fuss over men that have newly repented. He holds rather hard views about them. "He was in the field at work."

25-27. *And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.* Did you ever notice that point—the father's gladness because he had received him safe and sound? No bones broken. His face was not disfigured. He was safe and sound. It is a wonderful thing that the sinner should come back to Christ safe and sound, considering where he has been! He has been in much worse danger than if he had been in battle or in shipwreck. He has been with drunks and with harlots—and yet he is received safe and sound. Oh, the wonders that divine grace can do, to put safeness and soundness into us who went so far astray!

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NO. 3408

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Not of works lest any man should boast."
Ephesians 2:9.

THIS is very plain. There is no mistaking the sense. We are saved by grace and not by our own doings. A reason is assigned. If we were saved by our own doings, it would be natural and certain that we would boast. It is well that the apostle is so very explicit here and elsewhere upon this doctrine, for men will fall against and blunt the edge of his statement. Self-righteousness is the natural religion of every degraded heart. Only the Spirit of God can make a man really receive and acknowledge the truth of God. The apostle seems determined that if any reject it, it shall not be for lack of clearness in his statement as a teacher. He does not beat about the bush, or go round about, or mince matters—he comes at once to the point, "By grace are you saved"—and then he gives the negative, the backstroke of the sword, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." This is the old controversy of Christianity from the very beginning. The first heavy fire of the gospel ordinance was directed against the Judaizers. They said salvation was by ceremonies and the works of the law of God. In all sorts of shapes and ways, sometimes straightforwardly and sometimes cunningly, they tried to get into the Christian Church the idea that the works of men could have some merit in them and contribute in some degree to their salvation! The apostle was a very sturdy opponent of this subtle innovation. His Epistle to the Romans, his Epistle to the Galatians, his Epistle to the Ephesians and, indeed, all his writings seem like so many cannons dragged to the front and discharging red-hot shot against the very idea of salvation by the works of the law. "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified," he says, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Further down in the history of the Christian Church this old conflict was renewed very vehemently by Martin Luther and his brother Reformers against the church of Rome. You must not think that the great point of difference between the Protestants and Romanists is whether we shall obey that respectable old gentleman at Rome or not! Or whether we shall have our ministers dressed in blue and scarlet and fine linen—or in common broadcloth, like ourselves. Those trifles may become important as ostensible signs of profession, but they are not the main point at issue. They are merely the husk of the controversy! The real battle between the Papists and the Protestants turns on this—are men saved by works, or are they saved by grace? All the Reformers that ever tried to

reform the church of Rome by interfering with her mummeries and her monasteries, her priests and their vestments, her holy days and celebrations, and I do not know what besides, were all just fiddling away with a wasted force at some of the external branches of that horrible old upas tree! But when Luther came fresh from the cell with that light of God still beaming from his eyes, "We are justified by faith," then it was that the axe was laid at the root of this tree! There is nothing needed to bring down popery but the constant promulgation of this one truth of God—"It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy," for salvation is not of man, neither by man—it is of the Lord and it is given to as many as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts! In fact, this is the standing controversy, today, before which all other controversies dwindle into insignificance. The outside world still has it that they will be saved by their own doings. The host of God's elect, stripped of their own righteousness and made to put on the righteousness of Christ, stand, each man, with his sword upon his side and his shield in his hand, defensive for this one truth of God, this vital truth of God, the all-important truth of the gospel!

For this, brothers and sisters, we ought, every one of us, to be prepared to shed our blood! To obliterate or to disguise this Truth were to put out the lamp that illuminates this dark world! Take away the only ointment that can heal earth's wounds! To destroy the only medicine that will ever cure the diseases of humanity—"Justified by faith, saved by grace, not of works, lest any man should boast."

At this time, let us briefly consider *a great negative*—"not of works." *A great reason*—"lest any man should boast." And then throw in, one after the other, with very little order, *a few thoughts about this great matter*.

I. A GREAT NEGATIVE—"Not of works." Now, brothers and sisters, it must not be of works because that way has been tried and has proved *a complete failure*. Adam was placed in the garden of Eden under circumstances peculiarly conducive to his happiness. The law of God which was to test him was remarkably simple. It contained but one command, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." Adam was not, as we are, corrupt—his constitution had no tendency to sin. He was pure and perfect with well-balanced judgment and without bias one way or the other. He had never sinned—he need not ever to have sinned! It seems to me, he had nothing to gain by sin. His paradise was as perfect as it could be! God had been pleased to give him everything necessary to make him abundantly happy. But under these circumstances—the most favorable in which humanity was ever placed—the way of acceptance before God by works broke lamentably down!

Whether after a short or long term of probation, we will not say—it is folly to speak where Scripture is silent—it is certain that when tempted, he lapsed, for the woman took the fruit and the man also partook of it. Then acceptance by works became like a potter's vessel smashed with a rod of iron! Man had tried the way of merit and bitter, indeed was the

award. Despair, you sons of Adam—where your father failed, though up to then untainted—you, with perverted will, with imagination apt to picture pleasantry in sin, with judgment warped and strained by innate depravity, by the infection of example and by the force of surrounding circumstances—think not that you can stand upright where perfect Adam fell! Hope not to find a way back through the gates of paradise, for there still stands the cherub with his flaming sword—and no flesh living shall henceforth be saved by his works! The way of salvation by works is utterly unsuitable for us! It is not only fruitless, proved to be so, but it is inconsistent. Anything which involves an impossibility is vain to propose. Propose to a man without feet that he should walk, or to a man without eyes that he should distinguish colors—you see the folly—but is it not equally absurd to recommend a convict to seek a peerage? It is impossible for any one of us to obtain merits before God!

We have all confessedly sinned already. Our present status debars us from entering the list for future honors. By what means are we to put away this old sin? There it stands. Suppose we obey God from this time forth till we die without a single fault—we shall then only have done what it was our duty to perform and God had a right to expect of us! There will be no balance left, nothing to put *per contra* against our sins, nothing to our credit as a reduction of our liabilities—we would only have paid the current account, supposing that to be possible. The debt will still remain! The old score—who is to pay that? "Oh," says one, "we apply to Christ for that." No, no, sir! If it is to be by works, you must keep to works, for the apostle lays it down in the 11th chapter of Romans that, "if it is of grace, it is not of works, and if it is of works it is not of grace." Two principles, these, which will not mingle—have which you like. They are like oil and water, or, rather, like fire and water—they are opposed to each other! If Christ is to save you, He must do it altogether. He will never be a make-weight for you, depend upon it! He did not come into this world to make up a few deficiencies—not at all so! He will not have you boasting! He will not have you sharing the honor of your salvation with Him!

God demands of every man a perfect life—having all sinned, we cannot bring Him a perfect life. You have cracked that vase. And, if you do not break it again, it is already cracked. "Oh," but you tell me, "it is only in a little place." Yes, but if there is only one link in the chain broken which drags up the miner from the deeps of the earth, it is quite enough for his destruction that one link is broken! There is no need to have a dozen links fretted through with rust, the one flaw is sufficient. If you will be saved by works, you must be absolutely perfect, for it is inconsistent with the justice of God that He should accept any but perfect obedience from the creatures that come under His sway. Can you render this?

If you know yourselves, you will say, "we cannot." You will look on the flames that Moses saw when Sinai was on a blaze—you will tremble and despair of ever saving yourselves!

But, again, while the way has been proven to be fruitless and is certainly unsuitable, it is a way which, with all his talking, *no man ever does fairly try*. I have often noticed that those who prate loudest of good works are those that have the fewest good deeds to make mention of. Like little traders in the streets with their little stock of commodities, they had need cry and advertise their wares because they have so little to sell! Whereas a diamond merchant or dealer in bullion sits still and never makes a noise at all because he has precious treasure by him. Your hard talkers about good works generally come from some disreputable haunt. They will even boast that their sentiments are better than their habits. Well, they need be! I have seen them put their black and smutty fingers upon the bright gospel of Christ and say, "This leads to licentiousness." Pity, then, sir, you should ever approach it, since you can find licentiousness fast enough without it! Pure minds see God in the gospel. They veil their faces and bow before its majesty. Ah, well might I preach up morality, but not as the way of salvation, or what would be the result of it? What said Thomas Chalmers during the early part of his life? He said, "I preached up sobriety till nearly all my followers became great drinkers. I preached up honesty till I manufactured thieves. The more I preached of the right which man ought to do, the more I found men doing wrong." These are not his words, but they are the sense of his own solemn confession when he came to read the pure gospel and began to preach it with all his heart!

So is it with every man and I suppose it always will be. Dry essays about duty run off and slide like oil down a slab of marble—while the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God in pardoning the chief of sinners attracts men to Jesus, breaks their hearts, causes them to hate sin, sets them upon reformation, makes them holy and helps them to persevere even to the end! "Not of works," says the text—and we come back to it. If salvation were by works and could be so worked out—listen—then Calvary would be a superfluity! The cross of Christ, with all its wonders, would be a work of supererogation on God's part! The work of redemption would be a subject of derision for us! Is there no salvation, or is there salvation somehow else? Must God come down and take the form of man and in that form must the Christ of God suffer even unto death—and all for nothing—for it comes to that! If man can save himself, what is there need of you angels? Hush your Christmas carols! What need for those gazing eyes and that absorbing wonder as you watch the manifestation of the Lord of glory, Incarnate among men? What needs it that the prophets talk of the Lamb of God and point us to the infinite sacrifice? What need is there that Jesus wears the crown of thorns and bows His head to die for us? There are men who say we can work our own passage to the stars and by our merits enshrine ourselves among the blessed. Sirs, which shall I believe—that God has worked a work that need not have been, or that you are under the spell of a fatal delusion? "Let God be true and every man a liar." You can find no way to heaven but by the cross!—

"Could your zeal no respite know,
Could your tears forever flow—
All for sin could not atone—
Christ must save, and Christ alone!"

Those persons who prate most of salvation by works, whether they acknowledge it or not, do really *lower the standard of holiness* and abate the dignity of the law of God. You come to probe them and the old story which Whitefield and John Vaudois fought against so valiantly of Saxon obedience is the petition of the self-righteous man's creed. "Well," he says, "I can't keep all the law of God—I admit that. As to thoughts, deeds and words, I can't be quite clean, but I will do my best." Now, what is this but to altogether lower the law of God because you cannot come up to God's law? Is the Almighty God to come down to your terms? Do you think to barter with Him? Can your miserable three farthings in the pound satisfy a divine law? This will never be! "Heaven and earth shall pass away," says Christ, "but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail." This is the Word of God spoken from Sinai, "Cursed is every man that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

God will not take part payment! Holiness, let me tell you, sirs, is a very different thing from that morality which some men boast of! Why, I almost hold my breath when I encounter some men's morality that they talk so much of! Those loose tongues that chatter so glibly against the gospel as fomenting licentiousness—if they did but once cry, "God be merciful to us sinners," would come much nearer to playing their right part. Men that are sinning daily in open violation of common virtue will talk as though they were pure in all their tastes, holy in all their thoughts and above suspicion in all their lives? Oh, no! God's holiness is something more grand, more sublime than you and I have guessed at! And we shall not reach to that by our works, at any rate, for they are blotted, blurred, marred and spoiled upon the wheel like the figures of an ill-taught potter—and we cannot presume to exhibit them before the living God.

II. A GREAT REASON IS GIVEN—a few words on it—"Not of works lest any man should boast." If any man could get to heaven by his own works, what a boaster he would naturally be! I am sure he would be so on earth. This is the part he would play. He would hear that God, in His mercy, had been forgiving some great sinner and that there was joy in heaven over him. And he would say, "I cannot take my share in such pleasures as that. I have never transgressed His commandments. I find myself very tightly bound and I do not get much joy out of it. Here is that renegade who has been given to sin and he is to be saved! I do not like it." You know where to read the story in Luke's gospel, "He was angry and would not go in, therefore his father came and entreated him. And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandments and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as

soon as this, your son was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf." Pretty specimen of a son, but the picture of what any man would be who felt, "I owe God nothing. I am all right—I am saved by my own works."

What a churl he would be in the church! I am sure I would be very sorry to admit such a man to our assemblies. I would feel that he was quite out of place with poor sinners saved by grace like ourselves, who have nothing to boast of. It would make the whole church wretched to have such people in church fellowship! Why, if we did not idolize them, we would hate them! I do not know which of the two it would be—certainly they would be much out of place in our assemblies with their boasting. And what would they do in heaven? Why, the very reverse of what all the spirits are doing who are there—these all sing, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"—they would have to say, "We kept our raiment white ourselves." When the ransomed spirits cast their crowns at His feet, the self-righteous souls would hold high their crests and wear their tiaras, saying, "We have won them ourselves and we have a right to them!" It would spoil heaven! Heaven would not be the perfection of harmony. Such beings would occasion discord in the glory land—a greater discord than seen in the universe since the fall! No, no! It is "Not of works, lest any man should boast"!

Do I hear somebody say, "We do not maintain that men are to be saved by works altogether, but partly by God's grace and partly by their own works." Well, I will suppose for a moment that this strange monster can be manufactured—a saint compounded part of grace and part of works! Well now, in what proportion are these two opposite qualities to be brought together? How much grace and how much works? Half works? Yes. Then how about those poor fellows who come very near half? Well, one quarter works? Yes. And then three-quarters grace? Well, perhaps some more, and some less. Some three-quarters works, some half works and some only one-eighth works and so on. You will have to arrange them very orderly, you know—and depend upon it that as soon as they find out the proportion of their salvation that was by works—in that proportion they will begin to boast! I would and I do not think I would be to blame if I did. I would say, "Now, here I am, saved half by my works. Here is a lot of these poor believers in Christ who were saved altogether by grace, but I have contributed of my own means a full half to my salvation. I do not mind just lifting my crown a little—just admit I had help in getting it on my head, but I am not going to cast it down at His feet—every man has a right to what is his due!"

I thought Napoleon did a good thing when, on the day of his coronation, he took his crown and put it on his own head. Why should he not take the symbol that was his due? And if you get to heaven one half by grace and one half by works, you will say, "atonement profited me a little, but integrity profited me much more!" Do I seem to you to talk sarcastically? Be it admitted I do! Were it possible for me to kick this idea

of human merit like a football round the world, sirs—were it possible to set it in the pillory of scorn and pelt it with I know not what of filth, I would feel that I had the Apostle Paul standing by my side and saying, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And I would hear him say of his own righteousness, "I count it as dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." He could not have taken a coarser figure, nor one which expressed more thoroughly his hearty contempt of everything like self-righteousness—"I count it as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." "Lest any man should boast"—this is a good and sufficient reason why salvation should not be of works! Now—

III. A FEW THOUGHTS WITHOUT ORDER, but I hope they may catch your attention and stick in your memory. Some say—I know it is a common observation—this talking about sinners coming to Christ just as they are and trusting in Him alone for their salvation is very dangerous. Respectable persons and people who think themselves qualified to be critics, generally make some such observation as this—"it is very dangerous." Now my dear friends, if you will condescend to listen for a minute, I would remind you that *neither you nor I have anything to do with making the gospel.* We may think the gospel ought to be such-and-such, but that does not make it so. And if I should choose to think, or if you should, that such-and-such a doctrine is very dangerous, that neither makes it true nor makes it false, for, after all, the great solemn appeal about all matters of religion is not to you, nor yet to me! We stand on an equal footing there—you may think one thing and I may think another. But the Judge—the Judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail, must decide. The great question is, "What say the Scriptures? What does the old book say?" If it does not teach that the salvation of a sinner is altogether by grace and not of works, it does not teach anything at all—and there are no words in any language that mean anything! I must be made to believe that black is white and that God has purposely and willfully written a book to deceive us, before I can believe salvation to be by works! For the expressions about this matter are not a few. They are not casual—they are not dark and mysterious, they are not metaphorical—they are plain, simple and obvious. I challenge any man—I will not say any *theologian*—but any man of common-sense that can read the Bible—whether he uses our version, or prefers the original—if he will but read it honestly, he can come to no other conclusion in reading the Epistles of Paul than this—that salvation is by grace through faith in the merits of Christ—and not at all by the works of the law.

Now, that is a thing that ought to decide and end the matter. I ask you not to heed anything I say—do not take my word for it—my *ipse dixit* is nothing! It is in God's book and on your heads it must be if you deny it! "Oh," said one to another, "I didn't like your preaching the other night." "What didn't you like in it?" "I didn't like your preaching up salvation to

sinners." "Oh, that is nothing to me, the quarrel is not between you and me, but between you and my Master. You must settle that with Him. I have nothing to do with manufacturing doctrines—my business is to preach them as I find them in the Scripture. If you do not like them, you must leave them, but it is at your own peril." Let me say to all of you, I beseech you cast not away your own soul!

Every one of us ought to remember that a *great deal of that commodity in this world known by the name of good works is not good works at all.* What is a good work? I would venture to say that anything that has in it the element of selfishness is *not* good. You may question that, but I think it is the highest virtue to be unselfish. If a man is found to be virtuous, as we say, with the design of benefiting *himself*, has he not spoiled his virtue? The very design of seeking merit by what he does, spoils the possibility of merit! A man is not a servant of God while he is only serving himself. It is only when he gets rid of self that he becomes truly good. To pray may be good or not, according to whether it is real prayer. To attend the house of God, or give alms to the poor may be good or not good, according to the heart. But external duties are not good works! No, though a man should be faultless in his external life, yet if the motive were sinister and the desires unclean, his works would all taste of the fountain from where they came and not be good in the sight of God. Did it ever strike you that in our works the heart must always be the great matter?

Cowper, in his *Task*, has very wonderfully worked out this subject in the best blank verse. He pictures two footmen employed by you—one of them is a very polite, quick, nimble, handy fellow—but, as he says, he serves you for your house, your housemaid, and your pay. Let either of these be gone and he is gone, too. But the true servant is Charles, that stands behind the chair, that is troubled if your appetite seems to fail, that has been with you from a boy, that if you were poor and hadn't any pay to give him, would cling to the posts of your doors—that would live for you and die for you—that is the man whom you love as a servant! So it is with virtue. The best and highest of good works are those that spring from love, real love to God! Now, where do you find this? In the man who rejects Christ? No—his works are those of a slavish fear! He does not serve God out of love, but because he trembles at the thought of hell. But when a soul is brought to trust in Jesus, then the heart loves God, the service of God becomes a great delight and the man who says, "I am not saved by works," works ten times harder than he ever would have done if he had hoped to be saved by his own doings! And his works are better works because he has devoted love which infuses into them a sacred excellency which otherwise had not been there.

Be it forever known and understood that when we preach salvation by grace, *we do not undervalue morality*. No, brothers and sisters, we exalt it! I will give you proof. There is a hospital. It is free to all the sick, but there is a notion about town that nobody may enter there except those who do something to heal themselves. Now, I will suppose that I am sent

as a missionary to go among the sick and tell them that their own health is not worth a farthing, that they are to come to the hospital gates just as they are, that at the hospital they look at disease as a qualification and not at health. Somebody might say, "Here is this man undervaluing health." My dear brother, I am doing no such thing! Do you think I would be trying to get these sick people into the hospital if I undervalued health? It is not health I undervalue—it is the quackery that mimics health! It is this empiricism which films over men's diseases, which had need be dealt with otherwise. Why, if thousands in London were dying because they had the notion that they could not be received at the hospital unless they healed themselves, surely it were the kindest and best work a man could do—and the quickest means to promote the popular health—to go and dissuade men of this absurd notion! If, my brothers and sisters, when we bade you come to Christ, we told you that after coming to Him, you might live in sin as you did before, we would be worthy to be hanged! But when we tell you that Christ is a Physician and His Church a hospital—and that He can heal you if living in sin, we do not by any means decry your morality, but only tell you that it is but a piece of quackery until you come to Christ!—

"Speak they of morals, oh, You bleeding Lamb!
The best morality is love to You!"

The best holiness is to love Christ and to serve Him moved by the motive of gratitude! And if you try merit before you come to Him, it will only plunge you into deeper sin! You cannot blot out your iniquities. Still I know the scandal will be repeated, but if any choose to repeat it, the lives of those who have preached up salvation by grace furnish the best answer. In the days of Charles the First and Charles the Second, you would have found the party headed by Laud in the Church of England crying up ritual, crying up good works. You would have found on the other hand, the Puritan party rigidly preaching up justification by faith and salvation by grace. Now, sirs, where did you find the country parson that preached in the morning upon good works, in the afternoon? Why, with a girl on either side dancing round the Maypole, according to the book of sports! And if you needed him a little later in the evening, you would have to send some trusty parish beadle to bring him in from the village alehouse!

But where is the man who preached salvation by grace while at the conventicle? "Oh" says one, "he is at home singing Psalms with his family." Doesn't he go round the Maypole? "No, the old bigot, he never breaks the Sabbath. He says it is against the law of God." Well, but isn't he in the alehouse? "No, I dare say the old superstitious creature is on his knees somewhere, praying." Everybody knows this was the fact! The Puritan theology bred Puritan living—the doctrine of justification by faith made men holy! But the other party that preached this wonderful doctrine of salvation by works went pretty far to prove, at any rate, that *they* could not be saved by their works! The long-haired cavaliers, with their scented locks and their abominations not fit to be uttered by pure

tongue, or heard by the ear of decency—these were your work mongers, your upholders of salvation by your own doings! But the man that ordered his household well in the fear of God, the man that could bend to God but not to a tyrant, the man that loved his country and would sooner die on Edge Hill or Naseby than he would lay down the faith he held dear to him—that is the man who preached that we are justified by faith and not at all by the works of the law! You shall find holiness grows out of the one doctrine which is despised—and wickedness springs from the other which is advertised as a panacea for all ills!

If there are any here that think they can be saved by their own works, I have no gospel to preach to them whatever. I will not interfere with them. My Master has said that there is no need of a physician to them that are not sick. Good people, virtuous people, excellent people—you that are going to heaven all on your own account—don't quarrel with us poor sinners because we choose to have what you despise! If you do not want the medicine, let us drink it and be not bitter against us if we choose another way than yours. If your road is broad enough and there are enough companions in it, let us alone if we choose the narrow path!

But yet I cannot coolly dismiss you so. If you are naked, poor and miserable—I will not insult you. I counsel you by my Master—get gold tried in the fire that you may be rich and white raiment that you may be clothed—and if you know not how you can buy it, I will tell you. It is without money and without price! It is freely given and shall be given to you if you will take it. Shake your hand of that venomous serpent of your own self-confidence! Shake it into the fire, I pray you—it is the best place for it! You may come with empty hands to Christ and He will give you all your soul can want. When you come to die, you will find that good-works theory unable to bear you up. The best of men have looked upon their lives from that closing scene in another manner than they ever did before. One said he was gathering up all his works—his good works and his bad works, too—and flinging them all overboard that he might just simply trust in a crucified Savior. At any rate, friend, if you are prepared to risk your soul on your works, I am not prepared to risk mine on anything that I have done! No, I am not afraid to meet the trial hour. I am not afraid to look you in the face tonight and say, "I will meet you on that tremendous day and we will see whose confidence is the better. You shall take your works if you will, and I will take my Lord! And you shall rest in what you do, but I will not rest in anything I do." Oh, rest well upon Him and I will tell you what will happen when the whirlpools of almighty wrath shall be round about you! Your good works shall go like those deceitful life-buoys we heard of the other day—and you shall sink! But never did a soul sink that could cling to Christ! It is an unheard of thing that Christ has ever let a sinner perish, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Now, whether you have been righteous or wicked, whether you can cry yourselves up, or whether you bewail yourselves that you are deep in the

mire of sin—go, stretch out your hand and take Christ! Turn your eyes to Jesus, dying upon Calvary's cross and look to Him—

"There is life in a look of the Crucified One!"

There is life at this moment for you! I wish that everyone in this dense mass would look to my Master. There is grace enough in Christ for every one of you! No sinner was ever lost because there was any stint in Christ! No, but because they would not come and thought themselves too good for Him. Come as you are—just as you are and trust Christ. And then mark you, you will be saved! You will be saved from the love of sin! You will be saved from the power of it! You will begin a new and holy life. You will henceforth be full of good works which shall abound to the glory of God—and with these good works upon you, you shall be like a tree that is covered with rich fruit, acceptable to God! Still your root shall not be your fruit, but your root shall be a simple faith in a precious Christ whom this night I have declared unto you. So God bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5:1-9.

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* We have it tonight. We enjoy it. We delight in it, "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Not only have we peace, but we get into the favor of God and we stand in it! This is the grace or favor which comes of being justified. We now feel a freedom to come into our Father's presence because He has forgiven us for Christ's sake. We now feel at home with Him though once we were prodigal sons and had wandered far away. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have something yet in reserve—present peace, but future perfection! We have present rest, but there still remains a rest for the people of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

3-5. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation works patience. And patience, experience, and experience, hope. And hope makes us not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* So that even what might seem to be the disadvantages of this present life are made to work into advantages! And what at one time might threaten our prosperity, really conduces to it. Patience, which we never could have if we never had a trouble, is given to us. And experience, which we never could have if we did not patiently endure the trouble we obtain! We get pearls out of these deep seas. We get treasures out of these blazing furnaces which seem to smelt our blessings, that they may come to us rich and pure. And, above all, there rises a glorious hope, never to be drowned—never to be made ashamed—because we feel the love of God

shed abroad in our hearts like a sweet perfume making every part of our nature fragrant because the Holy Spirit is there!

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* That was our character. There was no good point about us. We were ungodly and we had no strength to mend ourselves or to be other than ungodly. The strength for reformation had all gone. The strength for regeneration we never had. We were without strength and then Christ died for us—died for the ungodly!

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man.* A benevolent, loving-spirited man.

7, 8. *Some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* And that is the glory of His love! While we were rebels against His government, He redeemed us. While we were far off from Him by wicked works, He sent His Son to die and bring us near. Free grace, indeed, was this—not caused by anything in us but springing freely from the great heart of God!

9. *Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* You see the force of the argument? If He loved us when we were still dead in sin, much more will He keep us and preserve us now that He has justified us! Were His enemies redeemed? Shall not His friends be kept? Did He love those who were still far off? Will He not love those who are brought near—and love us even to the end?

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SEEKING RICHLY REWARDED
NO. 3409

A SERMON
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"The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."
Psalm 34:10.

THE young lions are very strong. They are as yet in the freshness of their youth and yet their strength does not always suffice to keep them supplied. The young lions are very crafty—they understand how to waylay their game and leap upon them with a sudden spring at unawares, and yet, with all their craftiness, they howl for hunger in the woods. The young lions are very bold and furious, very unscrupulous. They are not stayed from any deed of depredation and yet for all that, freebooters as they are, they sometimes lack and suffer hunger. These are just the type of many men in the world—they are strong men, they are cunning men, they are thoroughly up to the times—smart, sharp men. If anybody could be well supplied, one would think they should be. But how many of them go to bankruptcy and ruin and, with all their cunning, they are too cunning! And with all their unscrupulousness, they manage, at last, full often, to come to an ill end. They do lack and suffer hunger. But here are the people of God—they are regarded as simpletons, such simpletons as to seek the Lord instead of adopting the maxims of universal worldly wisdom, namely, "Seek yourself!" They have given up what is called the first law of human nature—namely, self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-serving—and have come to seek the Lord, to seek to magnify Him. And what comes of their simplicity? "They shall not want any good thing." Notwithstanding their lack of power, their want of cunning and the check which conscience often puts upon them, so that they cannot do what others can to enrich themselves—yet for all that, they have a fortune ensured to them! They "shall not want any good thing."

Let us look at this text, now, and together consider it thus—first, *the seeking of the Lord which is here intended.* And then following upon that, *the promise that is given upon such seeking.*

I. THE SEEKING OF THE LORD HERE INTENDED.

We must be particular and very precise about this. The promise is so rich that we wish to win it fully, but we do not wish to be dishonest. We would not take a Word of God that does not belong to us, lest we should deceive ourselves and be guilty of robbing God. We must go carefully and

jealously, here, and must search ourselves to see if in very deed and truth we are such as *really* seek the Lord.

Now, the term to "seek the LORD," I may say, *is the description of the life of the Christian*. When he lives as he should, his whole life is seeking the Lord! It is with this he begins. "Behold, he prays," that is, he seeks the Lord. He has begun to be conscious of his sin. He is seeking pardon of the Lord. He has begun to be aware of his danger—he is seeking salvation in the Lord. He is now aware of his powerlessness and he is looking for strength to the Lord. Those deep convictions, those cries and tears, that repenting and humbling and, above all, those acts of simple confidence in which he casts himself upon the great atonement made upon Calvary's bloody tree—those are all acts of seeking the Lord! Now, perhaps some of you have got no farther than this. Well, you shall have your proportion of blessing, according to your strength. You shall have your share in it, little as you are. He will give to His children at the table their portion, as well as to those who have grown to manhood.

After a man has attained unto eternal life by confiding in the Lord Jesus, he then goes on to seek the Lord in quite another way. No wonder! Since he has found the Lord, or rather has been found of Him, and yet he still presses on to apprehend Him of whom he has been already apprehended! He still presses forward, seeking the Lord, and he seeks the Lord thus. He seeks, now, *to know the Lord's mind*, the Lord's law and will. "Show me what You would have me to do," he says. "Lord, I went by my own wit, once, and I brought myself into a dark forest—I lost myself—I was at hell's brink and You did save me. Now, Lord, guide and direct me. Be pleased to teach me. Open my lips when I speak. Guide my hands when I act. I wait at Your feet, feeling that—

"For holiness no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie."

The man now seeks the Lord by daily and constant prayer, seeking that he may be upheld, guided, constrained in paths of righteousness and restrained from the ways of sin. He becomes a seeker of the Lord after sanctification, as once he was after justification. And then he becomes a seeker of the Lord in a further sense. He seeks to enjoy the Lord's love and His gracious fellowship and communion. He seeks to get near in reverent friendship to his Lord. He now longs to grow up in the likeness of Christ, that his conversation with the Father and the Son may be more close, more sweet, more continuous. He feels that God is his Father and that he is no longer at a distance from Him in one sense, for He is made near by the blood of the cross. Yet sometimes he is oppressed with a sense of his old evil heart of unbelief and in departure from the living God—and he cries out, "Draw me nearer to Yourself!" In fact, his prayer is always—

"Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee—
Even though it is a cross that raises me,
Still all my cry shall be,

Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee."

He seeks the Lord's company. He delights to be in God's house and at God's mercy-seat, and at the foot of the cross, where God reveals Himself in all His glory! He is constantly crying for a larger capacity to receive more of God. And the longing of his soul is, "When shall I come and appear before God?" He feels that he never shall be satisfied till he awakes in the Lord's likeness. Now, all this, which may be private within him and scarcely known to any, operates practically in *an outward seeking of the Lord which makes the man's life to be sublime*. The genuine Christian lives for God. He makes the first objective of all that he does, the glory of God, the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, the showing forth of His praise who has brought him out of darkness into marvelous light. He is a young man, an apprentice—he has been converted and he says, "Now, what can I do while I am in this house to make it better, to make it happier and holier, that men may see what the religion of Jesus is? How can I recommend my Lord and Master to those among whom I dwell—to my master and my mistress and my fellow servants?" He becomes a tradesman on his own account, and when he opens that shop door he says, "I do not mean to trade for myself. I will make this to be my objective, that this shall be God's shop. God has got to keep me—He has promised that He will—therefore, I may take what I need for the daily subsistence of myself and my children, but I will keep the shop for God, for all that, and if He prospers me, I will give Him of my substance, but whatever comes of it, I will so trade across my counter, so keep those books and manage those bills that I will let the world see what a Christian trader is! And I will seek thus to recommend my Lord and my God—and my objective shall be to make Him famous."

He seeks the Lord on Sundays. He desires at the Sunday school, or the preaching station, or anywhere he may serve, to be glorifying God. But he equally seeks Him on Mondays and other weekdays, for he believes there is a way of turning over calicoes, weighing pounds of tea, plowing acres of land, driving a cart, or whatever else he may be called to do, by which he can honor God and cause others to honor Him.

Now, I say very solemnly—I hope I am mistaken in what I say, but I fear I am not—I am afraid there are many professors who would tell a lie if they said that they sought God always in their business, for though they are the members of a church and you would not find them out in anything seriously inconsistent, yet their whole life is inconsistent because for a Christian to live for anything but the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent! It is inconsistent to the very root and core, to the tenor and aim, the supreme objective of life, altogether inconsistent! A man has a right to live, to bring up his family, to educate them and see them comfortably settled in life—but that ought to be only for God's glory! His acting as a father is expected, for if a man cares not for his own household, he is worse than a heathen and a publican—that God may be

glorified by his doing is his duty! But when I see some people putting by their thousands and getting rich for no sort of reason that I know of, except that people may say, "How much did he leave behind him?" how can I believe that those professors, as they take the sacramental cup, are doing anything but drinking condemnation unto themselves? When I see some Christians who profess to be living for nothing but to be respectable and to be known, and honored and noticed, but never seem to care about the souls of men, nor about Christ's glory—never shedding a tear over a dying sinner nor heaving a sigh over this huge and wicked city, which is like a millstone upon the neck of some of us, like a nightmare perpetually upon our hearts—when I see these men so cold, so indifferent, so wrapped up in themselves, what can I think but that their religion is but a cloak, a painted pageantry for them to go to hell in, which shall be discovered at the last and be a theme for the laughter of the fiends? Oh, may God grant that we may all be able truly to say, "I seek the Lord. I am sure, I am certain that I seek Him," for if we can feel that that is true, then we can take the promise of the text. If not, we may not touch it. If we, as professing Christians, are not at top and bottom in heart, and soul, and spirit—and in all that we do—really seeking the glory of God, the promise does not belong to us! But if we can, from our very souls, declare, "Notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, yet, Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You and that I seek Your honor," then this is true of us, and no one of us shall need any good thing!

Just a word or two more about this, for we must discriminate thoroughly well before we come to the promise. It is too rich and precious to be bestowed upon the wrong persons, and there are some who hope to get this promise, and who feel that they must not take it. We must be among those who seek the Lord heartily, not merely saying that we do, or wishing that we did but, filled with the Holy Spirit, and in the power of His blessed residence in our souls, we must be heartily panting after God's glory! Otherwise I do not see that we can put our hands on the promise without presumption. We must be seeking it honestly, too, for there is a way of seeking God's good and your own at the same time—I mean having a sinister and selfish motive. We may preach and not be preaching only for God at all. A man may live in the sanctuary, in holy engagements from morning until night and yet may never ardently, intensely, seek the Lord. A man may be a great giver to charities, a great attendee at prayer-meetings, a great doer of all kinds of Christian work and yet he may never seek the Lord, but may yet be seeking to have his name known, to be noted as a generous man, or be merely seeking to get merit to himself, or self-complacency to his own conscience. It is a downright honest desire to serve and glorify God while we are here that is meant in the text. If we have got it and I think we may readily see whether we have or not—then is the word of the Psalmist true to us.

We must seek God's glory heartily, honestly, and we must seek it most obediently. A man cannot say, "I am seeking God's glory," when he knows he is disobeying God's command in what he is doing. How can I say that I desire to glorify God by following a pursuit which is sinful, by giving loose to my anger and speaking rashly? By giving rein to my passions, by indulging my own desires, by being proud and domineering over my fellow Christians, or by being pliant, fearful, timid after an unholy sort and not being bold for God and for His truth? No, we must watch ourselves very narrowly and cautiously. We must be very careful of our own spirits. We soon get off the line. Even when we are keeping correct outwardly, we may be getting very inconsistent inwardly by forgetting that the first, last, midst and sole objective of a blood-bought spirit is to live for Christ—and that if saints on earth were what they should be, they would be as constantly God's servants as the angels are in heaven—they would be as much messengers of God in their daily calling as the seraphs are before the eternal throne of God! Oh, when will the Spirit of God lift us up to anything like this? The most of us are still hunting after things that will melt beneath the sun, or rot beneath the moon! We are gathering up shadows to ourselves, things which have no abiding substance—we are seeking self, seeking anything rather than the blessed God! Lord, forgive us this sin wherein we have fallen into it, and make us truly such as truly seek the Lord! Now, let us be prepared to behold—

II. THE PROMISE OF THE REWARD OF SUCH SEEKING.

"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." That is, *not one of them*. They that first stepped into Bethesda's pool were healed—but no others. But here everybody that steps into this pool is healed! That is to say, everyone that seeks the Lord has this promise—the least as well as the greatest—the Little-Faiths and the Much-Afraids as much as the Great-Hearts and the Stand-Fasts. They that seek the Lord, whether they are chimneysweeps or princes, whether they are tender children or seasoned veterans in the Master's great army—they shall want no good thing. "Well, but," somebody says, "There are some of them that are in need." They are in need? Yes, that may be, but they are not in need *of any good thing*. They cannot be. God's Word against anything you say, or I say. If they seek the Lord, they shall not, they cannot, and they will not need any good thing! "Well, at any rate, they need what appears to be a good thing." That is very likely—the text does not say they shall not be. "Well, but they need what they once found to be a good thing! They need health—is not that a good thing? It was a good thing to them when they had it before, yet they need health. Does not that go against the text?" No, it does not in any way whatever! The text means this—that anything which is absolutely good for him, all circumstances being considered, no child of God shall ever need. I met with this statement in a work by that good old Puritan, Mr. Clarkson, which stuck by me when I

read it some time ago. I think the words were these, "If it were a good thing for God's people for sin, Satan, sorrow and affliction to be abolished, Christ would blot them out within five minutes! And if it were a good thing for the seeker of the Lord to have all the kingdoms of this world put at his feet, and for him to be made a prince, Jesus would make him a prince before the sun rose again!" If it were absolutely to him, all things being considered, a good thing, he would have it, for Christ would be sure to keep His Word. He has said he shall not want it, and He would not let His child want it, whatever it might be, if it were really, absolutely, and in itself, all things considered, a good thing! Now, taking God's Word and walking by faith towards it, what a light it sheds on your history and mine! There are many things for which I wish, and which I sincerely think to be good, but I say at once, "If I have not got them, they are not good, for if they were good, good for me, and I am truly seeking God, I would have them—if they were good things, my heavenly Father would not deny them to me—He has said He would not, and I believe His pledged Word." I think sometimes it would be a good thing for me if I had more talents, but if it were a good thing I would have more, I would have them. You think it were a good thing if you were to have more money. Well, if He saw it to be good, you would have it. "Oh," you say " but it *would* have been a good thing if my poor mother had been spared to me—if she were alive, now, it would have been a good thing and it would certainly be a good thing for us to be in the position I was five years ago before these terrible panic times came." Well, if it had been a good thing for you to have been there, you would have been there. "I don't see it," says one. Well, do not expect to see it, but *believe* it! We walk by faith, not by sight. But the text says so. It says not that every man shall have every good thing, but it does say that every man that seeks the Lord shall have every good thing. He shall not want any good thing, be it what it may. "Well, I doubt it," says one. Very well, I do not wonder that you do, for your father, Adam, doubted it, and that is how the whole race fell! Adam and Eve were in the garden, and they might have felt quite sure that their heavenly Father would not deny them any good thing, but the devil came and whispered and said to them, "God knows that in the day you eat of the fruit of that tree, you will be as gods! That fruit is very good for you—a wonderfully good thing; never anything like it, and that one good thing God has kept away from you." "Oh," said Eve, "then I will get it," and down we all fell! The race was ruined through their doubting the promise! If they had continued to seek the Lord, they would not have needed any good thing. That fruit was not a good thing to them—it might have been good in itself, but it was not good for them or else God would have given it to them—and their doubting it brought all this terrible sorrow on us. So it will upon you, for let me show you—you say, perhaps, "It would be a very good thing for me to be rich." God has stopped you up many times. You have never prospered when you thought you were going to. You will put out your hand, perhaps, to do a

wrong thing to be rich, but if you say, "No, I will work, and toil, and do what I can, but if I am not prospered, it is not a good thing for me to be prospered, and I would not do a wrong thing if it would bring me all the prosperity that heart could desire." Then you will walk uprightly and God will bless you. But if you begin to doubt it and say, "That is a good thing and my heavenly Father does not give it to me," you will, first of all, get hard and bitter thoughts against your heavenly Father. And then you will get wicked thoughts and wrong desires—and these will lead you to do wrong things, and God's name will be greatly dishonored thereby. How do you know what is a good thing for you? "Oh, I know," says one. That is just what your child said last Christmas. He was sure it was a good thing for him to have all those sweets! He thought you very hard that you denied them to him, and yet you knew better. You had seen him before made so ill through those very things he now longed for. And your heavenly Father knows, perhaps, that you could not bear to be strong in body—you would never be holy if you had too robust health. He knows you could not endure to be wealthy—you would be proud, vain, perhaps wicked—you do not know how bad you might be if you had this! He has put you in the best place for you. He has given you not only some of the things that are good for you, but *all* that is good for you! And there is nothing in the world that is really, solidly, abidingly good for you, but you either have it now, or you shall have it before long. God your Father is dealing with you in perfect wisdom and perfect love, and though your reason may begin to cavil and question, yet your faith should sit still at His feet and say, "I believe it. I believe it, even though my heart is wrung with sorrow. I am a seeker of God. I seek His glory and I shall not need any good thing."

I think someone in the congregation might say to me, "Look at the martyrs. Did not they seek the Lord above all men?" Truly so, but what were you about to object? "Why, they needed many good things. They were in prison, sometimes in cold, and nakedness, and hunger. They were tormented on the rack. Many of them went to heaven from the fiery stake." Yes, but they never needed any good thing. It would not have been a good thing to them, as God's martyrs, to have suffered less, for now read their history. The more they suffered, the brighter they shine. Rob them of their sufferings and you strip their crowns of their gems! Who are the brightest before the eternal throne of God? Those who suffered most below! If they could speak to you now, they would tell you that that noisome dungeon was, because it enabled them to glorify God, a good thing to them! They would tell you that the rack whereon they did sing sweet hymns of praise was a good thing for them because it enabled them to show forth the patience of the saints and to have their names written in the book of the peerage of the skies! They would tell you that the fiery stake was a good thing because from that pulpit they preached Christ after such a fashion as men could never have heard it from cold

lips and stammering tongues! Did not the world perceive that the suffering of the saints were good things, for they were the seed of the Church? They helped to spread the truth of God and, because God would not deny them any good thing, He gave them their dungeons, He gave them their racks, He gave them their stakes—and these were the best things they could have had, and with enlarged reason, and with their mental faculties purged, those blessed spirits would now choose again, could they live over again, to have suffered those things! They would choose, were it possible, to have lived the very life and to have endured all they braved to have received so glorious a reward as they now enjoy!

"Ah, well, then," says one, "I see I really have not understood a great deal that has happened to me. I have been in obscurity, lost my friends, been despised, felt quite broken down—do you mean to tell me that that has been a good thing?" I do. God has blessed it to you. He will enable you to say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your law." And if you get more grace, you will say it is a good thing, for is it not a good thing for you to be conformed to the likeness of Christ? How can you be, if you have no suffering? If you never suffered with Him, how can you expect to reign with Him? How are you to be made like Him in His humiliation, if you are never humbled? Why, I think every pain that shoots through the frame and thrills the sensitive soul helps us to understand what Christ suffered. And being sanctified, gives us the power to pass through the torn veil, and to be baptized with His baptism, and in our measure to drink of His cup and, therefore, it becomes a good thing! And our Father gives it to us because His promise is that He will not deny or withhold any good thing from those that walk uprightly.

I feel, brothers and sisters, as though my text were too full for me to go on with it! There is such a mass in it, and if you will take it home and turn it over at your leisure, you may do with it better than I can, if I attempt wire-drawing and word-spinning. There is the text. It seems to me to speak as plainly as the English tongue can speak. Give yourselves wholly up to God and live for Him, and you shall never want anything that is really good for you! Your life shall be the best life for you, all things considered in the light of eternity, that a life could have been! Only mind you keep to this—the seeking of the Lord. There is the point of it! Get out of that, and there may be some promise for you, but certainly not this one! You have got out of the line of the promise—but keep to that and seek the Lord—and your life shall be, even if it is a poverty-stricken one, such a life that if you could have the infinite intelligence of your heavenly Father, you would ordain it to be precisely as it now is! "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

Why, how rich this makes the poor! How content this makes the suffering! How grateful this makes the afflicted! How does it make our present state to glow with an unearthly glory! But, brothers and sisters, we shall never understand this text fully, this side of heaven. There we shall see it in splendor. They that seek the Lord here shall have up

yonder all that imagination can picture, all that fancy could conceive, all that desire could create. You shall have more than eye has seen, or ear has ever heard! You shall have capacities to receive of the divine fullness, and the fullness of the pleasures that are with God shall be yours forevermore!

But, again I come back to that, are you seeking the Lord? That is a question I have asked my own heart many and many a time—Do I seek the Lord's glory in all things? I ask it of you, you young men who are starting in business. Now, you know you can, if you like, go into business for yourselves. I mean you can make your trade tell for yourselves, and live to yourselves, and the end will be miserable and the way to it will not be happy. But if God's Spirit shall help you young men and women early in life to give your hearts to Jesus, and to say, "Now, God has made us so we will serve Him that made us. Christ has bought us, so we will serve Him that bought us. The Spirit of God has given us a new life, so we will live for this new and quickening Spirit"—then I do not stand here to promise you ease and comfort, for in the world you shall have tribulation, but I do say, in God's name, that He will not withhold one good thing from you, and that when you come to be with Him forever and ever, you will bless Him that He did for you the best that could be done even by infinite wisdom and infinite love. You shall have the best life that could be lived, the best mercies that could be given and the best of all good things shall be yours here and hereafter.

There may be some here, however, who have long passed the days of youth and up till now have never had a thought of their Maker. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but they have not known God. If you keep a dog, he fawns on you and follows at your heels. There is scarcely any creature so ignorant but what it knows its keeper. Go to the Zoological Gardens and see if those animals that are most deficient in brains are not still obedient to those that feed them! Yet here is God, good and kind to a man like you, and you have lived to be 40 and have never had an idea of loving and serving Him! Have you sunk lower than the brutes? Think of that! But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners such as you. Repent! May God's eternal Spirit lead you to repentance of this great sin of having lived in neglect of God, and from henceforth, seeking pardon for the past through the atoning sacrifice, and strength for the future through the divine Spirit, seek the Lord and you shall find that you shall not need any good thing. The Lord bring you there and save and bless you eternally! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34.

"A Psalm of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed."

It was a very painful exhibition and one in which David does not shine, but in which, nevertheless, the providence and grace of God are very conspicuous. And it is very pleasant to find a man of God penning such words as these after his escape.

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* After any very great deliverance, we feel prompted to special gratitude. And it appears to us as if we never should leave off praising God. I wish that perpetuity were real, but, alas, it often happens that the next cloud that sweeps the skies brings back our doubt and our fears—and our song is over. It ought not to be. Our heart's resolve should be, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD.* What else is there to boast about? But what a proper subject for boasting, the Lord is, because it is legitimate boasting! We can never exaggerate—we can never speak too well or think too well of God! He is high above our thoughts when they are at the best, so that we may make them as big as we may and we shall never be guilty of extravagance!

2. *The humble shall hear thereof and be glad.* Humble souls cannot, generally, endure boasting, but boasting in God is very sweet to them. He that will make God great will always be a choice favorite with a broken spirit. Those that are little in themselves delight to hear of the glory of God.

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* It is too grand a theme for one! One little heart can scarcely feel it all! One feeble tongue cannot tell it out. Come, then, you saints that know His name—magnify the Lord with me!

4. *I sought the LORD and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* Blessed be His name for this. Are there not many of you, dear friends, who can bear the same testimony—personal proof of a prayer-hearing God? You tried Him, for you sought Him. You tried Him and you found Him true, for He delivered you from all your fears.

5. *They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.* Only a look—and their burden was gone. Only a look! What great things hang on little things! Faith is but a look, yet it brings life, pardon, salvation! Heaven comes that way. Only a look!

6, 7. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps round about them who fear Him, and delivers them.* The angel of the Lord does not merely come to help His people, but he stays with them. He encamps. He has pitched his tent, for he means to tarry. The guardians of God forsake not their charge. They encamp about them who fear Him, for their deliverance.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* It is the grandest of benedictions! It is the sum and substance of the gospel! "Blessed is the man that trusts in Him." By the way of works

we are cursed, but by the way of believing we are blessed. Are you trusting? Dear heart, are you trusting? Is it a feeble trust? Are you often much tried and distressed? Yet if you are trusting, you are blessed! God pronounces you so—do not let your faith waver about it, or suffer the devil to tell you that you are accursed, for you cannot be! You are blessed.

9. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.* Sometimes their wishes are not granted, but there is no real need. They shall have all necessaries, if they do not have all luxuries.

10. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.* Strong as they are, and crafty as they are, they sometimes howl because of their hunger.

10. *But they who seek the LORD*—Though they have no craft, no courage, no strength and no foresight.

10. *Shall not want any good thing.* Plead that, tried child of God! Plead it! Plead it if you are in need tonight—if you are in any form of need—plead this gracious Word of God!

11. *Come, you children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

A Sunday School teacher's text! Gather the children close to you. Say, "Come near me. I would be familiar with you." It was a king who spoke these words, and yet he delighted to say, "Come, you children." Win their attention. "Hearken unto me." If they do not hear, how shall they understand? "And I will teach you the fear of the Lord." That is your subject—pure religion—heart religion—spiritual religion! I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

12. *What man is he that desires life?* What man is he that does *not* desire life? Love of it is innate in us all.

12, 13. *And loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile.* He begins with one of the hardest practical duties of the fear of God, for he that bridles his tongue is also able to bridle the whole body! The tongue is such an unruly member that if that is kept—and only through divine grace can it be so—then we may be quite certain that all the other organs and faculties will be kept, too.

14. *Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.* A great deal packed away into a small compass there. There is the negative, "Depart from evil," and the positive which must go with it, "Do good." And if you do not do good, you will soon do evil. And then there is that blessed precept—"Seek peace." Hunt after it if you cannot find it. And if it runs away from you, follow it—pursue it—hunt after it till you gain it! A peaceable life is a happy life.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous.* He watches them. He loves them too well to let them ever be out of His sight. He views them with complacency. He regards them with affection. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.

15. *And His ears are open unto their cry.* Ready to hear their feeblest prayer—the cry of their pain—their distress. His ears are always open.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil.* Sets His face against them.

16-17. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.* Here is an explanation of the experience of the believer—first, prayer—then God's hearing and then deliverance. Who would not pray who has found prayer to be so effectual with God?

18, 19. *The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivers him out of them all.* The first line seemed to have something terrible in it—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous." But there is a blessed, "but," that comes in—thrown like the tree into Marah's bitter stream to sweeten it all!

20, 21. *He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked.* Their own evil shall be their destruction! They need nothing more than to be allowed to go on in sin! Sin is hell. The fire of corruption is the fire of perdition. Evil shall slay the wicked!

21, 23. *And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them who trust in Him shall be desolate.* How grandly does David preach the gospel! We need not look to Paul to learn salvation by faith! The Psalms are full of it. We have had it just before. "Blessed is the man that trusts in Him." And now, again, "None of them who trust in Him shall be desolate." They are sinful, but they shall not be desolate. They often feel as if they were utterly unworthy, but they shall not be desolate. They are, sometimes downcast, but they shall not be desolate. They may be hunted by trials, afflictions and temptations of the devil, but they shall not be desolate! They may come to the bed of pain and to the chamber of death, but they shall not be desolate! They shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but they shall not be desolate—not one of them—for it is written, "None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate."

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CHRIST AND HIS HEARERS
NO. 3410

A SERMON
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"Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him, and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them."
Luke 15:1, 2.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS always seeks to blame others and to whitewash itself. The group that stood nearest to Christ in preaching was composed of two classes of persons—the publicans, or tax-gatherers and the open sinners. Now the Pharisee, when he came to speak of these two classes, called them by one name, lumping them all under one description and calling them all sinners. Now, although the publicans, or tax-gatherers, were very generally taken from the lowest class of Jews, and their calling of tax-gathering, never in itself, too popular, was in their particular case very objectionable, yet we have no reason to believe that all tax-gatherers were necessarily profane, or licentious, or dishonest. There were bad and good among those Jewish tax-gatherers, as well as among all other classes of mankind! Yet, because they were looked upon as being of the lowest class, the Pharisee spoke of them as if they were all "sinners." This is a common habit, I am afraid, with the too-goods—with those who have never felt their own sinfulness, to always use the worst names they can and to put as bad a color as they can upon the characters of other men. I wish we had learned to do the very reverse, namely, to try to see all the good we can in our fellow creatures, which were far more like Christ, rather than to condemn them wholesale, and impute the faults of some to a whole class. The Holy Spirit here speaks of "publicans *and* sinners"—the evil spirit in the Pharisee calls them all sinners. Let us imitate the Spirit of God and not the spirit of pride.

But I said that self-righteousness tries to whitewash itself, for did not these Pharisees, when they murmured that Christ received sinners, intend to say that as He did receive *them*, they were *not* sinners? No, they would not have blushed, for they were rather honest in their self-righteousness—perhaps more honest than we are—they would not have blushed to have said, "We have thanked God that we are not as the publicans, and not as the sinners." They did not reckon themselves as belonging to the class of offenders and breakers of the law of God. They were holy! They were the separated ones! They were a peculiar people, zealous for good works after their own estimation, though not in the sight of God. Alas, how easy it is for us to try to make ourselves appear to be better than we really are! We are full of sin—our nature is deceitful and

vile, and yet we try to draw up a good balance sheet, if we can, of our spiritual trading! We represent that to be sound which is rotten, and that to be accepted which is dishonored. Oh that we could but see ourselves as God sees us! We would never again, then, dare even to *think* a good thought of ourselves out of Christ, but abhorring ourselves in dust and ashes, we would wrap His righteousness about us! We would plunge into the crimson fountain of His blood and never hope to be accepted except in the beloved! May God grant us grace to beware of the least touch of self-righteousness, for it is evil, only evil and that continually! May we always be as timid as the publican who stood afar off and dared not even lift up his eyes to heaven, rather than be as censorious and presumptuous as the Pharisee, whose sole prayer consisted in flattering himself that he was better than others.

Having thus introduced to you the Pharisees, the publicans and the sinners, let us now come to the text, itself, and observe that publicans and sinners were attracted to the ministry of Christ. The first question at this time shall be—*what attracted them?* Then secondly, *what in the gospel should attract us?* And thirdly, *what came of their being attracted, and what comes to us, also, of our being attracted by the gospel?*

First, then, it seems that when Christ preached, He was surrounded by a number of persons of very loose character, and others of the lowest calling who pressed to Him to hear Him.

I. WHY DID CHRIST'S HEARERS COME?

They were genuine hearers—it was a *bona fide* audience. I mean by that, that they were not like the crowds who followed Christ up the mountain—who followed not to hear Him, but to eat of the loaves and the fishes. These publicans and sinners were not thinking of the loaves and fishes. They were none of those who, like the old people in some parishes, go to church in order to get the loaf of bread on the Sunday morning. They were real, bona fide hearers, who really went to hear. They were a genuine, earnest, and honest audience—and they pressed around Him to listen to Him. Why did they do this?

I will tell you why they did *not. They certainly were not attracted to Christ by any ceremonialism which Christ used, or any kind of pomp or show of priestcraft in His dress.* It is said that the working classes do not attend places of worship because we do not dress ourselves in white, and blue, and green, and I do not know what other colors besides—in other words, because we do not make fools of ourselves! It is said that people will not come to hear us because of this, but our Lord Jesus Christ never put on anything like a priestly vestment in His life! The common dress in which He robed Himself was "a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout," or rather, the usual dress of the East. There was nothing whatever in His garb that was distinctive. John the Baptist, it is true, put on prophetic robes—the rough robe of hair-skin and some have used that same rough garment to deceive, but Christ was perfectly a man among men. I may venture to say that whoever else was a clergyman, Jesus Christ was not, and whoever else was a priest, as one of a priestly

caste set apart from the people, He was none. He was just a man among men. He ate as they ate, and drank as they drank. He toiled as other carpenters have done in the carpenter's shop, and when He came to speak in public, He spoke like one of the people. His authority was not derived from His robes! He had not to step into the vestry and put on His garments to get His dignity. His dignity was in the man, Himself, in the Spirit that filled the man. That which attracted people to Him was certainly nothing external and had nothing to do with milliner's shops, but was something far other than that.

Again, the publicans and sinners certainly did not come to Christ to hear Him *because of His laborious reasoning*. The working classes of London, we are told, if they are ever to be brought to places of worship, need that we should argue with them, and prove to them the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, the truth of the Bible and all such things—and they are not led by our dogmatism! That is the statement that is made. I believe it to be as false as those who say it is impertinent. I do not find our Savior ever trying to prove that there is a God. I do not find Him standing up and continually apologizing! His mode of address is, in the strongest sense, and I grant you in a sense far above what you and I could claim to adopt, dogmatic! "Verily, verily, I say unto you." That is His argument. "I testify what I do know, and what I have seen of the Father," and He bears witness to the truths of God with a full, down-right certainty which does not admit of a doubt! True, He has an answer for the Sadducees, but it is curt, sharp and decisive. And He goes on His way to preach His own gospel, which is evidently His delight and His forte. No, if publicans and sinners came to Christ, they did not come to Him to be amazed with the display of intellect or to be dazzled with the remarkably judicious manner in which He would handle a debate! They came for some other reason than that.

Again, if they came to Jesus Christ, they certainly did not come *because of His trimming* doctrines. He was not one who excused sin, or who made it out to be a weakness, incidental to human nature. No, He denounced sin in the most burning terms! They did not come to Him because He was one who preached smooth things with regard to the punishment of sin. No, my brothers and sisters, of all the preachers that ever lived, none ever preached on the wrath of God in such terrible terms as Jesus Christ, Himself! Though He was full of tenderness and full of love, yet you hear Him speak of the worm that never dies, and of the fire that never shall be quenched! He loved men's souls too well to make them think that sin was a trifle! He loved them too well to let them run the risk of everlasting woe without warning them of it in the plainest terms. No, if any sat at Jesus' feet to learn of Him, it was not because their conscience remained unmolested and they were lulled by siren strains into a deadly sleep! His spirit-stirring words must often have sent bolts right through and through their consciences! They did not,

therefore, go because He used fair speech and so amused the people, and lulled them to sleep in sin!

Once more, if the publicans and sinners listened to Christ in crowds, *it was not because of His vehement gesticulation or His declamation.* He was not a preacher who was at all given to the stamping of the foot. "He shall not strive, nor cry, nor His voice be heard in the streets." The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench. He opened His mouth and spoke, and He spoke with matchless oratory, for "never man spoke like that man." But it was all simple and plain. You see no traces of logic. There are no signs of rhetoric. You do not catch Him for a moment, as it were, seeking so to awaken the emotions as to ignore the intellect, and so to stir the passions as if men were only children to the frightened or to be cajoled. He speaks to them as men! He appeals to their entire nature and while the truths He utters are full of pathos that stir the very depths of the soul, yet are they gentle and quiet, and His speech distills as the dew and drops as the rain. Let none think that they can win a congregation by the mere force of gesticulation. Jesus did not so.

What then, was it that attracted these people? They were not generally sermon-hearers. Look at that fellow, there with his ink bottle. He will look up the Jew that has forgotten to pay his tribute to Caesar. He is very quick about that, but he is not a man who is at all likely to attend theological discussions. Do you see that villain, there, with the low forehead? Why, I do believe he is the very man who was tried and who only escaped with his life upon a doubtful point at the last Passover! And there is that woman—oh, yes, there can be no doubt about *her* character! You know her, and what she is. Do you see them there? They are all listening, not with their ears, only, but with their very eyes and mouths they are drinking in every word that man is saying as He talks to them about the lost sheep and the lost son. What is it that enthralls them? What are the golden chains that come from His mouth and hold these by their ears? What can the secret be? I think it lay partly in this, *that He was a man awfully in earnest*. As they looked up to Him, they all felt that He was a real man. The Pharisees were starched with decorum and full of affectation. These people were too simpleminded, though wicked, to believe in the Scribes and Pharisees—and so they went their way to their own haunts and never regarded their teaching. But with half an eye, they could see standing there a man unaffected, sincere and in earnest, who was speaking of something which He, Himself, believed, and speaking it with power and force because He felt it in His soul! Oh, never was there such an earnest preacher as the Master! No idle word has He to give account of! No words to recollect that lack results because they came not fresh from the speaker's heart! All He speaks is to the point and all of it came deep from His heart's inmost self. This drew the people to Him.

They were attracted, too, no doubt, *because He honestly touched their consciences*. It would be supposed, my brothers and sisters, that the very intelligent, wise, rational, and seemly doctrine of Unitarianism, as we are

commonly told it is, would everywhere be attended by crowds—but there are scarcely any places in which that doctrine is preached in which you might not catch any number of spiders, and study the whole science of entomology as far as these interesting creatures are concerned! How is this? Why, as one said, once, "The people know in their hearts somehow or other, I cannot tell how, that this that you preach is not true. Although it looks so well and so rational, and seems to flatter them so much, yet they do not come to hear it, for in their hearts they know it is not true." It is a strange thing that if the old evangelical doctrines should appear for one moment to be beaten in a debate, they always conquer in results. I shall defy any man to maintain a church prosperously, or to keep up a denomination which is built upon unsound doctrine with anything like prosperity during a term of years. The bubble shines and glitters, but it is too thin to last, and it goes. Now, after all, the worst men like to hear a preacher who will dash at their consciences, who will tell them what they, in their inner selves, know to be true! And as Jesus Christ never flinched from this, but told them just what was fact; the people delighted to gather round Him and to listen to His speech.

Moreover, and I doubt not that this was the great charm *they perceived—that He intensely loved them*, that He did not preach the truths of God merely that it might cause philosophic speculation and because He was highly pleased to teach it, but because He wanted that truth to raise, to bless, to comfort, to save them and to make them happy. The Pharisee, if he ever spoke to a publican or a sinner, would do it with a long space between them, gathering up his robes for fear of contagion, looking down upon the sinner as though the teacher were so much above the taught. But Christ came right among them, and was one of them—and He looked as if He would do anything for them if He might but deliver them from their sins. They knew this, and it was this charm that embraced them, and made them linger till the voice had done, and then carry away the echoes of those loving tones in their memories for many a day afterwards.

Besides that, I doubt not that another charm of Christ's preaching lay in this, *that He always preached doctrine that was hopeful to them*. While He said, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees," He had loving words for weary and heavy-laden ones. While He denounced self-righteousness, He would turn round and say, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If He ever had a frown upon His brow, it was for the hypocrite and the proud man, but He had tears for sinners, He had loving invitations for penitent ones. Like a good physician, He sought out morally sick folk and sought to restore them to spiritual health. This it was, also, that helped to attract them to Christ.

Now, my dear hearers, I believe that if you would tell me your characters, I could tell you whether, if Jesus Christ were here now, you would be likely, habitually, to hear Him or not. If you are a very excellent person who never did anything wrong. If you feel yourself a deal above

most people. If you have a proper sense of your own dignity, and if you are much impressed with your own importance, I believe that you would have murmured at Christ. And I am quite sure that you would not have been in the throng that drew near to hear Him. But if you are sensible that you have been guilty; if you confess that you have broken God's law; if you are anxious to be forgiven, or if you are conscious that you *are* forgiven, but still need to be daily washed, to be daily kept, to be daily dealt with in tenderness and love—oh, you are the men and women who would have made a bodyguard about that prince of preachers, for as surely as His doctrine was meant for you as the rain comes down upon the mown grass, so was your state of mind meant for the gospel! And you and the Savior would be quite sure to stand in near and proper relationship to one another!

But we cannot linger, and must pass on, now, to the second point—

II. WHAT IS THERE IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST THAT DOES NOT ATTRACT SOME OF US, BUT OUGHT TO ATTRACT US ALL?

Very briefly, there is this in the gospel that attracts my soul and I will speak for others. Ever since we fell out with God through sin, the thought of God has been dreadful to us. We have been afraid of Him. But Jesus Christ is God, and He has taken upon Himself our manhood. And now He tells us *that we may come to God through Him*—in fact, that if we come to Him, when we have seen Him, we have seen the Father! Now, as I want to be one with God, and yet shudder at the thought of coming to Him, my soul burns with fervent affection towards Christ! And when I see that I can come to God so safely and so sweetly by coming through Him, that attracts me.

Next, ever since we were awakened to a sense of what sin is, sin has been a great burden to us. We have offended against God, and we know it. Oh, that this offense could be blotted out! Now, Jesus Christ comes and shows that, altogether without a violation of justice, *God can put away all our sins as if they had never been*! The gospel tells us that Christ becomes a substitute for us, that He was punished instead of all those who believe in Him, so that the law takes effect, justice is satisfied and yet God is gracious. I know when I first learned that truth of God, my heart was ravished with it. I have read books, sometimes, that have kept me up at night to read them, or I have got hold of ideas that have almost made me dance when I have got them—but that old idea of substitution—oh, sirs, it was the brightest day I ever lived when I learned that—that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all! You know, an awakened conscience cannot play with sin as some of you do and imagine that God can easily forgive sin—but when the conscience is awakened, it feels that God cannot forgive sin without exacting the punishment that is due to sin! Then there comes in to meet this difficulty the fact that Christ is punished in the place of the believer—that God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believes. Here is another precious truth that has attracted many of us to Christ. I pray God that it may

attract many others to Him. Here is the way of pardoned sin and here is the way of access to God!

Brothers and sisters, we feel in ourselves so many inabilities, we cannot do anything right! We feel that we cannot pray. There are times when, if we gave a world for it, we cannot shed a tear, when we cannot make our hard hearts melt, cannot get repentance out of these dry souls! Oh, but then this attracts me to Christ, *to find that He can give me all grace*—that in Him all fullness dwells, that His Spirit helps our infirmities and that just as I am—wounded, broken, sin-sick, hard, cold and dead— Christ comes and meets my case! Oh, how this ought to attract us to Christ!

And then oftentimes the fear comes up to every awakened man—"Shall I hold on? If I begin to be a Christian, shall I hold out to the end? Will not temptation yet lead me astray?" Then Christ comes in and says, "*Because I live, you shall live also*. I give unto My sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." Oh, Savior, this is a silken bond to draw us to Yourself! Was there ever a greater attraction than this—all safe in Christ! The lambs of the flock, the weakest ones, all safe! The man of imperious passions, the man with once imperious lusts—all safe when once they put themselves in the hands of Christ! Then can we all say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day." But the thought comes over us sometimes, "Ah, but what will it be to die?" That hour of death—how grim it looks! And, indeed, it never is child's play to die—to pass into the unknown and the invisible! The naked spirit—to leave the body behind—is to become food for worms. The bravest man may well turn pale here! But oh, the attraction of Christ is, "*He that believes in Me shall never die. Though he were dead, yet shall he live*." Oh, the thought of resurrection! The thought that death is changed, no longer to be a penal sentence, but to be merely an entrance into heaven! The thought that—

"Jesus will make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head
And breathe our life out sweetly there."

The thought that He will come and meet us, and that our spirits, side by side with His, shall pass through the iron gate with a song upon our lips, and fear no terror as we pass by the gates of the grave! My brothers and sisters, this woos us to Christ! This holds us to Christ! This charms and fascinates us! This is a faith that well sustains us, that blots out the past, that brightens the present and lights up the future with the expectation of the glory to be revealed!

My hearer, if you have never had Christ, do you not desire Him? Man, if Christ is yours, heaven is yours. Man, if you believe in Christ, this night, your transgressions shall be forgiven you! You shall become a child of God, an heir of immorality! Do you not need a Savior? Will you not ask for one? Oh, yield you, yield you now to Him who was given for

you, who round you now, the cords of His love would cast, binding you fast to His altar! God grant in His infinite mercy that the attractions of the gospel may be known to us all! And now, in the last place—

III. WHAT CAME OF IT?

Those who were attracted first to hear were, according to the second verse, still further blessed. The Pharisees said, not—"This man preaches to sinners," but, "*This man receives sinners and eats with them.*" It is a great blessing when the gospel is preached to sinners, but oh, it is a far greater blessing when sinners are received, when sinners come to eat with Christ. The Pharisees left out what they ought to have mentioned, that when Christ received sinners, He did not leave them sinners. It is no disgrace to say of a certain doctor in London, "Why, it is said that that doctor has had some of the most horrible cases in London. I saw one man, there, with a dreadful cancer. Another was taken in that was subject to epilepsy. I saw one with a leprosy taken into that physician's house." Is that any disgrace to the physician? Why, sir, the thing is how did they come out? What were they after his skill had been exerted upon them? What they were when they went into the hospital is no disgrace to the hospital—it may even reflect honor upon the wisdom of those who exercised their skill within it. So that Christ receives sinners is true, but He first makes them penitent sinners! He makes them believing sinners! He changes their nature! He turns the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove—and then when He has done this, when He has washed away their sins and changed their natures—He receives them to be His friends! None are so near to Christ as blood-washed sinners! He receives them to be His disciples! None could sit at His feet but those who first have been washed in His blood. Then He receives them as His servants. None can serve Him who have not first been served by Him. Then He receives these sinners to be His advocates. He sends them out to preach His gospel, but He never sends any out to preach the gospel unless, first of all, they have received Him into their hearts as the gospel of their salvation. "This man receives sinners."

Oh, I wish that tonight the Lord would find the biggest sinner in the tabernacle! I might say, if there were such a person present, one commonly known to be the biggest blackguard in the parish, I wish the Lord would light on just such an one, for the raw material for a great saint is often a great sinner! When the devil wanted to make the biggest sinner that ever lived, he took an apostle to be the raw material, namely, Judas, and made him the son of perdition. But when Christ wanted the greatest of preachers, and the best of all the apostles, He went right into the devil's camp and laid hold of Saul of Tarsus—and made him become Paul, the mighty winner of souls! "This man receives sinners." The thief, the drunkard, the harlot—He still receives them! He washes them, changes them, takes them into His society, lifts them up—takes the beggar from the dunghill and makes him sit among princes. Oh, mighty Master, do this deed of grace again and though the Pharisees will murmur and the proud may still slander Your name, we who are sinners,

too, will clap our hands for very joy and bless Your love and adore Your grace, world without end! "This man receives sinners."

And then they said, "*And eats with them.*" Yes, in a mystical sense you will see that done again tonight, for here is the TABLE, the Lord's table, peculiarly so, and to that table let no man come who has never been a sinner, for he will not be welcome! Let no man come who has not felt himself to be a sinner, for he will not be welcome. If there is a man that is rich in good things and that is full of good things, let him not come, for, "He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty." If there is a handmaiden here of low estate and humble mind, let her come, for He has remembered the low estate of His handmaiden. But if there are any that are great and mighty, and exalted in their own estimation, let them stand aside and hear Him say, "He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted them of low degree." Here is a table spread for sinners, sinners blood-washed, but still sinners. I often feel, my brothers and sisters, as if I could not come to the cross anyway but as a sinner. I think I told you this parable once. Once there was a great king who used to have a table spread every day, and there were two sorts of persons who had a right to come there. All round the king, on his right and left, sat the princes of the blood and the nobles of the highest rank. They came in their robes of state and there they sat, and they were welcome. At the other end of the table, the king in his bounty had bidden his chamberlain every day spread many dainty dishes for beggars, and if there were any in the city at any time who were foot sore, who were houseless and homeless, ragged and hungry, the notice was given that anyone who could plead abject poverty might come to the king's table. Now, it so happened once on a time that a prince of the blood had lost, as he thought, the deeds of his estate. Moreover, he had lost the register of his birth and he was afraid that all that he had ever possessed had never been rightly his own. Perhaps he was some changeling child, he said, for such things had been. Perhaps his estates were not his own, and as the time came round for the feast, he felt as if he did not dare put on his robes lest he should be shown to be an impostor. But then it flashed across his mind, "If I have been an impostor up till now, and I am not the son of my reputed father. If the estates and the rich gems I have, are not mine, then I am a poor beggar and I have not anything." So he took off his fine garments and found some common dress that had been laid aside. "I must sit at the king's table somewhere," he said, "and if I cannot go as a prince, I will go as a beggar and so, one way or the other I will eat of his banquet." Brothers and sisters, I have often had to do that, and I would advise you to do it whenever your doubts and fears come across you. If Jesus Christ cannot receive you and you cannot come to Him as a saint or as a child of God, remember, that "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Come with all your sins! Come, I say, and you cannot be cast out!

Many years ago the shaft of a mine was blocked up by some falling earth, and there was no chance of the miners' escape. They gathered themselves together and held a prayer-meeting in expectation of a speedy death, for it did not seem probable that they would ever be able to get out by the shaft, which was so thoroughly destroyed. While they were in prayer, a happy thought struck one of the older miners. He had heard that there was an old shaft which led into another mine, which had been given up, and he said he would go first and perhaps they might be able, by going through some old passages, to come out into the old mine. He knew from what he had heard his father say, that much of it was very low, and water dripped into it, and that in some places they would have to keep on all fours. But for all that, he said, it would not matter so long as they could but get to the daylight again. They could not go up the regular shaft, but away they went, creeping down the back ways, all through the mire, mud, and filth, and dirt and darkness—but they came to the light at last and all came up safe to their homes again.

Now, sometimes when I can look straight up to my Lord, I know that I am His child. I do tonight, and I can rejoice to go up and down the shaft straight ahead. But, brothers and sisters, if ever you cannot do that, there is an old working, there is an old way, the way that all the saints have gone. You will have to go on your hands and knees. You will have to go on all fours. You will find it flooded with tears of repentance, but never mind, the devil himself cannot block up that way. If you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner! If you have got no grace, you can get grace. If you cannot come with a tender heart, come *for* a tender heart. If you cannot come with faith, come to get faith, for "this man receives sinners and eats with them." May this Blessed man come and eat with us tonight!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:11-32.

***Verses* 11-13.** *And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.* It was an act of ingratitude to leave his father at all—an act of extreme folly to turn his father's goods to ill-account.

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in need.* And the sinner's greatest all will be spent one day! The pleasures of sin are but for a season. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will one day crack. The flowers that grow in man's garden will one day fade—man may think he has an eternity of pleasure before him, but if he is looking to the flesh for it, it shall be but for an hour.

15. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country. And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* At the very best, the comforts of this world are ignominious to a man. They degrade him—as it was a very degrading employment for a Jew to feed swine—so the comfort the world can give to a man does but degrade his noble spirit.

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but no man gave unto him.* The prodigal cannot be brought any lower! He is made to herd with the swine, and he envies even them because they are satisfied with the husks! He cannot eat of the same and, therefore, he envies even the brutes! Surely, when a sinner becomes fully convinced of sin, he may well envy even the sparrows or the serpents because they have not sinned!

17-20. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and went to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.* Remember Matthew Henry's paraphrase?—Here were eyes of mercy.

20. *And had compassion*—Here was a heart of mercy.

20. *And ran*—Here were legs of mercy.

20. *And fell on his neck*—Here were deeds of mercy.

20. *And kissed him*—And here were lips of mercy.

21-22. *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants*—Here were words of mercy, wonders of mercy and, indeed, it is all mercy throughout!

22-25. *Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring here the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field.* That is where these over-good elder sons always are—they are out at work—they are not at home in communion with God! They are in the field! Do not ask who the elder brother was—he is here tonight—there is many an envious moralist—yes, and an envious professor, too, who feels it hard that profligate offenders should be pardoned!

25-27. *And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry.* He did not want the fatted calf killed! If this reprobate brother were allowed to come in at the back door and to eat with the servants, he thought that quite good enough, but for this rebel to be put upon an equality with himself—he could not bear that!

28. *And would not go in: therefore came his father out and entreated him.* See the tenderness of this father? The same arms which embraced the sinning one, were also ready to clasp the self-righteous one! I always feel great pity and great admiration for this dear, dear father. What with a bad son and a good son, he had two bad sons, for this good son, you see, had got in a spat just as I have seen some real Christians get into a very un-Christian frame of mind! Well, they do not like, somehow, receiving into their company the women who have gone astray—the men who have lost their reputation. He was angry and would not go in—and now his father crowned his love. He ran to meet one son and now he comes out to reason with another who is unnaturally and ungraciously angry with him.

29. *And he, answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* I know the brother. He says, "I have been a consistent Christian. I have been diligent in the service of God. I have abounded in prayer and yet all the daylong have I been plagued and chastened every morning. I do not get much joy—I have such a sight and sense of temptation and sin that I am generally low spirited. I seldom get a drop of full assurance. I never get a kid given me, that I might make merry with my friends." Those who are under the law never do make merry. You never knew a man yet that was trying to save himself by keeping the commandments of God that could dare to make merry. No, they have to draw long faces, and well they may, for they have a long task before them! They put on a garb of sadness, being of a sad countenance, as the hypocrites are!

31, 32 *But as soon as this, your son, was come, who has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. And he said, to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for this, your brother, was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found.* And so, dear friends, there is more joy over the prodigal when he returns, than over the man who thinks he never has been astray!

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"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own Selves unto the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."
2 Corinthians 8:5.

SOME persons are always trying to prove what is customary in the Christian Church. They are always seeking after instances and precedents. The worst of it is that many of these people look for old things that are not old enough—the old things of the Church of Rome, for instance, and mediaeval customs and observances which are nothing but authentic trumpery! If they want the real old solid things, they should go back to the apostolic times. The best book of Church history from which to gather ritual, true ritual, is the Acts of the Apostles! And when the Christian Church shall go back to that, instead of inquiring about what the primitive Christians did in the second or third century, she will come much nearer to the knowledge of what she ought to do!

Now, our text tells us of one old custom in the apostles' days. Those who became Christians first gave themselves to the Lord and then they gave themselves to the Church, according to God's will. Let us ponder these things in their order. Of course we shall think of the main and most important point first—that action which gives value and beauty to all that follows and is its fruit—

I. THE SOUL'S SUPREME GIFT

The first thing that the original Christians, the Christians of the old and Holy Spirit times did was, "they gave themselves unto the Lord." This is vital, the one all-important bestowal. Have all of us who are professors that we are Christ's disciples really given ourselves to the Lord? Are there not in this house of prayer some who have never thought of doing so, and even some who would reject with contempt the idea of doing so? Oh, my hearers, the day will come when you will look at these matters in a very different light! And in the next world it will be seen that it would have been your highest wisdom to have given yourselves to the Lord—and your supreme folly to have lived unto self!

When these early Christians gave themselves to the Lord, the first thing manifestly was *that the giving and the gift were sincere*. Should any here present have given themselves to the Lord, let them ask themselves whether their gift was sincere. These primitive believers meant what they said. There was a deep reality about their consecration—they gave themselves over to Jesus Christ to be entirely His. Remember that in

those times this meant very much more than we are ever made to suffer now. A man who gave himself to Christ in those days was put out of the synagogue if he was a Jew. He was cast out of society if he happened to be a heathen. He was dragged up before the tribunals. He was frequently cast in prison—as frequently beaten with many stripes—and very often he was put to death by fire, or by the sword. But these early Christians knew what was to happen and, knowing it, yet deliberately they gave themselves up to the Lord. Oh, dear professors here present, has your gift of yourselves to Christ been as sincere as that, or did you merely come and make a profession because others did? And have you stuck to that profession, lie though it was, because you did not like the shame of confessing that you had made a mistake? Oh, is it sincere or not? If it is not, God make it so, for it is only that which is of the heart that will stand the trial of the last great day! Lord, deliver us from having any religion in which the heart is not found!

Their gift of themselves to the Lord was, in the next place, *a willing gift*. All the soldiers of Christ are volunteers and yet they are all pressed men. The grace of God constrains men to become Christians, but yet only constrains them consistently with the laws of their mind! The freedom of the will is as great a truth as is the predestination of God. The grace of God, without violating our wills, makes men willing in the day of God's power—and they give themselves to Jesus Christ. You cannot be a Christian against your will! How could it be? A servant of God against his will? A child of God against his will? No, it never was so and it never shall be so! Here and now, you Christians, I shall ask you whether you are not cheerfully, gladly, unreservedly the servants of God! I know you are and that bond you made years ago is not irksome to you now, but if you are genuine saints, you repeat it again tonight and you hope to repeat it in life and in death, for you are willingly and exultantly the Lord's own!

The gift that these early Christians made was, in the next place, *an intelligent one*. They did not receive into the Church in Paul's days unintelligent people. They knew that no sponsorship could avail here. They knew, as one would think all rational people ought to know, that the religion of Jesus Christ cannot exist where there is no clear apprehension of the saving truth of God.

Only where the understanding was able to grasp the Saviorship of Jesus could there be spiritual life and true conversion. No religious rite, or ceremony, or ordinance could confer this. I have heard ministers tell their congregations, "You were made Christians in your infancy and you ought to stand to the vows then made for you." Surely every man's conscience tells him there is not a shadow of ground for such reasoning! What have I to do with, or what do I care about vows that were made for me when I was a child? Were they bad or were they good—they never consulted me and I have nothing to do with them, nor will I have! Whether they promised that I would serve God, or that I would serve the devil, I equally reject their responsibility and their sponsorship! As an

intelligent being, I speak for myself before God and none shall speak for me! If I had been dedicated to Moloch, should I in my manhood accept the dedication? God forbid! And even if I were dedicated to Christ, I will not accept a dedication which I know Christ never accepted because He never asked for it. He asks my *personal* dedication. He asks only for intelligent love, intelligent service—and I trust that many of you came to Christ knowing what you did, knowing what repentance meant, knowing what faith meant, having counted the cost of what a life of holiness would be and then deliberately, as men and women of judgment and understanding, said, "O Prince, we enlist beneath Your banner! O Immanuel, write our names in Your muster-roll, for we will be Your servants from now on and forever!" It was a sincere gift, it was a willing gift and it was an intelligent gift that these first Christians made of themselves to the Lord!

My brothers and sisters, it was, moreover, *a complete surrender which they made*. No Christian in the olden times gave himself in part to the Lord and in part reserved himself for idols, or for himself—and had any attempted to have done so, they would have been spurned, for it is of Christ's rule in the Church that He will have all or none. You must, as a Christian, be all a Christian, or nothing of a Christian! There is no such thing as dividing between God and the devil, between righteousness and sin. The surrender must be without reserve and without limit. If you have truly given yourselves to the Lord, you have given Him your body—no more to be polluted with sin, but to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. You have given Him your mind—no more to be a free thinker after the boasted free thought of the slaves of skepticism. You have given up your faculties—to sit with them at the feet of Christ to learn of Him, to take His teaching for the truth of God and His Word the one court of appeal for all questions. You take Him to be your teacher beyond all dispute, and His doctrine to be unsullied truth for you. You have also given up to Him your tongue to speak for Him, your hands to work for Him, your feet to walk or run for Him—your every faculty of body and mind in beautiful partnership for His service!

As for your newborn, angelic, spiritual nature—that must emphatically be the Lord's—and will always be the royal and reigning power within. You are today in the trinity of your nature—body, soul and spirit—altogether Christ's! And this includes, if you are a sincere Christian, all that you have—all of talents, all of time, all of property, all of influence, all of relationship, all of opportunity. You count nothing to be your own from this time forth, but you say with the spouse, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."

Again, the surrender which every true Christian makes is *surrender to the Lord*. That, my brothers and sisters, is where it must begin—with the Lord! We ought not to give ourselves up to the Church until we have given ourselves up to the Lord. And it must never be a giving of ourselves up to priests. Oh, scorn that! Of all the wretches that live, the worst are

priests! Of all the curses that ever fell upon earth—I will not except even the devil—the worst is priestcraft! I care not whether it wears the garb of the dissenting minister, or the clergyman of the Established Church, or the Roman Catholic, the Muslim or the heathen—no man can do your religion for you! If any man pretends that he can, or that he can pardon your sin, or do anything for you before God, put him aside—he is a base impostor! Never surrender your thoughts or your mind to any man. Pin your opinions to no man's coat sleeves. To the Lord make the surrender complete and ample—to His truth, to His law, to His gospel make your surrender as complete as if you made yourselves slaves, or a stone to be carved by His hands! You shall rise in dignity as you sink in selfhood. You shall become free in proportion as you wear God's bonds. You shall become great as you become little in yourselves. Give yourselves wholly up to God. Mind it is to Him—not to any man, not to any creed, not to any sect—but wholly and entirely to the Lord who loved you from before the foundation of the world! To the Lord who bought you with His heart's blood! To the Lord whose Spirit sealed your adoption within your souls!

Mind this, then! Mark it as the first step in all public acts of religion—you must give yourselves first to the Lord! You have no right to talk about joining a Christian Church until you have done that—"first to the Lord." You have no right to be baptized until you have done that—"first to the Lord." You have no right to sit at the communion table until you have done that—"first to the Lord." Give yourselves first to the Lord with unfeigned repentance for sin and simple and hearty confidence in Jesus! And then, as a complete giving-up of yourselves to the Lord—you may come to every hallowed act of service, to every privilege-feast of love—but not until then! Oh, sirs, your sacraments and your ceremonies—God abhors them until first you have given Him your hearts! Vain are your oblations! Your incense is an abomination to Him! It is an evil, and worse than an evil—it is a mockery of God, an insult to Him—until first your heart surrenders itself to Jesus and your manhood becomes the rightful property of God by your willing yielding of it to Him!

I cannot press this matter by way of questioning everyone present, but still I would like to ask of every conscience, especially of every professing Christian, to answer this question, "My soul, have you given yourself up, through the grace of God, to belong to the Lord?" Do you mean that, or is it a farce? Have you made it real, or is it all a sham? Do you feel within your soul tonight a desire to make it more complete a gift? Do you pray for grace to make it perfect in the future? Do you rest alone upon the precious blood of Jesus? Then do you desire to glorify God so long as you are in this body? Oh, then 'tis well with you and you may go the next step with me. If not, hands off all ordinances, hands off all promises! There is nothing in the Bible and there is nothing in the Church for you until you first are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus Christ! And now let us turn to consider briefly the second giving of the soul—

II. THE GIFT THAT FOLLOWS THE SUPREME ONE.

I want to know this passage aright. I think I do. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us"—that is, they gave "their own selves" unto us—by the will of God. After a true Christian has given himself or herself to the Lord, the very next act should be to give themselves to the Christian Church. They should at once assay, as Paul did, to be united to the brethren of Christ. Somewhere in the district where he lives, if there is a Christian Church, the newborn believer should at once seek fellowship with others who love his Lord, because saved by His grace. The right way to do this is to give *himself*. Not his name, his money, not his mere presence, his sympathy, his active labors—all these are part of the gift—but the soul of it all is to give *himself*. In the whole force and weight of his influence, personality and ability, as far as God shall help him, he is to give up to the Church.

What is involved in this giving up of ourselves to the Christian Church? I will repeat it, so as to refresh the memories of many members here who have forgotten it. It is your *duty* to be united to the Christian Church. What does that mean? What duties spring out of it? There is, first, *consistency of character*. If you make no profession of religion and live as you like—you shall answer for that at the last great day. But if you join a Christian Church, take heed how you live, for your actions may become doubly watched—and will be doubly sinful if you fall into inconsistency! You are a servant in the family and a member of a Christian Church—there must be in you no eye-service! There must be about you nothing which would dishonor a good servant of Jesus Christ! You are a husband—you have no business to be a bad-tempered, domineering tyrant to your wife! If you are, you ought not to be a member of a Christian Church at all! You are a wife—you ought not to be an untidy, idle, novel-reading woman, neglecting your family duties! If so, I do not care what classes you attend, or what prayer meetings—you have no business to act like that and profess to be a Christian! You are a Christian, you say, and have joined the Church—then in your trade you have no business to fall into the tricks and knavery that are common on all sides! If you cannot live without being a rogue, do not be a professor of religion! It will be quite as well for you to go to hell at once, as you are, as to go there with a millstone about your neck through having made a profession, a base and wicked profession, of godliness which you did not carry out. No, sirs, if you will not, in the strength and spirit of God's grace, strive after consistency of moral conduct, you have no right to talk about giving yourselves to the Church, which you will disgrace! You will only sin yourselves into a deeper condemnation. Therefore, stay away from it!

The next thing that is required of every member of Christ's Church is *attendance upon the means of grace*. I do not mean merely Sunday attendance. Any hypocrite comes on a Sunday, but they do not, to my knowledge, all of them, come on Monday to the prayer meeting, nor all to the weeknight service on a Thursday. I am pretty certain of this, though

some of them may. Weeknight meetings and services are a powerful test. Many cannot come, I know, and I do not ask that domestic duties be sacrificed, even for public worship. But there are some who ought to be present who are not and, indeed, all of you, so far as opportunity will permit, and if you reside within reasonable distance, should come. Take care that you do not become lax in that respect.

Another duty of all Church members is *to aid and comfort one another*. Just as among Freemasons—give the grip and you get a kindly word and a brotherly recognition—so should it be among Christians, only in a higher sense. You must comfort those that mourn, help those who are poor and, in general, we ought to watch out for each other's interests, seeing that in the Church we are all members of one family. You are to "do good unto all men, especially unto such as are of the household of faith." Let your crumbs be given to the sparrows out of doors, but let your brothers and sisters have the most and best of what you can give! This is the plain duty of every Christian.

Every Church member, too, is to try to give himself to the Church in the sense of *doing his share in all Church work*. Shame on the Church member who has no post that he can occupy, who is neither generous with his purse, nor diligent with his hands, nor earnest with his heart, nor speaking with his tongue! You cannot all do all, but each must take his place and niche, for everyone who is doing nothing—what is he but a drone in the hive who will surely be expelled before long? I hope, my dear friends, I can say that I did this when I joined the Church of Christ. I well remember how I joined it, for I forced myself into the Church of God by telling the minister—who was lax and slow—after I had called four or five times and could not see him, that I had done my duty and if he did not see me, I would call a Church meeting, myself, and tell them I believed in Christ and ask them if they would have me! I know when I did it, I meant it! I know there was not one among them all who more intensely meant it, then, and I mean it now! I give myself up to Christ and to Christ's religion. I do not mind speaking upon politics when they touch upon Christianity. I do not mind helping on the common cause of philanthropy, or any work for the good of my follow men—but to no work do I give myself with my whole heart and spirit but to that of spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ's name! This, I think, ought to be to the Christian the first and last thing. Does your religion cover your drapery, or your drapery your Christianity—which, sir? You are a politician—right enough—I am glad that there should be an honest man in such a place. Does your religion, however, cover your politics, or do your politics devour your religion? You are a working man. Well, it is an honorable position and all honor to the hard-working man—but does your religion permeate and give quality to your hard work? Do you love Christ with it all? Do you feel all the while that, most of all, you must be a Christian? Then I do not care what you are, whether you are a blacksmith or a chimney-sweep, a king or a crossing-sweeper—it is of small account! First and foremost, must you be a Christian and all else must be

subordinated to that—for this the Christian Church has a right to expect.

Now I know there are some who say, "Well, I hope I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any *Church*, because_____." Now, why not? "*Because I can be a Christian without it.*" Now, are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord's commands as by being obedient? Well, suppose everybody else did the same? Suppose all Christians in the world said, "I shall not join the Church." Why there would be no visible Church! There would be no ordinances! That would be a very bad thing and yet, *one* doing it—what is right for one is right for all—why should not all of us do it? Then you believe that if you were to do an act which has a tendency to destroy the visible Church of God, you would be as good a Christian as if you did your best to build up that Church? I do not believe it, sir! Nor do you, either. You have not any such a belief—it is only a trumpery excuse for something else. There is a brick—a very good one. What is the brick made for? To help build a house! It is of no use for that brick to tell you that it is just as good a brick while it is kicking about on the ground as it would be in the house. It is a good-for-nothing brick! Until it is built into the wall, it is no good! So you rolling-stone Christians, I do not believe that you are answering your purpose—you are living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live—and you are much to blame for the injury you do! "Oh," says one, "though I hope I love the Lord, yet if I were to join the Church, *I would feel it such a bond upon me*." Just what you ought to feel! Ought you not to feel that you are bound to holiness, now, and bound to Christ, now? Oh, those blessed bonds! If there is anything that could make me feel more bound to holiness than I am, I should like to feel that fetter, for it is only liberty to feel bound to godliness, uprightness and carefulness of living!

"Oh," says another, "if I were to join the Church, *I am afraid that I would not be able to hold on*." You expect to hold on, I suppose, *out of the Church*—that is to say, you feel safer in disobeying Christ than in obeying Him? Strange feeling, that! Oh, you had better come and say, "My Master, I know Your saints ought to be united together in Church fellowship, for Churches were instituted by Your apostles—and I trust I have grace to carry out the obligation. I have no strength of my own, my Master, but my strength lies in resting upon You—I will follow where You lead and leave the rest to You."

"Ah, but," says another, "*I cannot join the Church—it is so imperfect.*" You then, are perfect, of course! If so, I advise you to go to heaven and join the Church, there, for certainly you are not fit to join it on earth and would be quite out of place!

"Yes," says another, "but I see so much that is wrong about Christians." There is nothing wrong in yourself, I suppose? I can only say, my brother, that if the Church of God is not better than I am, I am sorry for it. I felt, when I joined the Church, that I would be getting a deal

more good than I should be likely to bring into it. And with all the faults I have seen in living these 20 years or more in the Christian Church, I can say, as an honest man, that the members of the Church are the excellent of the earth in whom is all my delight—though they are not perfect, but a long way from it! If, out of heaven, there are to be found any who really live near to God, it is the members of the Church of Christ.

"Ah," says another, "*but there are a rare lot of hypocrites*." You are very sound and sincere yourself, I suppose? I trust you are so, but then you ought to come and join the Church to add to its soundness by your own. I am sure, my dear friends, none of you will shut up your shops tomorrow morning, or refuse to take a sovereign when a customer comes in because there happen to be some smashers about who are dealing with bad coins! No, not you! And you do not believe the theory of some, that because some professing Christians are hypocrites, therefore all are, for that would be as though you would say that because some sovereigns are bad, therefore all are bad—which would be clearly wrong, for if all sovereigns were counterfeits, it would never pay for the counterfeiter to try to pass his counterfeits! It is the quantity of good metal that passes off the bad. There is a fine good quantity of respectable golden Christians still in the world and still in the Church—rest assured of that!

"Well," says one, "I do not think—though I *hope* I am a servant of God—that I can join the Church. You see, *it is so looked down upon*." Oh, what a blessed look-down that is! I do think, brothers and sisters, there is no honor in the world equal to that of being looked down upon by that which is called, "society," in this country! The most of people are slaves to what they call, "respectability." Respectability? When a man puts on a coat on Sunday that he has paid for; when he worships God by night or by day. Whether men see him or not—when he is an honest, straightforward man—I do not care how small his earnings are, he is a respectable man! And he need never bend his neck to the idea of society or its artificial respectability!

These various kinds of humbug, for they are no other, keep many from joining the Christian Church because they are afraid of being looked down upon by respectable people in society. I read in a paper only yesterday that it would be no use to create nonconformist peers, because in the next generation they would cease to be nonconformist and become respectable in their religion—*and I am afraid it is true*! It is outrageous that as soon as some persons rise in social position they renounce the Church to which they gave themselves when they gave themselves to the Lord! The day will come when the poorest Christian will be exalted above the proudest peer that did not fear God—when God will take out of the hovels and cottages of England a peerage of an imperial race that will put to the blush all the kings and princes of the world! And these He will set above the seraphim when others will be cast from His presence!

I say to any of you who will not join this Church because doing so would lower your respectability—neither I or Jesus Christ asks you to join it! If these are the gods you worship—society and respectability—go

to your beggarly gods and worship them, but God will require it of your hands in the day of account. There is nothing better than the service of Christ! For my own part, to be despised, pointed at, hooted in the streets, called by all manner of evil names—I would accept it all, sooner than all the stars of knighthoods and peerages if the service of Christ necessitated it, for this is the true honor of the Christian when he truly serves his Master! The day is coming when the Lord will divide between those that love Him and those that love Him not—and every day is getting ready for that last division. This very night the division is being made! In the preaching of the gospel it is being carried out. Let each man take his stand and ask himself the question—Are you with Christ or with Belial? Are you with God, with Christ, with the precious blood, or do you still rank with sinful pleasures and their delights? As you will have to answer for it when the skies are on a blaze and the earth reels, and the judgment trumpet summons you before the great white throne, so answer it now! And you brave spirits who have loved your Savior—if you have never yet joined His army, come and enlist now! And you loving spirits who are tender and who have shrunk back awhile, come forward now—

"You that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."

Today stand up for Jesus! Today be willing to be the off-scouring of all things for His name's sake. And then, when He comes in His glory, yours shall be the reward, a reward that shall far outweigh any losses that you can sustain today! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession shall be saved." Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and may His blessing rest upon you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 8.

The apostle is writing concerning a certain collection which was being made for the poor saints of Jerusalem. It was from Jerusalem that the gospel had spread into Greece and, therefore, those who had received spiritual things from the poor Jews at Jerusalem were bound by every tie of holy brotherhood to remember their benefactors in the time of famine. The apostle stirs up the Corinthian Church about this contribution.

Verse 1. *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you.* Or, "we make you to know."

1, 2. *Of the grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia. How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their generosity.* It is good to stir one Christian up by the example of another and Paul excites those at Corinth by the example of the Churches in Macedonia—especially, no doubt, the

Church at Philippi. He says that they were in great affliction and they were very poor, but yet they had been so filled with the grace of God that their very poverty had enabled them to "abound to the riches of their generosity," for what they gave became more in proportion because they were so poor.

3. *For to their power, I bear record, yes, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves.* Without any pressure! Without even a hint—spontaneously!

4. *Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.* "Take upon us the communion," for that blessed word "*koinonia*," communion, is applied not only to the Lord's Supper and to such fellowship as that, but to communion with poor saints—fellowship with them by helping their necessities. And Paul says that the Macedonian Churches pressed it upon him that he should take their money and go with it to Jerusalem and distribute it. He appears to have been very reluctant to do this, but they pressed it upon him.

5. *And this they did, not as we hoped.* That is, "according to our hopes."

6. *But first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God.* They first gave of themselves to God and then asked Paul to take it that he might use it for God in the distribution of Christian charity among the poor saints at Jerusalem.

6, 7. *So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also.* They were a famous Church—this Church at Corinth, having gifted men in abundance more than other Churches—to the extent that they did not have one man for a pastor because they so abounded in brethren able to edify. And he urges them, as they were forward in all things, not to be backward in their generosity.

8. *I speak not by commandment.* "I do not wish to put it upon you as a law. I want it to be spontaneous on your part."

8, 9. *But by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.* What a touching argument! How could he find a better? Help your brothers and sisters in Jerusalem that are in need, even though that help should pinch you, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He did, and what He gave that you might be rich!

10. *And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.* They had begun last year—perhaps not a year ago, but some months ago in the previous year—to talk the matter over and to make promises. And they

had been among the first to undertake the work, but as yet they had not done it.

11. *Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance, also, out of that which you have.* They had not a minister, you see, and what is everybody's business is nobody's business—and so the contribution was not carried out. And in general, the Church at Corinth is about the worst in the New Testament, and that for this very reason—that it had not any oversight. It is the pattern Church of certain brothers whom we have among us this day—in the very example of them! And they quote this as an example, whereas it is put here as a beacon, and a very excellent beacon, too, to warn us against any such thing! Everything was sixes and sevens, good people as they were. Seeing that they had no order and no discipline, nothing got done, and they wearied the apostle's life because of that. God would have things done decently and in order—and He gives to His Churches, pastors after His own heart! And when He does, then is the Church able to carry out her desires and her activities with something like practical common-sense. But here a year ago, months ago, they had talked the matter over and made a promise—and now Paul has to say to them, "Now, therefore, perform the doing of it." They had no deacons to look them up, I will be bound to say.

12-14. *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not. For I mean not that other men be eased and you burdened, but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their need—that their abundance may also be a supply for your need—that there may be equality.* It is in the Christian Church, alone, that we shall ever find liberty, equality and fraternity thoroughly represented. There, by the life of Christ within His people spiritually, that shall be realized, and the apostle backs up this thought of his, which Bengel has beautifully put when he says, "We ought to minister of our luxuries to the comfort of others, and of our comforts to the necessities of others." So we should, to keep up a balance that when one suffers needs and another abounds, there may be an equality made.

15. *As it is written, he that had gathered much.* Much manna

15-17. *Had nothing left over: and he that had gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For, indeed, he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.* Or, "he is coming to you," for he bore this letter to them.

18. *And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches:* And what brother was that? Nobody knows. And a brother who has praise in all the Churches may be well content to have his name forgotten! Oh, it would be a sweet thing to have praise in all the Churches anonymously, so that it all might go up to God. It may have been Luke. Probably it was. It may not have been Luke.

Probably it was not. We do not know who it was. But it is not important. What does it matter? As Mr. Whitefield used to say, "Let my name perish, but let Christ's name last forever." "And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches."

19. *And not that only, but who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us with this grace,* Or "with this gift."

19, 20. *Which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind. Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us.* He had other brethren associated with him lest anybody should even hint that Paul was benefited thereby. And, oh, in the distribution of the Lord's money, it becomes us to be exceedingly careful! Paul adds this.

21. *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.* That the thing might be so clear and transparent that while God knew that Paul was honest, everybody else might know it, too, for others had been associated with him.

22, 23. *And we have sent with them our brother whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the Churches, and the glory of Christ.* How beautiful to see Paul so praising his brethren—very humble, commonplace persons as compared with himself, but he admires the grace of God in them. How very different from the general spirit of depreciation that you find even among Christians—afraid to praise anybody lest they should be exalted above measure. You might leave that to the devil! He will take care that they are not exalted above measure but you need not be as particular about that. Often the best thing that can be done for God's servant is to encourage him, for, though you may not know it, he may have a multitude of depressions, heavy toil and earnest care and much watching which may bring him down. Paul speaks well of the brotherhood—let us try to do the same. But what does he call these simple-minded men who are going with him to distribute this money? Does he call them the g*lory of Christ*? Yes! Christ is the glory of God and His people are the glory of Christ! He glories whenever He is glorified by them! They are the result of the travail of His soul and in that sense they are His glory.

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THE HEAVENLY RAINBOW
NO. 3412

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne,
in sight like unto an emerald."
Revelation 4:3.

"A RAINBOW!" "A rainbow around about the throne!" I have a notion concerning this rainbow, that it was a complete circle. In the 10th chapter the apostle tells us that he saw "another mighty angel with a rainbow upon his head," which could hardly have been the semi-circular arc we are accustomed to see in the sky in times of rain and sunshine. It must have been, I should imagine, a complete ring.

I stood, two years ago, on a little wooden bridge in the village of Handeck on the Swiss side of the Grimsel Pass, and looked down upon the roaring torrent beneath. The waterfall, breaking itself upon enormous rocks, cast up showers of foam and spray. As I looked down, the sun shone upon it, and I saw a rainbow such as I had never seen but once before in another place upon a similar occasion. It was a complete circle around the fall, then another one and within it a third—three wheels within wheels, consisting of all the delightful colors of the rainbow, from the timid violet up to the courageous red! There was no mistake about it. They were complete rings that seemed to go right round the torrent, like great belts of sapphires, emeralds and chalcedonies. The ring was trebled as it shone before me. I stood and wondered at the sight. Then these very texts came to my mind, "a rainbow round about the throne," and, "I saw a mighty angel, who had a rainbow upon his head."

It seems to me that John had such a sight before him—a rainbow which entirely surrounded the throne of God. If it is so, I shall not, I think, be accounted fanciful if I draw a moral. *In this world we only see, for it is all we can see, one-half of the eternal covenant of God's grace.* That one upward arch of divine masonry is all that we see here. The other downward half, on which the one which we see rests, namely, the eternal decree, the purpose, the resolve of infinite sovereignty—that is out of sight as yet. We cannot discern it. Earth comes between the horizon and bounds it. But when we shall get up yonder and see things as they are, and know even as we are known, then the covenant will be seen by us to be a complete circle, an harmonious whole—not a broken thing, not a broken arc, or a semi-circle, as it seems to be now—but, like Deity itself, perpetual, everlasting, complete, perfect, eternal! It may be true to the figure—it certainly will be so in fact. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter and possibly this very emblem is here used to

set forth to us that while we see the glory which God has made manifest, we do not and cannot, at present, see the eternal purpose itself, except as far as we judge of it from its grand results. Oh, it is delightful to think of going up yonder if for nothing else than knowing more of Christ, understanding more of divine love, drinking deeper into the mystery of godliness through which God was manifest in the flesh! Surely, if we know but little, that little knowledge has set us thirsting for deeper draughts and we are waiting for the time when we shall drop the veil which parts us from spiritual realities and shall see them face to face, needing no longer to view them as in a glass, reflected darkly!

I want you to notice three things which these words suggest, "There was a rainbow round about the throne." First—*divine sovereignty never oversteps the bounds of the covenant, but is rainbow-hedged with a wall of fire round about the throne.* In the second place—*divine government springing from sovereignty—the throne of God is always regulated by the covenant—there is respect at all times to the covenant of grace in everything that Jehovah does.* Thirdly—*in the covenant of grace the predominant quality is grace—"it was in sight like unto an emerald," which I will further explain indicates that loving kindness and tender mercy towards men always shine radiant in the covenant.* First, then, "there was a rainbow round about the throne."

I. DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY NEVER OVERSTEPS THE BOUNDS OF THE COVENANT.

"There was a rainbow round about the throne"—as though the rainbow hedged the throne of God—belted it, girt it round about. God's sovereignty must, of necessity, be absolute and unlimited. He made everything and as nothing existed before God, or independent of God, He had a right to make what He pleased and to make all that He did make after His own will and pleasure. And when He has made, His rights do not terminate, but He still continues to have an altogether unlimited and absolute power over the creatures of His hands. He claims the right for Himself. "Has not the potter power over the clay to make of the same lump one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" God has the power to create and the power, afterwards, to use that which is created for the purpose for which He has made it. "Shall I not do what I will with My own?" is a question which the Almighty may well ask of all His creatures who would dare to bring Him to their bar and blasphemously rejudge His judgment, snatch from His hands the balance and the rod and seek to set themselves up as censors of the Holy One! Whenever men say, "How can God do this?" and, "How shall He do that?" it should always content us to answer, "No, O man, but who are you that replies against God?" for whether we will have it or not, still God has said it and He will stand to it. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"—so then, it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy!

But as one truth of God is always to be taken in its relation to another truth and not to be isolated from its natural kindred, it is a delightful

consideration that God, in His absolute sovereignty, never does violence to any of His other attributes and, *above all, never does violence to the covenant*. The covenant still surrounds the sovereignty and practically hedges it within its bounds!

God is practically, as far as we are concerned, bound by His own revelation of His own character. He has been pleased to tell us that He is just and that He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious. In a few words, He has given us the sum of Himself by saying that, "God is love." When a man says concerning himself, "I have a right to do as I like, but I am generous as well as just," you feel sure he will exercise the right which he claims in a manner according to and consistent with his own statement of what he is. And if he has rightly estimated his own character, he will give bountifully and pay honorably. Rest assured, then, that God's sovereignty never will prove Him to have misrepresented Himself, or to have deceived us! When He says that He is just, He neither can nor will act unjustly towards any creature He has made. There was never a pang or a pain inflicted arbitrarily by God. God never pronounced a curse upon any man unless that man had clearly and richly earned it by his sin! No soul was ever cast into hell by God's sovereignty. God takes counsel with Himself, but He stoops not to caprice. How comes the hapless creature, then, to this dread torment? *Sin* brings the sinner into a ruined state—*justice* pronounces the sinner's doom. Sovereignty may let that doom stand. What if it moves not to avert the issue? Justice it is that pronounces the curse. Be assured, man, however much you may kick against the doctrine of election, you have no reason to do so! Whatever that doctrine may involve, it is not possible but that God must and will act towards you in a way so strictly just that when you, yourself, come to discover it in eternity, you will not be able to complain, but be compelled to stand speechless!

Moreover, God has been pleased to assure you that He is love—that He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Now, whatever sovereignty may decree, you may rest assured that the decree will be in consonance with the fact that God is full of mercy, grace and truth. I know some of you set up the decree of God like a huge monster before you. You paint a horrible picture, as though the visage of Him that speaks to you from heaven were cruel and pitiless. But that picture is drawn by your perverse imagination—it is not God's portrait of Himself, for He says, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he would turn unto Me and live." God mocks not when He says, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?" That is honest emotion which God feels over a sinner who ruins himself when He cries, "How can I give you up? How shall I set you as Admah? How shall I make you as Zeboim? My heart is moved; My repentings are kindled together!" God wills not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live! So He, Himself, assures us and, sovereign as He is, yet He still remains both just and

gracious forever—and let us not doubt it for a moment! The rainbow, the rainbow of His own glorious attributes of mercy always surrounds the throne of God!

It is equally certain, taking another view of this subject, that *God's sovereignty never can by any possibility run counter to the promise which He Himself has made.* God has a right to do as He wills with His own, but when He once, in His sovereignty, chooses to make a promise, He would be unfaithful if He did not keep it—and it is not possible that He can be unfaithful, for none of His Words ever did fail, or ever shall! He has been true to the very jots and tittles of all that He has, Himself, declared. Never in any case has any man been able to say that God has spoken in secret, and said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face," in vain. I want every unconverted person here to be careful to note this truth of God. Whenever you find a promise in God's Word, do not let the thought of predestination scare you from it. Predestination can never be contrary to the promise! It is not in election, or reprobation, or in any doctrine that asserts divine sovereignty to make the promise of God to be of no effect! Take a promise like this—"He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." If you believe, and if you are baptized, you have, then, God's Word for it—you shall be saved! Be sure of it—that stands fast! Heaven and earth may pass away, but that Word shall not fail you. God will keep His Word of truth with you and at the last tremendous day you shall find that since you believe, God will save you!

Take another—"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then, if you call upon the name of the Lord—that is if with hearty, earnest prayer, you cry to God and if with your whole soul you take Him to be your all-in-all, calling upon His name as the heathens do upon their gods when they avow themselves to be their followers—if you do this, you shall be saved! Now, I beseech you, remember that no decree can possibly run counter to this. You say, "What if the decree shall destroy me?" Man, His promise *is* the decree! The promise of God is His eternal purpose, written out in black and white for you to read. So far from the counsel of eternity being contrary to the revelation in time, the revelation in time is nothing more than a transcript of what God resolved to do from before the foundation of the world! Take any promise you will. Let it be this, if the others seem to miss you—"Come now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Now, your sins *are* as scarlet, and you *are* willing to come and reason with God and you find that when He reasons with you, He tells you that you must rest in the blood of Jesus, leave your sins and depend wholly upon Christ. Well, now, after you have done, you have God's Word for it that those scarlet sins of yours shall be "whiter than snow." Well then, they must be so! It is not possible that anything unknown to you should come in and make void the promise which is known. I will read that verse I just mentioned again, "He has never spoken in secret, and said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain." God has not said behind your back what He has not said to your face! He has said, "Come unto Me, and I

will give you rest." He has said, "Oh, you thirsty, come and drink." He has said, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." There is nothing in that mysterious roll, which no human eye has ever seen, that can be in conflict with the golden promises which gleam in the book of God's Word upon every needy sinner that comes and trusts in the Lord! There is a rainbow around about the throne. Sovereignty never gets out of the circle of the promise.

Oh, child of God! Your heavenly Father, in His sovereignty, *has a right to do with you, His child, as He pleases, but He will never let that sovereignty get out of the limit of the covenant!* As a sovereign, He might cast you away, but He has promised that He never will—and He never will! As a sovereign, He might leave you to perish, but He has said, "I will not leave you nor forsake you." As a sovereign, He might suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength, but He has promised that no temptation shall happen to you, but such as is common to man, and He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape! Let no dark thought ever cross your mind that, perhaps, towards *you* He will deal arbitrarily. It is not so. He will carry out His purpose to you—and of that purpose He has already informed you by telling you that you are His, His adopted child and you shall be His forever and ever! In the second place—

II. THE RULING GOVERNMENT OF GOD IN THE WORLD ALWAYS HAS RESPECT TO THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

It is so in great things. He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel. When you read God's Word, Egypt comes upon the stage—Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome. Yet what are they but a sort of background? They come and they go, for all their secular grandeur, as mere accessories. The central figure is always the election of grace—the people of God—for the rest, they are merely the plowmen and the vinedressers for the Lord's own people. Sometimes these nations are nursing fathers. At other times they are sharp rods. Whichever they may be, they are mere instruments. The Bible speaks of them as so much scaffolding for the building of the living temple in which the mercy of God shall be displayed! Whenever you read, or hear people talk about prophecy, you may depend upon it that inspiration has not been given to tell of Louis, Napoleon, or any other earthly sovereign. It is not the history of Prussia, Russia, or France that the heavenly Apocalypse unveils. The whole book is written for His people—it gives us the history of the Church—but it does not give us the history of anything else! The way to read the book, if you do read it, is with this central thought in your minds—that God has not revealed to us anything concerning Assyria, Babylon, Greece, or Rome for their own sakes—but He has referred to them because they happen to have a connection with the history of His Church. That is all, for He has chosen Jacob to Himself and Israel to be His peculiar treasure. My brothers and sisters, I believe that when kings and potentates meet in the cabinet chamber and consult together according to their ambition, a counselor whom they never see

pulls the strings and they are only His puppets. And even when armies meet in battle array, when the world seems shaken to and fro with revolutions and the most stable thrones quiver as though they were but vessels out at sea, there is a secret force working in all. The end and drift of these momentous actions is the bringing out of the chosen race—the salvation of the blood-bought company and the glory of God in the redeeming of the world unto Himself! When you read the newspaper, read it to see how your heavenly Father is managing the world for the good of His own children! All else—be it the disposal of a throne, the settlement of a political question, or the winning of a boat race—all else, I say, are minor things compared with the interests of the election of grace! All things are revolving and cooperating for good. They are working together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to the purpose of His grace. By them He will make manifest throughout the ages unto the angels and the principalities, His manifold wisdom!

Now, as this is the case in the great, *it is equally so in the little*. In all your smaller affairs, God always governs with respect to the covenant. Your worst afflictions are still meant for your good, for this is one clause in the covenant, "Surely in blessing, I will bless." When you come to the worst, even should that happen to be at the close of life, you will find that God has still kept within covenant engagements. Hear what David said upon his bed of pain, "Although my house is not so with God, yet"—oh, gracious, "yet"!—"yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." You have lost your property—it is a sad thing for you to come down in the world, but this always was in the covenant. Have you never read it? "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Lately, when you have been in prayer, you have had but little comfort—and when you have read the Word of God, it has not seemed to gleam with delight to you, but rather the book has seemed dark. Well, well, that is in the covenant! Did I not read it to you? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." Perhaps you have been backsliding. It is sad that it should be so. And now you have lost much of your enjoyment and you are exceedingly cast down. But did you ever read it, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways"? Do you not know it to be a promise from God—"If his children err from My commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod; nevertheless, My covenant will I not take away from him, nor suffer My loving-kindness to fail"? You are only receiving, now, what God has promised to give to you!

Look upon these things as tokens that God is faithful. We are told in the covenant God made with Noah that "seed-time and harvest, summer and winter shall never cease." Now, the snow has fallen today, and it is bitterly cold. But, my brothers and sisters, it was in the covenant that the winter should not cease. No doubt when the harvest comes, and the summer laughs with joy, we shall say, "How good God is and how true He has been to His covenant, that there should be a harvest and a

summer!" Ah, but when the seed is cast into the cold soil and the frost covers it, you ought to be equally grateful to the faithfulness of God, for this, too, is one part of the promise! If He did not keep one part, you might be afraid that He would not keep the other! Just so is it *spiritually*. Your troubles are promised to you. "In the world you shall have tribulation." You have got your troubles. "As many as He loves, He chastens." You have got the chastening. Be, therefore, thankful that you have another proof of the divine faithfulness towards you. There is a rainbow around about the throne of God, and let the throne decree what it may! The scepter is never stretched beyond the boundary of covenant Love. It is impossible for God to deal towards His people contrary to the spirit which breathes in the two immutable things in which it is impossible for Him to lie, and by which He has given strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to the hope which is set before them in the gospel. Our third point is—

III. IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE, REPRESENTED BY THE CIRCULAR RAINBOW, LOVE AND GRACE ARE ALWAYS CONSPICUOUS.

The emerald, with its green color, is always taken to represent this green earth and the things which concern the dwellers therein. And it has always been viewed as a type of mercy. It is a soft and gentle color, the most agreeable to the eyes of all the colors, the vibrations of light caused by it being found to be more suitable to the optic nerve than the vibrations of any other color. Scarlet and such bright colors, the emblems of justice and vengeance, would soon destroy the eyes. White, the emblem of purity, cannot long be endured. Those of us who have crossed lofty mountains covered with snow have had to suffer as long as we have been there, from snow-blindness. The human eyes would soon cease to perform its functions if the earth were long covered with snow and if we had nothing to relieve the eyes. Green is the color that suits mankind and it represents the mercy, the tenderness and the benevolence of God towards mankind.

Whenever you read the covenant, read it in the light of the emerald; I have sometimes thought that some of my brothers and sisters read it in another light. I think I have heard prayers which, if translated into plain English, would run something like this—"Lord, we thank You that we are elected; we bless You that we are in the covenant; we bless Your name that You are sending sinners down to hell, cutting them off and destroying them, but we are saved!" I have sometimes thought I have caught in such prayers an air of complacency in the damnation of sinners, and even a little more than that—I have fancied I have seen in certain hyper-Calvinists a sort of Red Indian scalping knife propensity—an ogre-like feeling with respect to reprobation—a smacking of lips over the ruin and destruction of mankind! As to all of which, I can only say that it seems to me to be "earthly, sensual, devilish." I cannot imagine a man, especially a man who has the spirit of Christ in him, thinking of the ruin of mankind with any other feeling than that which moved the soul of

Christ when He wept over Jerusalem, crying, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings!" Let no one imagine that the spirit of Calvinism is a spirit of hostility to universal humanity! It is not so! It is a perversion and a caricature of the expositions of Calvin and Augustine—and of the Apostle Paul and of what our Master preached—to represent us as thinking with complacency of the ruin of any one of the human race!

My brothers and sisters, when I have sometimes heard statements made about the fewness of those who will be saved at the last, I have thought that surely the rainbow around about the throne of the God whom such people worshiped must have been scarlet in color. It could not have been "in sight like unto an emerald." There must have been a predominance of vengeance in it and not of mercy! Why, I firmly believe that at the last it will be found that there are *more* in heaven than in hell, for when the great winding up of the drama shall come, Christ will in all things have the preeminence! Now, alas, there are few that find the narrow road while broad is the gate of hell and many there are that go in that way. We are in the minority, now, but when I think of the countless hosts of little children, elect of God, who have gone from their mother's breasts to glory, not having passed through actual sin, but being bought with precious blood, I can see a vast multitude that belongs to Christ! And when I look forward to that brighter age when the nations shall flock to the feet of Christ, and tens of thousands and hundreds of millions shall sing His praises from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, I rejoice to think that then the Lord Jesus Christ will see of the travail of His soul and will be satisfied—and it is not a little that will satisfy Him! I have sometimes thought with a certain good divine, that when the King comes to end His reign, there will be found no more in prison in comparison with the great number of His creatures, than in any well-ordered government. At any rate, let us hope so. We have no right to speak positively where we have no positive declaration. But it is significant that there is always a prominence given in Scripture to the grace, the mercy, the goodness and the loving-kindness of God. Surely Scripture would not tell us this unless it would also seem to be so in the universal providence of God. I believe that in the rainbow, the emerald will be the most conspicuous, and that divine grace will be "in heaven the topmost stone," for it "well deserves the praise." And now, in conclusion, my dear friends—

IV. LET ME MAKE ONE OR TWO PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let me exhort you *all to understand the covenant, of which the rainbow is the symbol*. I am sorry to say that there are many professors who do not know what the covenant means. I have been told that there are pulpits where the word, "covenant," is scarcely ever mentioned, so that the congregation really do not know what the covenant of grace means. Now, the old Scotch divines and our own Puritan forefathers were of opinion that the two covenants are the very essence of all theology. When a man gets a clear view of the covenant of works and sees how it was

made with Adam, and broken, and how it involved our ruin—and then gets a clear view of the covenant of grace made with the second Adam, the conditions of which are all fulfilled by Him, so that the covenant cannot be broken by us—and that all the provisions of that covenant are made sure by His having fulfilled His suretyship and sponsorship on our behalf. When a man gets a hold of these two things, why, he cannot be an Arminian. It is impossible! But he must keep pretty near to those grand old doctrines which we call the doctrines of grace. If any man says to me, "What is the one thing which I have to learn to be a sound preacher of the gospel?" I think I would say, "Learn to distinguish between the covenant of Hagar, which is Sinai in Arabia, and the covenant of Sarah, which is the covenant of the New Jerusalem, which is of promise. The distinction between works and grace, between debt and gift, between the works of the law and the abounding loving-kindness of the Lord our Lord." May I ask young members of the Church to read the Scriptures upon this point and to ask their older friends to instruct them in the matter of the covenant? It is such an important point that I would press it very earnestly. I hope you do not wish to go to heaven like those of whom the Savior speaks, and who enter into life lame, or maimed, or having but one eye. Oh, no, but seek to clear away ignorance! That the soul is without knowledge is not good. Get a clear view of these things, for by so doing you will be comforted, you will be strengthened, you will be sanctified!

But *if you do understand the covenant, have a constant regard to it.* There is a sweet prayer, "Have respect unto Your covenant." We pray that to God. Well, He does have respect to the covenant. He has the symbol of it all around His throne! He cannot look anywhere without looking through His covenant. He sees us, He sees the world, He sees all things through that rainbow which is around His throne. He sees all human affairs through the medium of the great mediator, the covenant angel, the Lord Jesus. Well now, what you ask God to do, and what He does, do for yourselves! Have respect unto the covenant. Do you ever think of the covenant? Some, I am afraid, do not think of it by the month together and yet the covenant—oh, brothers and sisters—it is a casket full of wealth! It is a fountain full of crystal streams! It is the heaven out of which the manna falls! It is the rock out of which the living waters flow—the rock, Christ, who is the essence of the covenant to us! Live upon the covenant in life and let it claim your last accents in the moment of death! Rejoice in this covenant of grace all day! Live upon the choice morsels which God has laid up in store for you in it. The covenant! The covenant! Oh, keep your hearts, keep your thoughts, keep your eyes constantly on it!

And oh, *get comfort from the covenant*! Do not merely *think* of it, but really lay hold upon it. You are in covenant with God! It is not a question with you, as a believer in Christ, whether God may keep you and bless you and cause His face to shine upon you. He will do so! He cannot do

otherwise, if I may use such language concerning Him, because though He is free, yet He has bound Himself by His promise! He has bound Himself by His oath! He has put Himself within the limit of the rainbow and out of that He cannot, and will not go! It encircles His throne and Himself. You may go up to His throne humbly but still go there with boldness. You do not come like a common beggar. You do not knock at the door as a man does at your door, a chance beggar asking for charity. You have got a promise! Come, then, as a man goes into the bank who has got a bank-bill that is dated and now the day is come for it to be paid! Go to God, making mention of the name of Jesus, with the humble boldness with which a child asks of its own loving parent what that parent has often promised to bestow. Let the comfort of the covenant be continually yours!

And if you have this comfort, *never, never be so base as to indulge hard thoughts of God*. It is very easy for me to say this to you, but it will not always be so easy for you to practice it. Ah, friends, we think we can take God's will and be submissive to it and acquiesce in it—but when it presses hard upon us—then is the proof. When a man gets into the fining-pot and the crucible is put into the fire, they will show what faith he has! Ah, it is hard when you get a heavy stroke, when you are told that such-and-such an one who is very dear to you will die before long, or when you know that you, yourself, have a fatal disease—it is then hard to say, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock!" Or, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be His name." It was admirable in David, that when he began one of his mournful Psalms, he knew that he was going to groan a good deal, so he said, "There is one matter we will set right before we get out of trim. Truly God is good to Israel." That is settled. He puts that down as the first thing when he gets into the box as a witness. He says, "I am confused, today, and tumbled up and down in my wits, but before I say anything, I have to say this one thing—I solemnly declare before men, angels and devils—God is truly good to Israel! As for me, my feet had well-nigh gone, my steps had almost slipped," and so on—but he begins with that. Now, settle that, settle that in your soul! Put that down like an anchor, right deep in the sea—come winds, come waves, come hurricanes—God is good! God is faithful! God will keep His covenant! Every dark and painful line meets in the center of His Love. It must be right. Never let your soul be envious of the wicked when you see their prosperity, but still rejoice in your God and let Him do as He wills!

If you do know anything about the sweetness of the covenant, when you meet with a poor child of the house of Israel, tell him about it. And as you do not know who he may be, tell everybody about it! There may be one of your brothers or sisters with whom you are to live in heaven sitting next to you in the pew. Since I mentioned last Sunday night that there was a young person who had been here for two years and nobody had ever spoken to her, I have had a letter from a young man to say that he is in the same case. Oh, dear! You know how I told you on Sunday

night that I was ashamed of some of you, but I did not know in which part of the chapel you were and, therefore, as I did not know who it was, I could not be ashamed of you, but get you to be ashamed on your own account! Now, you see, there are two cases, and I am afraid if we get more testimony, it would go to ever so many places in the tabernacle. Do not let it be so! Let each one pluck up heart and say unto his fellow, "Know the Lord." Let each man say to his neighbor, "Have you tasted the sweetness?" Who finds honey and eats it all? You ought to say, like the Syrian lepers, "This is a day of good tidings; if we tarry here, perhaps mischief will befall us; let us go even into the camp of Israel and let us tell them of this thing." Spread abroad the good news! Who knows how many you may bring to my Master's footstool, to their salvation and to your own comfort and joy?

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 18:21-24; 19:1-10.

Blessed is he that reads and understands the prophecy of this book. We have no difficulty in knowing to what city this great Babylon refers, for the Church of Rome, in the plenitude of its wisdom, has taken the title to itself in attempting to claim that Peter was the first bishop of Rome! They quote the text, "The Church that is in Babylon salutes you"—that Church, they say, being the Church in Rome! Therefore Rome is Babylon! Besides, the whole of the 18th chapter gives such a description as can only apply to her and she must, and shall, come to her end!

Verses 21-24. *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city, Babylon, be thrown down and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in you; and no craftsmen of whatever craft he is, shall be found anymore in you; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in you, And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in you. And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the great men of the earth; for by your sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*

REVELATION 19:1-10.

Verses 1-4. *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, praying, Alleluia, Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments: for He has judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His servants at her hands. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshiped God*

that sat on the throne, saying, Amen: Alleluia. For the overthrow of a monstrous system of error gives delight to all holy spirits—and chiefly to those who stand nearest the eternal throne of God!

5-6. *And a voice came out of the throne saying, Praise our God, all you His servants, and you that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!* The harlot Church is put away! The true Church is introduced, fully arrayed in perfect holiness, ready for the consummation of her own joy and her master's—her last delight.

7-10. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him, and he said unto me, See you do it not: I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* If John made a mistake, because the saints in heaven are all so like their Master, it is well that the mistake was at once corrected, for angel worship, or the worship of saints, is to be avoided by all saints! And God's Word about it is, "See you do it not." It is said that we should certainly pay reverence to holy men that are now with God, but see you do it not! Indeed, here among men, the same kind of idolatry is sought to be kept up, and the preacher is arrayed in garments to make him distinct from the people, as though he were something better or different from them and not their fellow servant! But, for all this, let us hear the voice which says, "See you do it not. I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

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GOD'S MERCY GOING BEFORE
NO. 3413

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 10, 1870.

"The God of my mercy shall prevent [go before and meet] me."
Psalm 59:10.

IF you read this Psalm, you will find that David was in a very grievous plight. He was surrounded by the cruelest and the most false of men. They were ravening like wolves over carrion and endeavoring to destroy his character—and even to take his life. David knew where his resort was. As the conies make their dwellings in the rocks, and as the swallows have built a nest for themselves at God's altar, so David resorted to his God, and to his God alone.

All the skin bottles may be dry, but there is water in the well. And all creature comforts may fail but there is an all-sufficiency in an unfailing God. If all is false to you, God will be true! And if all hate you, God is love—and if you are in Him, He cannot be angry with you, nor rebuke you—love towards you, and love only, shall rule the day!

Let me persuade every child of God here in the hour of his trouble to resort to the comfort which David found so availing. Away, as a bird to the mountain—away, away to your God! If you have Rabshakeh's letter about you, go and spread it before the Lord. If you have, today, an inward sorrow that you cannot tell into any other ear, go, like Hannah, and stand before God, and there let your soul pour out its bitterness. You shall find that in consulting human sympathy, there is some gain—often very little—but in seeking the sympathy of your great High Priest above, there is much gain and there never can be failure. When David returned to Ziklag, he found it burned and his wives carried away captive. He and his men had lost all their property and all their families. His men spoke of stoning him, but it is written, "David encouraged himself in his God."

Now, if you have come to something like the same plight. If your affairs are at the lowest ebb and there is the sharpest winter passing over all your prospects, now turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope! Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Be of good courage, for He shall strengthen your heart. If we learn only that lesson—and do but put it into practice throughout our life—we shall have a good reward for coming up to the assembly of God's people tonight.

But now, a few words upon this text of David's. He declares that the God of his mercy would go before him, or forestall him. The word "prevent," when it was used by our translators, did not mean at all what

it does now. It means here that God would provide, would forestall, would be beforehand in loving kindness with him—and the two points we will speak of tonight are these—*it has been so. It shall be so.* First—

I. IT HAS BEEN SO.

The God of our mercy has gone before us and outrun us. It has been so *in the salvation of all His people*. Long before time had begun, God had foreknown His chosen, and foreordained them unto eternal life. They had not chosen Him, for they were not in existence! He chose them as He saw them in the glass of His decrees. It must always be that God goes before or outruns His people, since from before the foundation of the world He had loved them—loved them with an everlasting love. There can be nothing before this. We know of nothing that can stand side by side with it, so far as we are concerned, for we had no being, except in the purpose of God. But even then He loved us. He loved us when we were dead in sins, when we had not a heart with which to love Him, when we were rejecting Him altogether and did evil even as we could—yet He loved us notwithstanding all. It must always be true if we think of the doctrine of election that He went before us with His mercy!

It was so also, *with redemption*. Where were we when Christ redeemed us? My brothers and sisters, our sins were laid on Christ, but they were not then committed. Our transgressions were then taken by Him, but we had not even perpetrated them then! We were not yet living and yet a Savior was provided for us before we were, by any actual sin, personally lost. A fountain filled with blood was provided for us before we had, by any actual guilt, become defiled. Oh, here was divine forethought—here was a precious going before, of God's goodness! How He must have loved us, that knowing what our needs would be, foreseeing the abundance of our sins, He laid by in store the divine atonement, the sacred propitiation by which all our sins should be put away. This was another going before of His mercy!

Indeed, brothers and sisters, if you think of it, the *whole gospel* is a going before of us. There was that book written exactly to meet your case and mine, when as yet our case was not in existence. Here was a covenant "ordered in all things and sure" and made for us in the person of Christ. We were not parties to it, for as yet had not any being. Here was mercy laid by in the covenant, everything that our necessities could require! Grace for grace supplies for all the needs of our nature, treasured up for the poor mendicants before we ever became beggars, or knew that we were in need!

Think of the fullness that there is in Jesus Christ, and all these 1,800 years ago in matter of fact, and there from the foundation of the world in the divine purpose for every elect soul, though many of them would not come into being until remote centuries had flown by! All this forestalled, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, too, by which the saints are now called unto repentance, and unto a new life and all the operations and influences of the Holy Spirit which are all provided for in the covenant of grace—all bestowed upon the saints as one by one, they come into life,

but all provided for long before they were born! My God, your goings forth were of old, from everlasting, and all your goings forth were full of love to me, and to all them that love You! How marvelous are You in Your condescending grace! Where shall I find words with which to adore You? How shall I sufficiently give you the gratitude of my heart in outward expression for this, Your ancient, Your everlasting love towards those whom you have chosen? Bless His name, oh, you His people! Live to His praise and love Him all day long!

But this truth of God met with a further illustration in our experience *at the time of our conversion and before it*. Observe the preventing goodness of God with many of us before conversion. We might have committed the unpardonable sin, but we were always kept from that—how, we may not know, and probably never shall until we are in heaven. We might have put ourselves into positions where instrumentalities which were blessed to us might never have reached us. We have sometimes been on the verge of committing sins which might have led us in a downward career of vice, farther and farther, and might even have led us to destroy ourselves! Speaking after the manner of men, our soul has run innumerable risks, each one of which could have led to eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, had it not been that going before mercy was beforehand with us and would not let us commit the fatal act which would have consigned us to everlasting perdition! Many and many a time has He held back His servants when they were just on the edge of the fatal precipice, when they were about to take the deadly poison which would have eternally destroyed their souls! His mercy, in some providence which they did not understand, has interposed. And you who are here tonight, you have been sick lately. Well, that sickness has kept you out of a sin into which you were beginning to slide. You have lately been overtaken with a very terrible loss. Yes, but your soul was getting eaten up with covetousness, and if it had not been for that loss, you had not been here tonight—you would have been still seeking after the world with both your hands—and you would not have had an ear for anything like a message from the throne of God! It may be a part of the joy of heaven to be permitted to see the manifold wisdom of God in His dealing with us even before we were quickened by His Spirit. There are marvelous preparations, I do not doubt, which are going on in human hearts for the more effectual work of grace, for there are many who are not converted, but whose case is very hopeful. They are like what our Lord called "honest and good ground," ready for the living seed. Holy teachings at home, Godly examples, works within the mind that have tended to elevate the taste and purify the morals—and a thousand other things may come in as a sort of preparation for the true work of divine grace—and in looking back, while we must, first of all, see the preventing grace of God in keeping us back from sin, we can next see it in gently leading us, though we knew Him not, as He did Israel of old, taking us by the arms and teaching us to go, sweetly inclining us, gently

drawing us until the time should come when He should pass by us and say unto us, "Live." All the history of an elect child of God, even before conversion, will be found to be full of traces of the going before goodness of the Lord.

But probably we noticed this most *at the time of our conversion*. Some of us recollect when we first began to sigh and cry after a Savior, but oh, how He then went before us with His mercy! The sermon that we heard seemed exactly to suit our case, though the minister knew nothing of us. And when we turned to the Word of God, there were texts there, some of them very terrible ones, and they did for us just exactly what ought to have been done—they helped in the cutting and tearing process that was necessary before the pierced hands should come and bind up our wounds! God's mercy in going before us helped us to the tenderness of heart that we were seeking after, helped us to the repentance that we longed to feel, helped us to the contrition which we desired to experience. It helped us, in fact, to have done with self, and to begin with Him! It helped us to see the depravity of our hearts as soon as ever we began to desire to see it and to be humbled on account of it.

But do you not remember *when those desires began to assume the form of prayer*—when you got some light as to the way of salvation and desired how to close in with Christ and to trust Him? How swiftly did the divine Father then run to meet His prodigal child! Oh, happy day when He fell upon our neck and kissed us, when He took off our rags and put on the raiment of joy, and bade the music and dancing go on in the house because the lost one was found! Oh, at that time, in gracious answer to prayer almost as soon as we began to pray, perhaps, we had an instance of how He goes before us with the blessings of His goodness! We were not fit to receive His mercy—so we thought—but His mercy came. We were not ready for Christ, but Christ came to us. We felt ourselves so hardened, but He came and softened us. We could not squeeze out a tear, but He accepted the dry bottles that would have had tears in them if they could. We felt as if we were just nothing—but Christ knew that our nothingness made room for Him to be everything—so He came and took us at our worst and gave Himself to be ours forever and ever! Oh, if He had waited until we had washed that foul face, and taken away every stain with floods of tears—oh, if He had waited until we had cleansed those filthy hands and washed them snowy white, until we had found a wedding dress in which we should have been fit to come—ah, Savior, You would have waited even till now and even forever, for we never could have been fit for You! But no sooner did we long to come, no sooner did we feel that we would gladly come if we dared, but felt that we were all unfit to come, than Your swift feet of mercy brought You to Your children, and the grace was given for which we scarcely dared to hope! That is my experience, brothers and sisters, and I know that it is yours—God in the matter of conversion going before us with His mercy!

And how has it been since then? Take another illustration *from your life*. Have you not oftentimes been prevented by the God of your mercy—

by directions given when you were just about to take a wrong step? I remember well, and never can forget, how the whole turn of my life was made by the providence of God in what we would call an accident.

I certainly, in all probability, had not been here tonight if it had not been that an engagement made to meet a certain gentleman at a certain time was punctually kept by us both, but a servant showed him into one room on one side of the passage, and showed me into another on the other side—and we sat there two hours waiting for one another, but missed each other—and so the whole current of my life flowed in another direction! I recollect a course of action which I would have adopted, but from which I was altogether turned by hearing, as I thought, as I walked alone and sought direction, such a voice as this, "Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not." That text guided me in what I believe was a right, prudent and certainly has been a happy way! Had it not been for that, I might have gone astray, unwittingly, but still unwisely, into all sorts of paths! Have you not found it so? Just when you did not know which way to go you had the direction when you sought it. If you applied to God, He gave you guidance by some means, just as surely as the Jew had it when he resorted to the priest who wore the Urim and the Thummim. Take care that you always recollect this in the future, if it has been so in the past. God has gone before you, and marked out your path for you—and given you a plain map of the way. Has it not been so?

Moreover, He not only tells us the way, and so prevents us, but *He clears the way for us*. Great difficulties have frequently run in our way in providence and in grace, and we have been like the women who went to the sepulcher. We have said, one to another, "Who shall roll away the stone for us?" But when we have come there, behold, "the stone was rolled away for it was very great." God had made a road where we could not see any and could not make any. What? Have you never gone through the Red Sea? Have the waters never stood upright as a heap on either side while you, as God's chosen, went through? I know you have had an experience analogous to that! Then treasure up the memory of it. Do not be ashamed now, in your talks with your fellow Christians, to tell that the Lord has gone before you with His goodness, in clearing the way for you!

How frequently, too, has He gone before us with His goodness, *by supplying our needs*! Like the Israelites, who, however early they rose in the morning, found the manna from heaven awaiting them, so has it been with you, with all who trust God! Your needs have not come as quickly as the supplies. In fact, some of us have only known our needs by finding the supplies sent! And we have said, "Then I must have needed this, or it would not have come." And we have blessed the Lord as we have seen our soul's necessities in the light of the grace that has come to supply them! Oh, it has been so with you—you know it has! You have had to move, perhaps, from place to place, and God has prepared the place for you. It may be that your life has consisted much of

wandering to and fro, and tossing about, yet, though you seemed like a football, you have never been tossed anywhere but what you have fallen on your feet, and fallen into the place, too, that God had provided and prepared for you! So it has been up to the present, has it not? Has He not thus gone before you with His goodness?

And once again, how often, dear friends, *when we have begun to pray for a mercy, we have had the mercy while we have yet been calling*—while we have been speaking He has heard us! How frequently have we desired to return from our backslidings, and while we have been desiring to return, He has appeared and melted us down in penitence and gratitude. We have desired sanctification, and we have had the rod sent to our house directly, which was probably the very speediest way to ensure our growth in that respect. Whatever we have actually needed of the Lord, our God, He has not withheld it from us in its season, so that we will join in saying that until now it has been so, it has been so. The God of our mercy has gone before us. Now, in the second place—

II. IT SHALL BE SO.

It shall be so with you *who are seeking Christ tonight*. God's rule for the future is His action and conduct in the past. He never changes. You must not imagine that Jesus Christ will be sterner with you than He has been with others like you. If it has been His custom to reject those who have come, He will reject you. But if it has never been so, it never shall be so, for, "Him that comes to Me, I will in nowise cast out." Hearken, then, to Jesus now! God will go before you with the blessings of His goodness. Now, you have been thinking lately—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives."

And you have thought to yourself, "Before I can come, I must feel my need aright." Now, you think you do not feel your need and you have been troubled a great deal lately because you have not that tenderness of heart that you ought to have. Now, if you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come to Christ *for* a broken heart! He is ready to give it to you. The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord in this respect. Come and tell Him that you need a broken heart. One of the best prayers you can pray is, "Lord, create a right spirit within me." You say, perhaps, "Sir, I need more than a broken heart—I need even to learn to pray." Well, I remember what Mr. Fuller once said to a young man who was trying to pray and could not. He whispered to Mr. Fuller, who was kneeling by his side, "I cannot pray." "Tell the Lord so," said Mr. Fuller. So, brothers and sisters, when you say, "I cannot pray as I would. I cannot express myself as I desire," go and tell the Lord that you are a poor, ignorant soul, and that you do not know how to pray, and say, "Lord, teach me." "Oh, but I do not feel the desire I need to feel." I have often found that those who have most of desire think they have not any. Well, go and tell the Lord about that, and ask Him to give you the desire which shall be necessary to make earnest prayer, that you may begin to pray, that you may have a broken heart. Wherever you like to go back to,

I will go back with you, but I will tell you that Jesus Christ was there before you, and that He will meet you there with just what your souls need! He is there ready with it. He will go before you with the blessings of His goodness. The God of my mercy shall go before! "Well," says one, "but I think that I ought to have some sort of preparation for God. I do not mean *merit*, but still, there must be the cleansing of the hands and the reformation of the heart." Yes, I know there must, and I know what is more—that there *will* be all that if you come to Christ for it—but if you try to work this in yourselves, *before* you come to Him, you will certainly fail!

Now, instead of going roundabout to find preparations for Christ by way of reformation, come to Him as you are, for He will give you all the fitness that you think you ought to bring. He has got it all. Christ did not come to save the righteous, but sinners, just as a physician does not present himself to heal those who are whole, but to heal those who are sick. "But I do not feel my sickness." That is part of your sickness that you do not feel your sickness. Come and have that cured as well as all the rest! Do not think that you are to patch up a part of the cure and then to come to Him! But oh, stand to one side and let Him go before you with the blessings of His goodness, of His love, His blood and His Holy Spirit. He will meet you just where you are.

"But I am desirous to be saved," says one "and I do not think that Christ is willing to have me." Ah, but remember the verse we sometimes sing—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—
Your grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

If you have a heart-felt desire after Christ, I know where you obtained it. It never grew in your garden. The dust heap of your heart would never yield so sweet a flower as that! It is the grace of God that has made you desire Christ and for every spark of desire that you have to Christ, Christ has a volcano full of desire after you! Oh, if you have but a farthing's worth of desire for Him, He has ten thousand pounds worth of desire towards you! You cannot outrun Christ, I am sure. "I would gladly be at peace with God," says one. "I throw down the weapons of my rebellion tonight! I will say, 'Lord, accept me.'" And do you think that He is unwilling to be at peace with you? Why, there never was any unwillingness on His part! He wills not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he would turn unto Him and live. Oh, do not imagine, do not imagine, any of you, that if there is any distance between you and God, God makes the distance! No, it is your own heart, your own unbelief, your love of sin—something sinful on your side—it is no lack of grace on His side! I do not say that God will meet you half-way—I do not believe He will—but I believe He will meet you all the way, every inch of it, that He will meet you just where you are! Like the poor man that was left between Jerusalem and Jericho, of whom it is said that the good Samaritan came "where he was," so Jesus will come and pour in the oil and the wine to heal and quicken. Only cry unto Him! If you cannot

frame words, groan out your prayer! Let your aching heart but cry, "My God, have mercy on me! For Jesus' sake, forgive me!" and He will outrun you, sinner! He will outrun you! He will anticipate the prayer and grant the blessing! Why are you afraid to come? You know not what God is, or you would come right willingly and tell Him all your case. He can meet it! He understands it! He knows it now! Oh, come! Seek the secrecy of your chamber. Tell out as best you can, your sins, your fears, your weaknesses and unbelief—and trust in that Son of God, who became man that He might lift men up to God—and as surely as you trust Him, you shall be saved!

But now, it *shall be so, to you who are the people of God.* He will go before you with the blessings of His goodness in the future, as He has done in the past. Now, you are, perhaps, going across the sea to America or Australia. Well, He will be there before you. All is well! He has arranged it for you before you get there, and you shall have reason to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord, He has come where His servant should come and has prepared a place for him, and made him a sphere of labor." Or it may be, my dear friend that you do not know just where you are going. Well, I do not know that you need fret yourself about it, for if you walk by faith in the living God, you are going just where He knows it is best for you to go—and He will go before you. As surely as ever His glorious marching was through the wilderness with the hosts of Israel, so will there be glorious marching at your head to lead you in a right way and to bring you to a city to dwell therein. Trust in Him with full confidence and go onward, for He shall be your guide and lead the van.

I speak now especially to the members of this Church. It is a blessed thing to reflect upon, that *in all Christian service, God will go before us.* When our missionaries have gone to foreign lands, it has often happened that before the missionary has arrived, there has been a tradition in the minds of the people that there would be white men who would come to teach them some new thing—and thus they have been prepared for it and frequently whole tribes have speedily given ear to the gospel of Christ, because for many years God had been leading them to expect His gospel! Now, what has happened in heathen countries is happening every day in our own country! I believe that God prepares the minds of the people for the preacher as much as ever He does prepare the preacher for the people! I ask the Lord to give me preparation for the pulpit, but I often think that the other side of it—the preparation of the people for the pulpit—is equally important, and that the Lord will give it in answer to prayer! Now, how often, dear friends, when you try to do good, you will discover that the person you are anxious about has been prepared by God on purpose for you? For instance, a man has been sick and ill. Ah, you see he had been thoughtless, before, and God has just been plowing the soil by making the man thoughtful and careful, in order that he may now listen to the gospel. There are a thousand different sorrows that cross over men's minds. A working man, for instance, may during the day feel depressed, and he does not know why. Some recollections of his

early childhood may come across him, but he cannot tell why, and you, perhaps, meet him ten minutes after that. If you would but speak to Him of Christ, you would be surprised to find that you had come just in the very nick of time, when God had made the man ready for you and then sent you as a messenger from Him! Believe it, that whenever you feel an extraordinary anxiety after a soul, you may take it as an indication that that soul is as much needing you as you are needing it! There is a something that will attract that person to you, as well as you to that person. Or if you should seem to be repelled, God has still a design there, and you must try again, and labor again—for a blessing will certainly come. God is preparing the man even while that man repulses you—preparing him for the time when at last he shall cheerfully accept that Savior whom you propose to him!

My brothers, as God's servants, we are very much in the position of Joshua with the Israelites when they came up to Canaan. They were to conquer Canaan, but do you know Canaan had been conquered long before? For if you conquer a man's heart, it is merely a matter of detail to go and conquer his body, and God had sent before a rumor of what He would do, and Rahab told them that she knew that the hearts of the Canaanites were melted in them for fear. Moreover, God sent diseases and sent the hornet so that these people were dying, and those who were living were weakened by disease and stung by hornets, so that the Jewish hosts had an easy work. They had but to take what God had made ready for them! Go up, go up, O hosts of the Lord, for God has conquered the land beforehand for you! All these sorrows and griefs, all the calamities of wars, all the miseries of nations are but convincing them, as they shall be convinced, that their idols cannot help them! And even as to the antichrist of Rome, all the kings that have committed fornication with her shall hate her, and shall burn her flesh as with fire! God is working secretly; God is working mysteriously and mightily! Only be encouraged, O Church of God, to go up and take the prey, for Jericho shall fall before your shouts, as God, even the Lord, your God, shall be exalted, as you win the last great victory! Think of all this through this month when you will be hard at work and just go in to win a soul. Go in for God has gone before you! You, dear teacher, be earnest with that child, for God is intending to bless it and is getting that child ready! Your instrumentality shall fit to that heart as a key does to the wards of the lock. God is preparing you and preparing it, and good will come of it!

And now lastly, brothers and sisters. We shall soon expect to have done with laboring for Christ and to have done with pilgrimage and all its cares, except that *we shall have the last river to pass over.* But then, "the God of my mercy shall go before me." There shall be the delightful presence of Jesus and the shining company of angels, and the visions of glory yet to be revealed—and we shall forget the pangs of earth in the joys of the heavenly land! Like one drop of bitterness that is drowned in the flood of sweetness, death shall be swallowed up in victory, and when

we come to heaven, itself, we shall discover that our God has gone before us there. "Behold," says the Redeemer, "I go to prepare a place for you." Oh, how delightful it is to think of going to heaven where there will be nothing to get ready, but where all will be just as we need it—all that can be required to give to us the highest conceivable happiness, all ready, and all made ready by Christ! Rejoice, then, believer! He will go before you through this earth and before you into heaven, where He has already gone, bless His name! Live happily! Live happily! Live to serve Him out of gratitude for what He has done, and the Lord bless you evermore. Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116:1-6; ROMANS 5:10-21.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* You cannot help loving God if He has heard your prayers. Have you tried Him? If you have, you can join with David and thousands of others in confessing that He is a prayer-hearing God and, therefore, you love Him. I find the verse might be read, "I love the Lord because He hears." He is always hearing. I am always speaking to Him and He is always hearing me. Therefore I love Him. Can you imagine a better reason for love?

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* "He has inclined His ear"—stooped down, as it were, as you do to a sick person to catch his faintest word. "He has inclined His ear." He has heard my prayer when I could hardly hear it myself! When it was such a broken prayer, such a feeble prayer, that I was afraid I had not prayed, yet He heard me! He inclined His ear and, "therefore, will I call upon Him as long as I live." That is, I will never leave off praying and I will never leave off praising. This is the best gratitude we can show to God. Now, if a beggar were to say to us, "If you will help me today, I will beg of you as long as I live," we would not be very thankful! But when we say this to God, He is glad, for He wants us to be thus continually calling upon Him.

3, 4. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD—O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* He felt as if he had been hunted. As in hunting, they sometimes surround the stag with dogs as with a cordon, so he says, "the sorrows of death compassed me. There was no getting away. I was in a circle of sorrow." Worse than that, his pains of conscience and heart were so great that he says, "The pains of hell got hold upon me"—got the grip of him, as though he were arrested by them—as though those dogs had come so close as to seize and grasp him. "Then," he says, "I called." At the worst extremity he prayed. There is no time too bad to pray! When it is all over with you, still pray. Often the end of yourself is the beginning of your God. He means to get you

away from every other confidence, that you may fling yourself upon Him. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord."

And what was the prayer? A very short one—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." God does not measure prayers by the yard. It is not by the length, but by the weight. If there is life, earnestness, heart in your prayer, it is all the better for being short. Read the Bible through and you will scarcely find a long prayer. Prayers that come from the soul are often like arrows shot from the bow—quick, short, sharp! And God hears such prayers as these—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul."

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous.* Wonderful combination—gracious and yet righteous! And if you want to know how this can be, look at Calvary, where Jesus dies that we may live! "Oh, the sweet wonders of that cross, where God the Savior loved and died"—where there was the justice of God to the fullest and the mercy of God without bound. "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous."

5, 6. *Yes, our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple.* Those that have such a deal of wit may take care of themselves, but, "the Lord preserves the simple," the straightforward, the plain-minded—those who believe His Word without raising questions. "The Lord preserves the simple."

6. *I was brought low and He helped me.* Oh, many of you can say this, I trust, and if you cannot, I hope you will before long—"I was brought low and He helped me."

ROMANS 5:10-21.

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall by saved by His life.* This is a grand argument for the safety of all believers, having a three-fold edge to it! If He reconciled His enemies, will He not save His friends? If He reconciled us, will He not save us? If He reconciled us by the death, will He not save us by the life of His Son?

11. *And not only so*—The blessings of the covenant of grace rise tier upon tier, mountain upon mountain, Alp on Alp. When you climb to what seems the utmost summit, there is a height yet beyond you. "And not only so"—

11. *But we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* Then he begins to explain the great plan of our salvation.

12. *Therefore as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* In that one man.

13, 14. *For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come.* Children died

who had not actually sinned, themselves, but died because of Adam's sin.

15-17. *But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one, many are dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one, to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense*— By Adams' sin.

17, 18. *Death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* All who are in Christ are justified by Christ, just as all who were in Adam were lost and condemned in Adam. The "*alls*" are not equal in extent—equal as far as the person goes in whom the "alls" were found. And this is our hope—that we, being in Christ, are justified because of His righteousness.

19, 20. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered*—The law of Moses.

20. *That the offense might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* It makes us see sin where we never saw it. It comes on purpose to drive us to despair of being saved by works. It bids us look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink and tremble with despair.

21. *That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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A SERMON
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"LORD make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."
Psalm 39:4.

ACCORDING to the judgment of Calvin, and some of the ablest commentators, there is a kind of pettishness in this verse. The context appears to imply that David had grown impatient under the chastening hand of God. Job, under similar circumstances, longed to accomplish as a hireling, his day, and sought the repose of the grave. And so the Psalmist inquires how much longer he has to bear the ills and griefs of life, or when the goal shall be reached. But I am sure it is not for any of us to upbraid the Psalmist, for what is his impatience compared with ours? When I read of Elijah casting himself under the juniper tree, saying, "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers!"—should I wonder at the weakness of so great a man—it is only because he is great! No doubt that kind of weakness has seized us all. We have, every now and then, expressed a longing to depart—not so much, I fear, because of our eagerness to be with Christ, as because we have grown weary with the trials, the services and the sufferings of this poor wilderness. Well, if we are the subjects of the same infirmity as these godly men of old, we must flee where they fled for strength to grapple with these infirmities and overcome them! We must look to the strong for strength and pray God to work in us that ripe fruit of patience so rare and yet so precious, for it greatly glorifies God wherever it is brought forth!

David here asks the Lord to be his teacher. Observe the words, "Make me to *know*." That is to say, "Instruct me, let me be the scholar, and You condescend to my ignorance and weakness, and teach me." What? But did not David know his end? Did he not know the measure of his days? Was his frailty a secret that he could not discover? We may be sure that he knew it in part—knew it, perhaps, in that superficial manner in which many of us assent to moral and spiritual truths, with little understanding and no appreciation. But he wanted to know it after a more perfect way—he would apprehend it with that spiritual enlightenment which God alone can communicate. Upon the dishes at the china factories you have, perhaps, seen an impression produced—the inscription is to be there in the future—that is, like common knowledge. Have you afterwards seen that piece of china when it has passed through the oven, has been baked, and comes forth with what you saw there,

superficially baked into its very substance? Such should be our prayer, that what we know as upon the surface may be burned into our innermost consciences may become indelibly a part of our own selves. Lord, not only make me to know, but make me to know by Your own divine art—burn it into me—make me to know my end and the measure of my days. Observe the condescension of God that we are allowed to ask Him to teach us such a lesson as our frailty! And mark the proof of our own ignorance and our own forgetfulness that we cannot even learn this lesson unless God teaches us! And must He make us know? We need that our minds should be renewed, as it were, by a creative or a regenerating process; else we shall fail to discern the very simplest truths of God. Confessing our ignorance, let us go to God with the prayer of the Psalmist and He *will* answer us.

There are, then, three things which the Psalmist wishes to know—*his end, the measure of his days* and growing out of these, *a just estimate of his own frailty*. May the Lord teach us to profit while we meditate upon them!

I. "LORD, MAKE ME TO KNOW MY END."

Do we know this already? If you do, let your pure minds be stirred up *by way of remembrance*. The certainty of your end—try to know that by grasping the fact and letting the truth of it affect your souls. Yes, I must die unless the Lord should come and I should be caught up together with the saints in the air. I must reach the terminus of this mortal life as other men, on the couch of weakness and the bed of death. I must die. There is no discharge in this war. There is no possibility of your having an everlasting life *here*. You don't desire it if you are Christians! Neither could you have it if you did desire it—a time will come when you must depart. Think, then, dear brothers and sisters—common places will be useful to you. Let it pass over your soul, that for you the funeral bell must toll, for you the grave be dug, for you the winding-sheet and the cerements of the tomb, for you, "earth to earth, and dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," as sure as you are a man. Being born mortal, you must die. The Lord make you to know this! *You* must die, not another for you! You must gather up your feet into the bed and, like old Jacob, pass across the stream, the narrow stream of death. You though now in the prime of life, or in the gaiety of childhood; you who have escaped so many accidents and are now ripe and mellow in the quietude of old age—the dearest friend and companion cannot be a sponsor for you. When the call shall come, your pitcher must be broken at the fountain, your wheel at the cistern and you, in your own proper flesh and blood, must pass away—and your disembodied spirit must stand before God. Forget not, then, the certainty, or the personality of it!

It shall be conclusive, "Make me to know my end." It shall not be a halt, but a *finale.* Not a starting on the road, but a termination of the great journey of life. "My end," my end for all things beneath the sun, the end of my sin as far as this world is concerned and the end of my service

of almighty God! The end of all my opportunities of doing good; of my occasions of getting good; my end so that whatever after is done under the sun, I shall have neither share nor interest in it. The living know that they must die, but the dead know not anything! Other saints walk over their graves, nations rise and fall, convulsions shake the most solid empires, all things change—but there, beneath the sod, and they slumber on. Their memory and their love are lost alike—"unknowing and unknown." Certainly we shall come to an end. Certainly I, myself, shall come to that end, and when my death comes, it will, for this life and this mortal state, be a veritable end which I cannot pass.

While musing on our end, the accompaniments of *our end may well excite passing reflection*. In all probability, brothers and sisters, though we know not what may come to us, our departure out of this life will be attended with the same languor and prostration we have witnessed in the case of others. We may expect the sick bed, the days of pain and the sleepless nights which are the premonitions of decease. We may imagine for ourselves what we have so often seen among our kinsfolk and acquaintances—the family gathered in silent watchfulness and the weeping children summoned to give the parting kiss—while the hot tears fall on the blanched cheeks of the departing. We can picture it all to our minds. It may be well we should, and make a rehearsal of it, too, for it is probable enough that so it may come. We are not sure that we shall take so deliberate a leave of the world. It may happen to us in the crowded streets. Our end may come to us as we go by the way. That, however, rather strikes us as the course of nature, when there is the taking down of the tent, the folding up of the canvas, the putting away of each pin and pin-hold, and so we shall be removed as a shepherd's tent. Then will come a leaving of all earthly things—your shutters will be put up by somebody else—your books will be no more kept by you—you will have struck the balance for the last time. Some other hand must go out to earn the children's bread, now that the father is gone. Some other woman's tender care must watch over the little ones, now that the mother is no more. And the time must come when the rich man shall bid farewell to his parks and lawns, when he must bid farewell to his mortgages, to his bonds, his deeds and his estates. And the poor man, who may, perhaps, find it as hard, must bid farewell to the cottage and the hearth, and all that made life dear to him. There will be a parting time for each of us, and we pray the Lord make us to anticipate it! In connection with this, it is probable there will be many regrets to all of us. I hope when we come to die it will be no question as to whether we are saved or not. But even to a saved man, there arises this thought, "Oh, that I had glorified God more! Oh, that I had devoted of my substance, and of my time, and of my talents, more to my Master's service! I can no more feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or teach the ignorant. Oh, that those golden opportunities had been seized more eagerly, and

employed more industriously by me! But now my time for service here is over, and I am mourning the scantiness of my life-work—and I cannot amend that which is faulty, or supply that which is lacking." Our end, beloved, will be the end of all our Christian labor here below. No going to your Sunday school class any more. No coming, again, of the preacher to his rostrum. No standing here to admonish or to console. No more will the corner of the street listen to your voice, my brother, in your earnest evangelizing. No longer can your hand be outstretched to distribute the word which tells of the great Savior and the good Shepherd—our Lord Jesus Christ. On that bed you will be taking leave of all your Christian service and if anything has been left undone, there will then be no opportunity to complete it. Depend upon it—and it is wise to look forward to the event—our end will be no child's play. We may often smile and sing about death and long for evening to approach, that we may rest with God, but it is, at the same time, a most solemn thing. The best way to deal with it is to die daily, to go down to Jordan's brink and bathe every morning in that death stream, till death shall be as familiar as life, till you shall come to think of it with daily expectation! Yet at times we almost wonder that we are lingering here, for we are expecting to be called away to dwell in the land of the living, where there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor sighing.

Then, again, it will be well for us to be made *to know our end in all its results*. Although it is called our end, yet surely it is, strictly speaking, a great beginning! A more true beginning, I was about to say, even than our first birth. The moment a man dies, he then enters upon the most solemn part of his existence. Make me, Lord, to know what it will be after this, my departure. What will then happen to me? Come, let me reflect. My soul must wing her way without the body up to the throne of God, and there, at once, receive the preliminary sentence, the forecast of the sentence of the last tremendous day. "Committed for trial," to lie in durance vile without the body till the resurrection trumpet, or be admitted into glory, such as that glory can be without the body, until the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God! Which will it be with me? Ask this, dear hearers, and ask your God to make you to know which it shall be—your spirit rejoicing in the presence of Christ, your Savior, far from the world of grief and sin, eternally shut in with God—or shall it be your spirit mocking among kindred condemned in the pit that has no bottom, where the iron key is turned and through the door of which there can be no escape? Which shall it be with you? When you think of your end, remember one of these must be your portion—heaven or hell! Then comes the day of judgment, and of the resurrection. The clarion, clear and shrill, shall be such as wakens man, not for battle, nor sleepers for the fray—it shall wake the long-buried from their silent graves and they shall rise from sea and land an exceedingly great multitude! Then shall the great white throne be set and the books be opened! This is the end

God will have you to know. Oh, seek to know it! When that book is opened, and Christ shall read with eyes of fire, and with a voice of thunder, what shall the Lord award you? Will He turn to the page and say, "Blotted out with My blood are all the transgressions that were once recorded here and, therefore, there is nothing now to read except that which is the award of My chosen. I was hungry, and you gave Me meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; sick and imprisoned, and you ministered unto Me! Come, you blessed!" Or will it be to see the page turned over and to hear the voice declare, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; thirsty and you gave Me no drink"? Will it be a record all of sin, and not of virtue, with the accompanying sentence, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire"? "Lord make me to know my end," and let not my end be to be banished forever with the wicked! Gather not my life with sinners, nor my soul with bloody men! Cast me not away from Your presence! Banish me not from Your mercy! Shut me not up in the lowest pit! Condemn me not to eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord! "Make me to know my end," and let this be the end—to be with Christ where He is, to behold His glory, the glory which You gave Him from before the foundation of the world!

It seems to me that when David prayed that he might be made to know his end, he well knew these were the accompaniments. But the way in which he wished to be made to know them was that he might be made to believe in them firmly, so as to realize them vividly, look upon them not as fictions, myths and traditions, but as realities—that he might be made to know them, so as to meditate upon them, to have his mind exercised constantly about them—that he might be made to know them so as to be prepared for them and to set his house in order, because he must die, and not live, preparing to meet his God. And, above all, that he might know his end by having a full assurance of being saved in Christ Jesus, so that his end should be everlasting peace! "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Oh, that we might, while mentioning such men, become such men ourselves—and know that our end shall be peace through Jesus Christ! Now, in the second part of the prayer, David says—

II. "MAKE ME TO KNOW THE MEASURE OF MY DAYS."

It is a very humbling thing to recollect that our days have a measure. In the Latin there is a proverb, "As poor men count their sheep." And it is only because we are so poor in life that we are able to measure our days. God's days are not to be counted. "Your generations, who can tell, or count the number of Your years? From everlasting to everlasting You are God." "The measure of our days." Ask in prayer that you may be made to know this. I will just give some outlines, like a drawing-master's sketch on the blackboard. *How insignificant the measure of my days*—what a very little time I have to live after all. If 70 years is my term, of what small account they are! Perhaps you have sometimes stood by a sand-

cliff, as I did the other day, looking at alternate layers of shells, one above another. I should think at least one hundred feet thick of shells of a modern sort succeeded by thin layers of sand! Now, this must undoubtedly have been formed by the gradual deposit of some ancient sea, but how long must it have taken to have composed a rock of one hundred feet thick of white shells and sand? Well, but that is only a comparatively small layer of this earth. We go a little deeper and we find sandstone and limestone which must have taken, if the laws of nature have been at all in other times as they are now, not thousands, but even millions of years to form by the gradual deposit of the ocean! You go deeper, still, and at last you come to rocks made by fire, and the geologist is most reasonably led to the conclusion that this world, as it now stands, must have existed several millions of years, because it has taken so long a time to collect these various deposits. I know as I stood poking my stick into this sand and shells, I felt as if I had shriveled into a little ant and less even than a tiny animalcule which had scarcely come into this world when it was driven away and there were these rocks looking at me, and saying, Where were you when we were formed? When the waving ocean was washing up these shells, where were you? But now take your mind away from this world and recollect that some beings dear to us are older than this world, for when this world was made, the morning stars sang and shouted for joy! Oh, you angels—what infants we must seem in comparison with your age! Where were you when Gabriel first flew upon his errand, swift as lightning? Where were you when sin made Lucifer, son of the morning, descend swift beneath the wrath of God into the shades of darkness which are reserved for him forever? What is your life when once compared with the period of life which cherubim and seraphim have seen? Oh, but what are cherubim and seraphim compared with God? When, in this great world, sun, moon and stars had not begun, God was as great and glorious as He is now! And when the whole of this creation shall be rolled up like a worn out scroll, He will be the same—no older in a myriad years than He is now, for with Him there is no time—

"He fills His own eternal Now,
And sees our ages pass."

All things are present to Him! We are carried away as with a flood, but He sits serene, neither age nor time change Him! "Lord, make me to know the measure of my days." Help me to fall down in my utter insignificance before Your throne, adoring Your eternal majesty—

"Great God, how infinite are Thou,
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee."

While seeking to know the measure of our days, let the great importance that attaches to them stand out distinctly before us, for *on this link our everlasting destiny is hung*. It is this life which, as far as we are concerned, decides the next. In this life a believer, then a life of glory,

happiness, and immortality! In this life an unbeliever, then in the next life, in the world to come, everlasting punishment from the hand of God! This thought makes even this little life swell to wondrously great proportions! Here is a man next door to a worm and yet next door to God—born but yesterday and yet his existence will go on perpetually with God, for man shall not die! So momentous, and yet so insignificant! So magnificent, and yet so minute is the measure of my days!

"Lord, make me to know the measure of my days"—the certainty of that measure. God has appointed that you shall not die before the time—you shall certainly not live beyond it. That thread shall be cut off in its due season—

"Plagues and death around me fly,
Till He wills, I cannot die."

While I admonish you to remember the certainty, let me urge you to reflect upon the uncertainty of it, as far as you are concerned. You may live another twenty, thirty, or forty years—or you may not live as many seconds! You may be spared for the next 50 years, and still taking part in life's battle. Or it may be that before the clock has ticked again, you may be like a warrior taking his rest. Certain to God, but uncertain to you! It is well, in thinking of our days, to remember they will be quite long enough for us if God helps us to use them well. Life is very short, but *a great deal may be done*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in three years, saved the world! Some of His followers in three years have been the means of saving many and many a soul. It was a short life that Luther had to do his great work in. If I remember rightly, he was hard upon 50 before he began to preach the truth of God at all! This is a hopeful sign for some of you who have wasted your young days! There have been men of 60 that have yet achieved a life's work before they had slept and gone their way. After all, time is long or short as you like to make it so. One man lives a 100 years and dies a worldling. And yet another man, through God's grace, puts forth as much energy in two or three years as if he were a thunderbolt launched from the hands of God! And he leaves his name among imperishable memorials. Your life will be long enough to achieve great things if God will help you to remember, in measuring your days, that they will be quite short enough for the enterprise you have in hand. You will only have finished the picture when the master palsies the arm and makes you drop the pencil. And you will only have completed the day's work when the shadow shall have fallen and you shall go home to your rest. Work with all your might, but don't work despondingly—there is time enough for your soul to glorify God! Do your piece of the great work, though it be but a hair's breadth you are allowed to perform, and though it is as nothing in the presence of Him whose mighty deeds are shown through all generations. Shall I need to say anything more about measuring our days, except that it may be a painful recollection for us to remember that if they are no longer days, it is the prevalence of sin that made it necessary to shorten them! We might have lived to the age of

Methuselah but the antediluvian fathers so filled the earth with violence that God sent a flood and swept them all away! It is great mercy that men don't live too long. Where were progress if the old men of 200 years ago were here to obstruct it? Where the chance for reform if the vested interests of avarice were permitted to accumulate without any check? Now, however, the old blood is constantly superseded by fresh blood and the stream of life is kept purer by the passing away of the old conservative element, which when here, was exceedingly good in its season, but must give place to the influx of a spring tide more adapted to the growth of the times. Thank God, the great infidels don't live forever—who would have wished to have a Voltaire forever stalking about this world! What a mercy that his was but a short life! What would you think if you had a Tom Paine blustering against almighty God 500 years at a stretch? A mercy it is that even good men don't live here forever, because their temptations would so accumulate in the recollection of years of service, that self-righteousness would become inveterate, hero worship an established idolatry and dogmatism a nuisance without abatement! I grant you experience might come in to modify some of the evils, for so the grace of God can do anything—but there would be at least a natural tendency to perpetuate corruptions. We don't measure, I am afraid, our own years, in some respects, as we are known to do those of others. Some have to thank themselves that their lives are short—sins of their youth lie in their bones! And as we remember our days, we may provoke very painful recollections as to past sin, be checked as to all future folly and desire henceforth to walk in holiness and fear in the service of God until our days are ended. To number our days seems to me to mean, "*not let them run away and be wasted*." Hours ought to be counted—we sleep too much, some of us—we spend too much time at the table, too much in idle talk. Lord, help us to measure out our days, count them as they fly, and even the odd five minutes—those little pieces of time which we think we may idle away—much may be accomplished with them if we really set our minds as in the sight of eternity to employ the scraps for God. "Lord teach me to know the measure of my days." But my time has failed and, therefore, I must have but one or two words about the third point. David prays that he might know his frailty—

III. LORD, HE SAID, "MAKE ME TO KNOW THAT I HAVE AN END, THAT I MAY KNOW MY FRAILTY."

I must come to that end soon. I am coming to it now. Lord, make me to know that I am so frail that I may die at any time—early morning, noon, night, midnight, cockcrow. I may die in any place. If I am in the house of sin, I may die there. If I am in the place of worship, I may die there. I may die in the street. I may die while undressing tonight. I may die in my sleep. I may die before I get to my work tomorrow morning. I may die in any occupation. But God, grant I may never die a blasphemer! I may die with the cup of communion at my lips. I may die preaching. I may die singing. In all, grant I may die as I wish to die—doing Your

service for the love of Christ and by the power of Your Spirit. Perhaps, as I stand here and readily speak, the arrow is on its way—soon may the hand be stretched and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain! Oh, may it never intrude upon an ill-spent hour, but find me wrapped in meditation and hymning my great Creator, or serving my fellow man with love to God, or in some way so laboring that it shall not come to me as a thief in the night, but shall find me watching, ready for His advent! And this is what David meant, "Make me to know my end." It may come at any time, but let me always be ready for it. Make me to know the measure of my days with the same object. My days are measured. These days may be few—they may be very few—I may have come to the last one. The pilgrimage of life is a very solemn one. It reminds me of a caravan proceeding forward in a track—some know it, some of the travelers have forgotten it—but on the road which they are pursuing, there is a deep gulf or chasm, and some in the front part of the caravan have already fallen into the gulf. Others are proceeding. In some cases they can hear the shrieks and cries of those who have fallen into the chasm on ahead. But here in the darkness, in the rear of the caravan, there may be many others indulging in such sparks of fire as they have kindled. They are sounding the tabret and the cymbal, and still making merry—though everyone of them is going onwards towards the same precipice over which their comrades, who led the way, have already fallen! There they go—onward, onward, onward in the darkness, till they come to that fatal step which will plunge them into the world unknown! God has led you to this tabernacle well in health and strong, but your next step may be into eternity! Beware, then, that you lay hold on the hand which was once crucified lest, when you slip, there be none to hold you up! And, when you fall, there be none to rescue you, and you fall through the black and cheerless darkness forever and ever, lost, lost, lost, beyond hope of rescue! God forbid this for His mercy's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90.

"A prayer of Moses, the man of God." It is well to know the author because it helps you to an understanding of the Psalm. Remember that Moses lived in the midst of a pilgrim people who were dwelling in tents, journeying towards Canaan. He lived in the midst of a people doomed to die in the wilderness. Only two of them—Moses, himself, not one of them—only two of those that came out of Egypt were to be permitted to enter into the promised land. You may expect, therefore, to find much that is somber about this Psalm—and yet there is much that is very restful and trustful about it. If it is the prayer of Moses, it is the prayer of a man of God.

Verse 1. *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* Your chosen people have dwelt in You. You are their rest, their refuge, their comfort, their home. It is just the same, now, as in the days of Moses. God's people have no dwelling place for their souls, but their God. They are happy when they get to Him. In Him they dwell at ease.

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth*—Before they were born like infants, gigantic as they are.

2. *Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* Everything else changes. You do not. We lose our comforts. We dwell, as it were, in tents which are taken down and removed, but there is no change in You. Beloved brothers and sisters, you know this truth of God, but do you enjoy it? I think there is no sweeter food for the soul than the doctrine of the immutability of the eternal existence of God—God who cannot die and cannot change—that is, and always is, God. Oh, He is our confidence and joy! As for men, what are they?

3. *You turn man to destruction and say, return, you children of men.* He has only to speak—no need to take the scythe and mow us down. He does but say, "Return, you children of men," and we go back to the dust!

4. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* A thousand years is a very long period in human history. If you fly back and try, in your knowledge of history, to recollect what the world was a thousand years ago, it seems a long, long time ago. But to God, who always lives, all the age of the world must seem but as the twinkling of an eye! What are a thousand years to You, You glorious One, before whom the past is present, and the future is as now?

5. *You carry them away as with a flood.* Men stand, as they think, firmly, but as the best built buildings are swept away by a torrent—trees, cattle, everything dispersed before the impetuous outburst—so, great God, do You carry men away as with a flood!

5, 6. *They are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.* Have you ever watched a field of grass when in full bloom? There is, perhaps, no more beautiful sight! What variety of colors in the flowers which are the glory of the grass! And then you come by and the mower has done his work—and there it all lies. It has been withered by the sun's heat. Just such are we. Our generations fall before the scythe of death as falls the grass. And it is done at once. "In the morning it flourishes; in the evening it is cut down."

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.* Whenever God's anger breaks forth against a people, it must consume them! Oh, what a blessing it is if you and I know that His anger is turned away and He comforts us. Then we are not troubled by it any longer. Do not apply these words to yourselves. They belong to the Israelites in the wilderness who were dying, consumed by God's anger

and troubled by His wrath. But as for us who believe in Jesus Christ, we have love instead of anger—and the sure mercies of David instead of wrath—and in this we may rejoice.

8. *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.* And what was the result of that but that they all had to die? Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Oh, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, this text is not true to you—does not belong to you. Here is another that *does* belong to you—"You have cast all my sins behind Your back." He has not set them in the light of His countenance, but He has cast them into the depths of the sea and, beloved, you stand acquitted, justified! And yet there may be some here who feel their sins, tonight, and know that God is looking at their sin. Do you know, dear friend, there is no hope for you but one? And that is written in the book of Exodus—"When I see the blood, I will pass over you." If you do but put your trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, God will turn away His eyes from your sins and look upon the blood of Jesus Christ! Yes, the blood of Jesus shall blot out your sins and you shall rejoice!

9, 10. *For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength, labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.* It is well to have such a sense of our mortality upon us as this psalm suggests. And yet, it is better still to recollect that we are immortal—that when we die after the flesh, we shall not die, but live in Christ, world without end! Life is cut off and it is like a string that holds a bird by the leg—we fly away. Which way? If we are God's own, we fly away above yon clouds. We reach the eternal fields where we shall sing forever and ever!

11. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.* Dreadful is God's anger, indeed. Who knows it? None of us do. The lost in hell begin to know it, but it will need eternity for them to learn it all! Oh, I charge everyone here who is unpardoned never to attempt to learn what God's anger means! It will be an awful lesson, the power of that anger! Why, when it is let loose against a man, even in this life, in a measure it crushes him. But what the power of that anger must be, who can tell?

12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Count how many days have gone. Will not the time past suffice us to have worked the will of the flesh? You cannot tell how few remain, but still, if you live to the longest period of life—taking that for granted which you may not take for granted—how little remains! Oh, that we might, by the shortness of life, be led to apply our hearts unto wisdom, so as to live wisely! And what is the best way of living wisely, but to live in Christ and live to God?

13. *Return, O LORD, how long?* It is an earnest prayer, full of grief. The prophet of Israel, Moses, was attending one continual funeral. Whenever

the tribes halted, they formed a cemetery and buried another legion of their dead. I do not wonder that he prays, "Return, O LORD, how long?"

13, 14. *And have compassion on Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy: that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* If they are but few, help us to live happily in them. Grant us the art of Your grace of knowing Yourself, the source of happiness, that we may drink of bliss to the fullest.

15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* Give us measure for measure—sweets in bounty, according to the bitterness. Surely God has done more than this to some of us! We can bless His name because His love has abounded and He has made our cup to run over with His goodness!

16. *Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children.* We will do the work and the next generation shall have the glory. We will be content to wait, plodding on. Jesus will come, by-and-by. "Let Your work appear to us—Your glory to our children."

17. *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us.* That if we must go, we may do something that will live, that we may not have lived in vain. "Establish the work of our hands upon us."

17. *Yes, the work of our hands establish.* It is my daily prayer. My heart often goes up to heaven that the work that is done in this place may never pass away, but that God would make it such a work of true and real grace, that it may abide until the Lord, Himself, shall come! We may expect it if we seek it at His hands. "Yes, the work of our hands, establish."

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RIGHT-HAND SINS
NO. 3415

A SERMON
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"And if your hand offends you, cut it off."
Mark 9:43.

SALVATION is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not of works, neither can it be procured by human merit. It is the free gift of God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ to every soul that believes. But what is salvation? Salvation is, in short, deliverance from sin, deliverance from the guilt of it, from the punishment of it, from the power of it. If, then, any man is saved, he is delivered from the reigning power of sin. It is not possible, therefore, that any man should have salvation and yet continue in the indulgence of sin. Jesus Christ came to open a hospital for sin-sick souls, not that they might remain sick in a hospital but might go out of it healed. He came not to take men to heaven with their sins about them, but to purge them from their sins and so make them fit to enter heaven! Hence, Jesus Christ is the severest of all moralists and while He and His followers denounce all trust for salvation in merit, they equally declare that no man is a saved soul who tolerates any known sin. The entire gospel declares this. In all its parts it implies this, and that man cannot and ought not to consider himself to be saved and cannot truly be said to be saved while he lives in the indulgence of evil propensities as he did before. We shall not at all, therefore, come into conflict with the doctrines of grace while we preach to you the strongest claims of Christ upon our hearts and lives through His Word. We shall have to urge upon you the most strenuous giving up of sin and that which leads to sin—but this, not as a means of salvation—but as a *result* of faith and as an *evidence* that salvation is truly possessed—as the sign and token, the proof and the earnest of the good work of the Holy Spirit within the soul. We shall begin, therefore, with this short assertion which will serve as our first point of thought—

I. EVERYTHING WHICH OFFENDS GOD OUGHT TO OFFEND US.

You notice the text says, "If your hand offends you." We might read it "Makes you to offend God." The two expressions ought, in our experience, mean the same thing, for everything which offends God does offend every truly gracious heart. That short statement will serve as a touchstone for us all to know *whether we are reconciled to God or not*. Remember, if you truly love God, it must be so—that that which is hateful to Him will be hateful to you. Where two hearts are bound

together in the bonds of love, they are quite sure to endeavor to remove everything out of the way that would cause pain to either. You cannot love me if you favor my enemies. You can have no affection for me if you delight to thrust before me that which vexes my spirit and grieves my heart. True love feels a sympathy with the person loved and learns to put away that which is obnoxious. Now say, heart, do you put away from yourself that which God hates? Do you hate it because He hates it—not so much because your fellow Christians dislike it, or because the public judgment would go against it—but do you hate evil because it is detestable in the sight of God? If so, then you have a clear mark that you love God and you should be thankful for the divine grace which has put your heart into such a state.

Again, if that which offends God offends us, then *we may congratulate ourselves that there is some degree of conformity between God and us*. All the saints are to be made like unto God. It was in God's image that man was first made—he lost that image by his sin—but that image is to be restored by the work of the Holy Spirit. If you do, even now, in your soul war against that which God loathes—if you strive and cry after that which God loves—then there is between God and you some degree of likeness. You are like He in your hatred of evil—like, not in degree, but yet still in substance. You are like God in your love towards that which is lovely and good and pure—not like He in degree, I say again, yet still in the matter of fact there is some likeness between God and your soul.

Then there is one other thought that ought to cheer you. If you can honestly answer this question—If that which offends God offends you, *then there is some communion between God and your soul*—and though it may be a question with you and you say, "Will God in very deed speak with such a one as I am? Will He reveal Himself to His servant and show Himself gracious to such a worm as I?"—He has *done* it and He is *doing* it and this practical proof of His communion is far better than half the raptures and the joys which may be but the fruit of men's carnal excitement! This solid gold of holiness is full and true proof that the hand of the Lord has been laid upon you. Settle this, then, my beloved brother or sister, in your heart from this day forth! If there is a good man in this world, if God loves him, I must love him. If there is a good doctrine preached anywhere, though I may scarcely understand it, yet if God loves it, I must believe it and rejoice in it! If there is any providential dispensation that is really of God's mind, then let it be of my mind. Oh, Spirit of God, bring me to love what God loves, not only to acquiesce in His will, but to rejoice in His will! And Lord, teach me to hate what You hate. If there are those in this world whose company You would not have, for they blaspheme and rail and speak lightly of holy things, help me to shun their company! If there is a song that Christ's ear would not hear, let my ears refuse to hear it. If there is any sight that a holy God would not gaze upon, let not me gaze upon it. May I seek only to love that which would approve itself to the pure mind of Christ and to be offended,

heartily and naturally—without any twisting of myself towards it—at everything that is at enmity with God. That stands as the first thought. Now, let us pass on.

II. EVERY SAVED MAN WILL FIND THAT THERE ARE MANY SINS WHICH OFFEND GOD WHICH MUST BE VERY SUMMARILY DEALT WITH.

That which offends God, offends the soul. That is the first step. Then the next step is—deal with it as an offense, deal with it with vigor, deal with it in a summary manner—as the text puts it, "If your hand offends you, cut it off." *There are sins which are very dear to men.* I shall not attempt to give a catalog of them. We are so differently constituted that the sin which might bewitch you, might not fascinate me, and the sin into which I should be likely to fall might not be that to which you would be so liable. We all have some besetting sins. We may fall into all sins, but some men are more disposed to certain offenses than others.

Now, if you have any wrong thing that has hitherto been dear to you, like your right hand, your right eye, your right foot, you are, according to this text to deal with it—and to deal with it at once!

Some sins appear to men to be necessary to them. "What shall I do without my right hand?" In certain trades and lines of business, the habit of telling white lies, or the indulgence of certain company, may seem as if it were absolutely necessary. "How can I get my daily bread unless I do such-and-such as others do? We must live," and so on. Well, if the thing is wrong, even though it appears to be necessary to your livelihood, as the right hand is to the body, yet you are still to deal with it, for you and your sins must part, or God and you must part! There can be no salvation to one that harbors sin, and if sin is not given up, hope must be given up, for into heaven no man shall come who hugs his sins! Some sins, then, are dear and some sins seem useful.

Some sins, again, *seem to be parts of our very selves*. "I give up that habit?" says one, "If that were relinquished, I should be, indeed, a very different man from what I am, but I cannot give it up—it is impossible! The Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, or the leopard his spots." And yet, friend, even if it is impossible, it must be done! Another power than yours must come to the rescue, for that sin of you must go, and the sooner, the better, if you are to be saved!

Now, observe Christ's word about this right-hand sin which seems so dear, so necessary and so much a part of the man, himself. What does He say? "If your hand offends you"—strap it up? Well, some have said, "I will take a vow not to fall into such a sin as that." "If your hand offends you"—secure it within certain bounds and limits, so that it shall only act up to a certain extent, but shall go no farther—fetter it, chain it? "If your hand offends you"—swathe it in bands, keep it from doing mischief? No! But hear the Master's sharp and, at its first sound, cruel words—"Cut it off!" In the gospel according to Matthew, He puts it, "Cut it off and cast it

from you," as though even after it were cut off and the vital union were dissolved, yet still even the thought of it becomes detestable! "Cut it off and cast it from you." You perceive it is a thorough-going action! It is a vigorous action! It is a final action, for, after the man has cut off his hand, he cannot put it on again! After he has plucked out his right eye and cast it from him, he cannot have it restored again! And after the right foot has been cut off, it cannot grow there again. It is a final sentence of separation between the man and his sin!

Now, I put it to some of you, tonight, who have been thinking about going to heaven but you will never get there, while you are what you are. You are accustomed to drink, perhaps. Now, it is no use your dallying with that sin, saying, "I will keep it within bounds!" Off with it, sirs! And cast it from you! Those pots of yours must be turned upside down! The damnable habit must be relinquished, or it will certainly be your destruction. It is of no use for a man to say, "I have been unchaste but I will keep that sin within limits." There is no such thing as keeping the devil in a cage. Cut it off and cast it from you! Then there is your pride. It is in vain for you to say, "I will be somewhat humble. I will be somewhat resigned," and so on. Cut it off, man, cut it off and cast it from you! It must be thorough work—a clean severance between you and sin. Ah, these are hard tidings and many will turn on their heels and go their way, and say, "We cannot endure this!" But as the Lord lives, the pearly gates can never open to any of you who keep your sins. All your iniquities shall be forgiven you—though you have blasphemed and have even committed murder, there is pardon for you if you hate those sins and leave them—and Christ will help you to hate them if you trust Him! He will give you grace to quit them, but if you hug those sins, you may prate about faith in Christ, and you may lie about experience in grace, but to such things as real faith and true experience, you are and must be utter strangers unless sin, with stern resolution, is given up—not so much as *one* sin hugged, or indulged, or loved. "Must a man be perfect then?" Sir, a man must *desire* to be perfect. "But he cannot *be* perfect." Sir, he can be perfect in intention, if not in fact, and there is a deal of difference between the sin of misadventure, and of infirmity, and the willfully wicked sin of some men! Alas, there are always men who can excuse their sins by the sins of God's people. They eat up the sins of God's people as they eat up bread—they make a sweet morsel of it! But the genuine child of God, if he sins, hates himself for it. The evil that he would not, that he does, but his heart is right. He would do good perfectly if he could, and he pants and longs to be delivered from sin. His heart does not go after his idols—he has given them up, cast them away, by God's grace and, if he could, he would never take their names upon his lips again.

Let that second point sink deep into the souls of all who would be saved. Sins that offend must be given up, and given up at once. Now, in the next place—

III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH CAUSE US TO OFFEND, and if we are true Christians, we shall not hesitate to give them up. Now, I am about to address those who are really in Christ Jesus. There are certain matters which to believers are very risky and dangerous, and if they love Christ, they must give them up.

I think I know some who, I trust, are the Lord's people, but they are very fond of a certain class of company. There are attractions to them in certain pleasures. Now, if they would but look at their own hearts, they would find that this company is a snare to them. They are kept from weeknight services. They have little zeal for God's glory. Prayer is not kept up as it ought to be, kept up after such meetings as they sometimes hold. And yet the society is very fascinating and not altogether in itself to be condemned—but the tendencies are, to this soul at any rate, exceedingly detrimental. The man is backsliding and he certainly gets nothing to help his growth in grace in that society. All he gets there is evidently to the bad and has an evil tendency. Now what ought the Christian in such a case do? He ought without hesitation to give up such society! I have no right to be constantly found where I cannot grow in grace. I have no right to find happiness in associations which are dangerous to my soul, which drive away the Holy Spirit and break my communion with Christ. Off with that right hand, then! "Oh, but it will seem so painful to give up that society! It would be like losing a right hand!" Well, but it would be a grand thing to lose a hand for Christ. They are not altogether the most ignoble soldiers who come back from battle maimed—no, their scars are their honor—and for a Christian to have to sacrifice some dear connection, to have to give up standing and position, to receive the cold shoulder, to have the wink of the eye, to have the unkind word for Christ should be counted for an honor! We should be willing to do and bear it. No, without the slightest hesitation, we should feel that there is no connection to be compared with communion with Christ, no society for a single second to be put in the scales with walking near to Him! And so, off with the right hand and stay close to Christ.

It sometimes happens that things which are right, and good, and desirable, may be causes of offense. Yes, there may come a time when a man's good name and reputation may have to be given up. I believe that a Christian minister had better, once and for all, as soon as ever he sets out earnestly preaching the gospel, make up his mind to give up his reputation. It is very hard to be accused of this, and that, and the other—some unknown crime to which you were never tempted—to have your words wrested and your motives misconstrued! But every faithful servant of Christ ought to go in for that, and reckon upon that and settle it at first. Mr. John Wesley, I think, once said in the pulpit that he had been accused of every crime in the whole catalog of sin, except drunkenness, and he did not know that anyone had accused him of that—whereas some wicked blasphemer in the crowd accused him of it to

his face, and Mr. Wesley lifted up his hands and said—"Now this day is fulfilled the Word of the Master wherein He said, 'Woe is unto you when men shall speak well of you, but blessed are you when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake and the gospel's.'" Why, in the old times, the old days of the covenanters, the old times of the Puritans, there were found plenty of the followers of Christ who would keep close to Him if they could keep their reputations and their characters! But those were the brave men who would be counted the offscouring of all things, be set down for fanatics and I know not what besides, but who declared that for the truth of God, for Christ and for His cause, they could bear it all! I was reading yesterday the famous sentence of excommunication which Cargill declared against Charles the Second, in which he cast him out of the Church of God and brought all his crimes against him—and went to the block for having done so! He and Alexander Petrie and such were known to say that they would die a thousand deaths, sooner than admit that any king could be head of the Church, or put the crown on any head, except the head of Christ Jesus the Lord! In such times, and in other times as well, the most of men are cowards—they must keep a reputation—they must not oppose themselves too much to popular opinion. They must, if they can, sail with the current. Oh, child of God, if your reputation is ever a snare to you, off with that right hand of yours and be willing to be called a dog or a devil, if Christ can get the greater honor out of you!

To some professors, their love of profit becomes a snare. I need not say many things about that. If there are any profits that you get in business that are not honest profits, I charge you before the living God, have nothing to do with them! But let the Christian's business be conducted with such uprightness that he could afford to have it proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet at the market, for only such business is fit for a Christian! So if there is anything about your trading that would not stand the test of the most searching investigation, cut it off! Cast it from you—what have you to do with it, you child of God?

So, too, with very much besides, which I have not time to mention. There are a thousand things we might plead for concerning which much might be said, but if these things, though they may be indifferent in themselves, should to any of us prove a preventive of our serving Christ, they become sins to us. Even if they are allowable to others, we have no right to touch these doubtful things. That which is not of faith, is sin—that is to say, that which you cannot do, believing it to be right, even if it is right, is sin to you. You have got to know in your own soul that it is according to the commandment, or else, as a child of God, you have no right to touch it, or go near it.

May I urge upon my dear brothers and sisters, the members of this Church, to avoid all places where they give Satan the advantage. In a battle it is a great thing for a general to fix his position. I do not think I should be inclined to often expose myself to the fire of a battery across a

plain where the shots were constantly flying. And I pray you young people, and old people, too, never to be afraid of being too precise, but to be afraid of being too lax. This is a day in which the stern regulations of the Puritans are cast overboard and, perhaps, rightly so, some of them—but let us not go to the opposite extreme, but rather when we feel that anything comes to be a temptation to us, let us away with it and away with it without a moment's hesitation—off with the right foot, the right foot, and out with the right eye!

One thing there is which I have often to preach a little sermon about to myself. There is a tendency in some of us, especially those of us to who have heavy constitutions, to have a love of ease—and we have to drive ourselves on with a whip to constant industry. But it must be done, we must do it! Whitfield used to call out against the gouty doctor. That minister who takes things easily will be cursed of God at the last. I believe there is no man whose condemnation will be more dreadful than that of an easy-living minister. We are bound to be the best of men, to spend and be spent in the Master's cause. The love of ease is the temptation of many, many Christians. Their love of retirement is really indolence. They get into the back ranks of the Christian army and enjoy all the good things of the Church out of a love of self. I am sure many do. We, ourselves, like spiritual ease. We do not like being stirred up too much. We do not like a little self-examination. Are there not hundreds of Christians who do not dare to look at their own souls? They are obliged to live at secondhand, hoping it is all right, but as to a thorough ransacking of their spirits, they have not gone through that by the year together! It won't do, my brothers and sisters! We must cut off this easy kind of Christianity. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and only the violent will win it! A heart-searching contention against sin—and revenge against iniquity in our own souls must be carried out—for men will not go to heaven sleeping! These are not times in which you will be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. He that would win the heavenly race must run for it. He that would get to heaven must fight for it. The Lord stir us up and deliver us from this right-hand sin of self-confidence and love of carnal ease! The Lord help us to work for His cause while we have any strength left, and to rest in the rest which He has prepared for us on the other side of Jordan! Now I come to a close.

IV. WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THERE SHOULD BE A CUTTING OFF OF RIGHT HANDS?

I shall speak first to you unconverted people about the giving up of sin.

"*It is not a very pleasant operation*, that of cutting off the right hand," says one. "I cannot do it. I do not like that amputation." Listen awhile, man! Did you never have a friend that had a broken leg? Did you never go to see him in the hospital? You recollect that the doctor told you that the leg would mortify, and when the man heard that, what did he say?

Did he object to have it taken off just above where it was mortifying? He was told that if it were *not* taken off, the whole body would perish—and was he not very thankful, indeed, when the surgeons came and removed the diseased limb?

There may be some here who have even passed through that themselves—you were glad enough to lose the arm or leg to save your life. But, man, that sin of yours is a mortified part of your *soul*, your spiritual manhood! It must be given up—it will send mortification through your whole self if it is not cut off. Is there anything cruel in Christ's demanding that it should be removed? No, it is the dictate of generous and kindly wisdom. Submit yourself to it and ask the Holy Spirit to take away your darling sin and make it distasteful to you. You will soon die, and if you die with that sin unrepented of, you can have no question about where you will go! If you have any question about it, our Lord's words that I read to you told you three times over that you will be cast "into hell fire, where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched." I am not going to dwell on those words by way of explaining them. What they mean I trust you never may know, but if you ever should begin to know, you will continue to know forever and ever—"where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched," as some say it is. Oh, beware lest you run that risk! Now man suppose you should keep your cups, keep your bad company, keep your lusts, keep your self-righteousness—and find yourself in hell? It will be poor consolation to you! Ah, instead of consolation, it will be another tongue for remorse, another tooth for the adder of despair. What? Did you sell your soul for that little dance, for that night of revelry, for that week's debauchery? What? Would you sell your soul for that unchaste delight or for that wild maniac shriek of pleasure? Ah, how you will curse yourselves and tear your hair and wish that you had never been born, and played the fool so horribly with your immortal soul! Let the sin go! Let the sin go! If a man were drowning with a golden belt about his loins, and could not swim because the gold was heavy, how quickly would he seek to unbind the belt! How gladly would he feel it sink in the flood, and himself begin to strike out and swim. Man, may God's grace help you to unbuckle that belt of sin, or, pleasure, or whatever it may be—and give up all, that you might swim for eternal life through Jesus Christ!

And now Christians, this word to you; I have hinted that there are some things that you will have to give up in order that you may grow in grace and serve your Master. I will not keep you, but there are two or three things I have to say to you. Remember, that what you ever have to give up for Christ, it will be sweet to give up, and His precious society and approval will be a perfect recompense! No man ever lost by Christ in the long run. No, talk of giving up—are not those things most our own that we give up to Him? Have we not felt it to be far sweeter to drink the gall-cup than to drink the wine-cup if we have made the exchange to glorify His name? Ah, if the love is right, sacrifice will be the truest gain!

Besides, reflect—*Christians are losers to be gainers.* The farmer loses his wheat as he scatters it abroad upon the soil, but then he expects the harvest. The money that is invested and put out, the merchant has it not, but then it is making gain for him and he expects to receive it with its interest! So whatever we give up for Christ will come back to us with blessed interest in that land where to have been maimed for Christ will be nobility, where to have suffered for Christ will enroll us among the peerage of the skies, where to have died for Christ will make us brightest of the bright, amidst the fair ones, fairest of the fair! Oh, never stand questioning and parleying about anything in which Christ is concerned, but pray the Holy Spirit to keep you, from this day forward, close at the heels of the Master, casting aside every weight and every sin that besets you, and every earthly thing that attracts you—only desiring His name to be sweet upon your tongue, and His praise to be reflected in your whole character! God grant it may be so with you, my dear brothers and sisters, until Christ comes. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 18:1-22.

Verse 1. *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* The question we have sometimes heard asked in other forms, "Which is the highest office—which form of service shall have the greatest honor?" As if we were courtiers and were to take our positions according to precedent.

2. *And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them.* They all wondered what He was going to do. The little child was, no doubt, pleased to find itself in such happy company.

3. *And said, Verily I say unto you*— "And said, Verily I say unto you"—to you men or women who think no small things of yourselves and are wanting to know which is greatest—implying that you, each one, think yourself pretty good as it is.

3. *Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Someone said to me this morning, "This is a growing day." "Ah," I said, "I hope we shall all grow spiritually." "Which way?" he asked, "smaller or larger?" Let it be smaller, brothers and sisters—that will certainly be the surest way of growth! If we can become much less, today, we shall be growing. We have grown up, as we call it— today let us grow down and become as little children, or else we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven!

4. *Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* The lower down, the higher up! In a certain sense the way to heaven is downward in our own esteem. "He must increase. I must decrease." And when that straight-backed letter,

"I," which often becomes so prominent, vanishes altogether, till there is not an iota of it left, then we shall become like our Lord!

5. *And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name, receives Me.* The humblest and the least in the family of divine love, if received, brings with that reception the same blessing as the reception of Christ.

6. *But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me*—It does not mean put him out of temper by his taking his silly offense—but shall cause him to sin, shall make him stumble, shall scandalize him—whoever shall do that.

6. *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* If you have the revised version, you will see in the margin that it is a donkey millstone—not a common millstone which women used to turn—but a bigger stone which was turned by a donkey in a mill which thus was of a larger kind altogether. The very heaviest conceivable doom were better than to be a stumbling block in the way of the very least of God's people. Yet I have known some say, "Well, the thing is lawful, and if a weak brother does not like it, I cannot help it—he should not be so weak." No, my dear brother, but that is not the way Christ would have you talk! You must consider the weakness of your brother—all things may be lawful to *you*, but all things are not expedient—and if meat offends your brother—eat no meat while the world stands! Remember, we must, after all, measure the pace which the flock can travel by the weakest in the flock—or else we shall have to leave behind us many of the sheep of Christ! The pace at which a company must go, must depend upon how fast the weak and the sick can travel—is it not so? Unless we are willing to part company with them, which I trust we are not willing to do. So let us take care that we cause not even the weakest to stumble by anything that we can do without harm to ourselves, but which would bring harm to them! But I am not sure if it would harm the weakest, whether it would not harm us, also, because we are not as strong as we think we are. And, perhaps, if we took a better measure, we might put ourselves among the weakest, too!

7, 8. *Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offenses come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut them off and cast them from you.* Get rid of that which is most useful to you, most necessary to you, rather than be led astray by it and made to sin!

8. *It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* Remember those are the words of Jesus—"everlasting fire"—not the words of some of those coarse, cruel theologians that you hear a great deal about now-a-days, but the words of Jesus Christ, the Master Himself! You cannot be more tender than He! To pretend to be so will only prove us to be very foolish!

9. *And if your eye causes you to sin.* So necessary to your pleasure, to your knowledge and to your guidance, yet if it make you sin—

9. *Pluck it out and cast it from you: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.* Better to be but a maimed believer than to be an accomplished unbeliever! Better to be an uncultured saint than a cultured modern thinker! Better that you lose an eye, or lose a hand, than lose your faith in God and His Word—and so lose your soul and be cast into hell fire!

10. *Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones.* So apt to do so, when a man appears to have no perfect knowledge, no large pretensions, we are so apt to think, "Oh, he is a nobody!"

10. *For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.* There is an angel to watch over each child of God! The heirs of heaven have those holy spirits to keep watch and ward over them. These sacred intelligences who watch over the people of God, do at the same time, behold God's face! They do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word and beholding His face all the while. And if these little ones are thus honorably attended by the angels of God, never despise them! They may be dressed in fustian, they may wear the very poorest of print, but they are attended like princes—therefore treat them as such.

11. *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.* Another reason why you must not despise them. "What do you think?" Put on your considering cap and think a minute.

12-14. *What do you think? If a man has an hundred sheep, and one of them is gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if he finds it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.* Nor shall they! Christ has come on purpose that He may find them—and find them He will! And having an hundred whom his Father gave Him, He will not be satisfied with ninety-and-nine, but the whole hundred shall be there. Now, as if to show us that we are not to despise the very least in the family, nor even the most erring, He brings it personally home to us.

15. *Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.* Do not say, "You must come to me." Go to him—he has trespassed against you. It is a personal affair—go and seek him. It is useless to expect the person who does the injury to try and make peace. It is the *injured* one who always has to forgive, though he has nothing to be forgiven! It always comes to that and it is the injured one who should, if he is of the mind of Christ, be the one to commence the reconciliation.

16, 17. *But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be*

established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglects to hear the Church, let him be unto you as an heathen and a publican. Quit his company. He has despised the last tribunal. Now you must leave him. Be not angry with him. Freely forgive him, but leave him.

18. *Verily I say unto you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Where the Church acts rightly, it has the solemn sanction of God. This lesser tribunal on earth shall have its decrease sanctioned by the great tribunal above. Hence it becomes a very serious matter, this binding and loosing which Christ has given to His Church.

19-20. *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.* It is not a large Church, therefore, that is girded with the wonderful power of prayer, but even two or three! Christ will not have us despise one. He will not have us despise two or three. Who has despised the day of small things? On the contrary, measure by quality rather than by quantity—and even if the quality fails—measure by love rather than by some rule of justice that you have set up!

21. *Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?* He thought he had opened his mouth very wide when he said that.

22. *Jesus said unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times, but, Unto seventy times seven.* I do not wonder that we read in another place that the disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith." For it needs much faith to have so much patience and to still continue to forgive.

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SHALL AND WILL
NO. 3416

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

"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him."
Psalm 91:15.

THIS psalm is full to the very brim of exceedingly great and precious promises, nor is our text the least choice of them all. We have here two pearls. I am not sufficient merchantman to be able to say which is the more precious, but I am certain that the two put together are priceless beyond all computation!

"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." "He shall call upon Me." Prayer is, itself, a blessing. The desire to pray, the disposition to pray, the resolve, the determination to pray—what hopeful, healthy symptoms these are! But to be able to pray—ah, what some might give if they could put forth their soul's strength in this cheering exercise! Then comes the divine engagement favorably to hear prayer, "And I will answer him." What would some give, especially the lost—those beyond the reach of mercy—if they could but hope that their cry of anguish could meet with a response of pity! That God would answer them, even if it were to relieve, though it might not be to remove their torments! We have this privilege. Prayer is encouraged and prayer is answered! These two are stars which shine in the Christian's sky, lit up by God to lead him to the land where darkness shall be all unknown!

We have no time for a preface, therefore let us at once notice that *prayer must be offered—and that prayer must be answered.*

I. THERE MUST BE PRAYER.

"He shall call upon Me." It is not said, "I will give him this and that without his praying." He that *asks* receives. To him that *knocks* it shall be opened. He that *seeks* finds. The asking, the knocking, the seeking must come before the reception—the opening of the door and the finding. This is God's way. "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Though the promise is good and sure, and will be fulfilled, we are to bring it in our hands, lay it before the throne of God and plead with God's faithfulness and mercy that He will do as He has said. Prayer is essential.

The text seems to assert that the man who dwells near to God must and shall pray. "He *shall* call upon me." Others may refuse—man has a will of his own, but this will shall not stand in the way or prevent prayer. He shall be willing to pray. He shall be made willing in the day of God's power. If having received a new heart and a right spirit, his will shall be

in such gracious order that he *shall* will to pray! God declares that if other men are silent, this man *shall* pray. This is a bell which God will ring! This is a flute upon which God will play. This is an organ which shall send forth its peals, for God puts His hands upon the keys. This man shall pray!

Beloved, you who know Christ, who are in the habit of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, *you know that there is a constraint upon you that you should pray*. You are free agents, just as Paul was in the matter of preaching and yet he said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" You are free agents in the matter of prayer, and yet do you not feel that there is a divine compelling that moves you, so that it is woe unto you unless you draw near to God?

This necessity springs from different causes. *Within you there dwells the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of intercession. Wherever He is, there will be a groaning which cannot be uttered—intercessions made within the heart which has become the temple of the blessed Spirit! You cannot help praying if the Spirit of God is in your hearts. Drive out that sacred visitor and you will soon become as dumb as the fish in the sea—but while He is there, you shall be like the seraphs who continually cry before Him. Your prayer and your praise shall never cease, but, like the incense upon the golden altar—it shall always smoke—the fire shall never go out by day or by night. The presence of the Holy Spirit secures the fulfillment of this promise, "He shall call upon Me."

Moreover, *as the Holy Spirit gradually teaches you and educates you, everything that you learn tends to make you pray*. I say everything, my brothers and sisters, whether you read in the illuminated books wherein you see the glory of the person of Christ, or whether you turn to the black-letter volume in which you discover the depravity of your own heart. Whichever may be the book, all sacred literature alike shall lead you to pray. *Certainly a sight of your own heart will do it.* You will tremble as you see the envy, the pride, the murders, the murmurings, the rebellions of every sort that lurk there—and you will turn to the strong for strength, feeling that the monster evils of your nature cannot be overcome by your own powers! They have chariots of iron, they dwell in cities that are walled up to the skies! You cannot drive them out, except a mightier power than yours shall be enlisted in the warfare. Hence you will be driven to cry mightily unto the Lord God of Israel, that He will put forth His omnipotence because of your impotence to overcome your corruptions and lusts!

And a sight of Christ—which is the opposite extreme of experience—equally instructive and far more pleasant—*a sight of Christ will bring you to your knees*. When Peter's boat was full and began to sink, then down he went, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Sometimes a sense of the weight of sin may make us wish to escape from Christ. Sad that it should be so! But when we see the glory of Christ, Himself, and behold His condescension towards us, then we come very

near to Him and beg Him to abide with us, finding arguments in our circumstances to compel Him to tarry yet a little longer since we cannot afford to lose his blessed fellowship.

So, *as we learn and grow in grace*, we are sure to grow in prayer! If we do not increase in prayerfulness, we may take it as a sign that we are not advancing in the divine life. I am certain that the closet is the thermometer of the entire man. Beloved brothers and sisters, how grow you if this is the case? How is it with some of you if this is true? Oh, how little time is spent upon your knees! Time, however, is of small consequence, for I sometimes think we can pray more in five minutes at one time than we can in hours at other seasons. Have you had personal dealings with God of late? Have you come close to the Most High? Have you wrestled with the covenant angel? If not, there is something wrong. Begin the search! Perhaps under your beloved Rachel, your most favored delight, some evil is hidden, some idol concealed. Search and look, for if there is a lack of prayerfulness, there is mischief somewhere.

Moreover, dear friends, not only does the Holy Spirit compel us to pray. Not only will all that we learn from Him lead us to prayer, but I think *the sense of holy joy which communion with God in prayer brings will entice us into our retirement*. We can look back upon some very, very happy times that we have had, when no stranger's foot could intrude into the sacred enclosure of our retreat with the Most High. Have we not looked into the face of God—a marvelous sight! And have we not been made to reflect from our own faces, afterwards, the light of His glory? Have we not spoken to Christ? Why, I dare to say there are some of us who have as surely spoken with Him as a man speaks with his friend! And it has sometimes become to us scarcely a matter of faith as to whether there was a Christ or not, and whether He heard and fulfilled our desires, for we have whispered right into His ear and have felt Him to be near us. I do not mean with any carnal feeling, or under a sense of mere excitement, but in all sobriety, when there was no flush of feeling, for we have been heavy of heart with the world's troubles, or we have been racked with physical pain. Or at other times, when our passions have been subdued by long reading, by searching of the Word, or by the exercise of prayer—then in our clearest senses we have been cognizant of spiritual things as surely as ever in our lives we were conscious of worldly things! Well, now, having once been at that table, we long to get there again! Having once sipped of this glorious river, we shall never be content with the muddy rivers of Egypt anymore! We long for the hour to strike when secular business shall be over, that we may begin spiritual business, the real business of our souls in commerce with heaven! We have wished that we could prolong the time when we could sit, like David, before the Lord—when our spirit could gather such confidence that we could almost dance before the Lord as he did when girded with a linen ephod. I am sure that the sweetness of prayer attracts and draws the believer. Even as birds are drawn with baits towards the snare, so

towards the holy exercise of prayer we are drawn by the sweet attractions it has.

The Lord takes care that His people shall pray by *giving them a plentiful supply of daily trials and needs*. If there is anyone here without needs, I can suppose him to live without prayer. And if you have had a long course of prosperity, I can easily imagine that the mercy-seat has grown neglected. But it will not be so with those of you who have to fight hard for daily bread, or with those of you who have many cares in the household, or who have much trouble in your position in life by persecution, by ridicule and sneers. Certainly, we who are engaged in the business of a large Church with the care of many souls upon us, cannot afford to do without prayer. And when we come into contact with other people's souls, and get to be earnest about them, if we did not pray, we would be worse monsters than those that throw their young into the depths of the sea, for we should have utterly forsaken those who have a call and claim upon us, deserting them in the most important of matters, neglecting to make intercession before the Lord for them. Surely, we would sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. You who never look after sinners and do not care whether they perish or not, you can live without prayer. But those of you who come into contact with the desponding and try to encourage them, and find you cannot—you who talk with the despairing and find you cannot comfort them—you are driven to God! You call to Him to do what you cannot—to perform what you cannot accomplish. I am persuaded that the more intelligently active and the more earnestly vigorous a man is in God's work, the more will he find the necessity of prayer. I do not wonder that Christ spent whole nights in prayer. As a man, He could not have preached and done all He did without it. It would not have been possible to have sustained the ardor of such zeal daily, hourly, incessantly—without feeding it by nightly, restless, almost incessant intercessions! Brothers and sisters, God will have us pray! And if we will not pray by reason of charm, He will force us to pray by reason of fear! If we will not pray when the dish is dainty, He will break our teeth with gravel and make us drunk with wormwood. If threats will not bring you to your knees, trials shall! If one cut of the rod does not remind you of your negligence, you shall have stroke upon stroke till there are welts upon the skin, till you have smarted, groaned and wept—till at length you shall say, "Before I was afflicted from the mercy-seat, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word and come near to Your throne of grace." But you *shall* call upon Him. If you are elect, you shall cry unto Him. "Behold, he prays," must, and shall be said of you! If you are a quickened soul, you shall pray. You shall not be allowed to forget to breathe out your soul unto God! If the Lord intends to crown you in glory, He will make you wrestle in prayer before you win that crown! "He shall call upon me." I delight to look at the text in this light—not merely as the Christian's duty and privilege, but as God's own purpose to make us pray! By the divine influence of His

Holy Spirit and by the workings of His providence, He will compel His beloved ones to live near to Him. "He shall call upon Me." And now, please, to observe the relative truth—

II. PRAYER WILL BE ANSWERED.

"And I will answer him." If your experience has not got so far as the first head, you cannot enjoy the second. If you do not feel the propulsions and compulsions of the Holy Spirit compelling you to pray, you will have nothing to do with this—"And I will answer him." But if you have been much engaged in prayer—then, as there was a necessity for you to pray, so there is a necessity for God to answer!

Let me show you this. *It is a part of the divine scheme and plan by which God governs the world and manages providence that men should pray and that He should answer them.* I do not know why God is pleased so to ordain it, but I do know that this is one of His statutes. In reading Scripture, you constantly see evidence of it in precept, in promise and in example. Now, when the sun rises, there is light. Why, I do not know. There might have been light without the sun and there might have been a sun that gave no light, but God has been pleased to put these two things together—sunrise and light. So whenever there is prayer, there is a blessing. I do not know why. There might have been prayer without a blessing, for there is in the world of wrath. And there might have been a blessing without prayer, for it often is sent to some who sought it not. But God has been pleased to make this a rule for the government of the moral and spiritual universe, that there shall be prayer, first, and that then there shall be the answer to prayer. I do not expect God to alter His rule about the sun rising. I do not expect to see it light in the middle of the night before the sun is up. Neither do I expect to see God altering this rule—that there shall be a blessing upon the Church without His people seeking it! If we did but observe it aright, we would perceive this to be as certainly a rule of God's government as any law of Nature which has been discovered by experience and embodied in science. And instead of wondering that prayer is answered, we would come to look out for and expect answers! Some of you good people who have been known to pray for your children to be converted, have been not only pleased, which is quite right, but you have been amazed, which is quite wrong, when you have seen the divine grace that was in them and heard their profession of faith in Christ! That surprise of yours looks as if you were wonder-struck to find that God was honest and kept His word, whereas you should take that as a matter of course. But as this is so reliable, "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him," when you do *not* get an answer to prayer, you should go to the Lord with this question, "Show me why You contend with me. What is it that hinders the blessing? Why do You withhold it? Is my prayer faulty? Or did I ask amiss? Or have I a wrong intent? Or did I not plead the blood of Jesus enough? Or is it that I am altogether unfit to receive such a blessing? Whichever it may be, Lord, set me right, that I may pray, again, and have given to me the answer to my prayer." You

ought to get an answer and will get an answer because it is a part of the rule of God's government!

It should be enough for every believer to know that his prayer will be heard *because he has God's word for it*. Why raise objections or multiply arguments? We have it before us. "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." It is no longer a matter of conjecture! God has said He will, and "let God be true and every man a liar." Settle it for certain, that what God has promised, He can perform—and He *will* perform!

Has not *God always answered prayer*? In looking back throughout the history of the saints, this seems to be their constant testimony, "This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him." He has heard them in strange places—Jonah, to wit, in the whale's belly! He has delivered them, in answer to prayer, out of very difficult positions—Peter, to wit, when sleeping with four soldiers to be his guard—and yet brought out of prison in answer to the prayers of God's Church. He has answered prayer to some of us. We are the living witnesses to this. I have sometimes said to skeptics, "You are believers in the Baconian philosophy, by which matters are proved by induction—that is to say, certain facts are collated and then an inference is drawn from them. Now, as an honest man, I solemnly declare that I have met with not twenty, but hundreds of facts, facts certain to me, because they concerned myself, in which God has given me what I asked of Him. Who, then, are you, that you should say there is no God? Or who are you that you should say God does not answer prayer when I, as credible as you are, and quite as capable of judging of my own consciousness, and of observing facts as you are, state this and that, and when not only I, but hundreds of others, reliable people, who, if put into the witness box tomorrow, would be accepted by any lawyer as being among the most honorable and trustworthy witnesses in the parish—the very men whom he would like to get on his side of a case—declare that God has answered them? Why are they not to be believed?" Are all the thousands of God's people to be put down as fools or fanatics, and a few addle-headed infidels to be taken after the estimate of their own conceit, to know everything? Well, when the world is turned upside down, perhaps it may be so, but as long as things stand as they are and plain evidence carries its weight with impartial jurymen, we shall hold to what we know, and testify to what we have seen! God does hear! He has heard me! He changes not! You may rest assured that if you call upon Him, He will answer you.

Our God compares Himself constantly in Scripture to a Father. "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? "You do not let our children cry to you for things which you have promised them, and then refuse them. Of course, if they take whims into their heads they may take them out again. And if they like to cry for that which is not good for them, they may cry till they are tired. But if they

ask for that which you have promised to give them, you give them according to their desire. Are you better than your Father in heaven? I think not. He condescends to represent Himself *as a friend*. Surely one friend will give to another who has need. Is Christ such a poor friend as to deny us our repeated and importunate prayers? He calls Himself a *husband*. You who have a tender husband's heart would not refuse to your bride, your spouse, anything that would give her joy that it was in your power to bestow. You know you would not. And do you think that the husband of the Church will let her cry to Him and refuse her? Oh, no! He is a model of a husband in the love He has, and He will be a model in the generosity with which He proves His love. "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." The relationships of Father, friend and husband, all go to prove that an answer shall and will come!

Were the duty of prayer enjoined, and no promise of answer vouchsafed, of what use would it be? *Has God enjoined upon us constantly a useless observance, and perpetually commanded us to abide in the practice of an unmeaning service?* He says, "Continue in prayer." "Pray without ceasing." Does God delude us and send us to an exercise which can by no possibility be profitable? God forbid! We pray because He leads us and He bids us because there is an end to be answered by it. Therefore, an answer will come!

If God does not answer prayer, *to what purpose is the Holy Spirit given to us to make intercession for us?* It were blasphemy to suppose the Holy Spirit doing a work of supererogation. Prayer is necessary and as we know not what to pray for as we ought, the Holy Spirit condescendingly comes to fulfill a useful office in helping our infirmities and assisting us to pray.

Were there no answers to prayer, *to what end would be the mercy-seat?* It was the central part of the Jewish worship, the most mysterious of all their religious furniture—the Ark overshadowed by the cherubim—the mercy-seat, which covered the law and concealed the sacred things. In symbol, or in spirit, the Scripture teaches us it is a great privilege to be allowed to come to that mercy-seat. Christ has died to rend the veil, has sprinkled His own heart's blood to make it possible for us to approach without our being struck down for our presumption as Nadab and Abihu were. And is all this for nothing? Never tolerate such a thought for a single moment! Ah, my dear brothers and sisters, there is a wonderful reality in prayer. I am afraid that some professors have not proved it and those of us who really do know its power do not use it as we should. If a man could have, somewhere in his house, some little secret spring which, but to touch it, would bring him all he needed—which could shake the world, which could move heaven, which could stop the sun and moon if necessary—would you not think him insane if he never put his finger on that spring, but let it lie idle by him? The insanity is our own! We may move the arm of God if we will. There is nothing in earth or Heaven that we may not have, if it is really good for

us, if we do but know how to be importunate with God in prayer for it—and yet we do not pray as if we believed in its efficacy! Do you not often find yourselves hurrying through your prayer and then going away without ever getting near to God? Depend upon it, there is not one more ounce of prayer in the world than there is of real dealing with God. That is the measure of prayer. Unless you draw near to God and speak with Him, you may use the best language, you may think yourselves in the most devout frame, but you have not prayed at all! It is getting the grip, spiritually, laying hold upon Him who is invisible, talking with Him as a man talks with his friend, ordering your cause with arguments and then feeling, "I have really asked this of the great invisible God, who has promised to give it, and I expect it! I must look out for it, it will surely come—as sure as God is God, He will keep His promise—and as He has made me call upon Him, He, Himself, will answer me!" This is the essence of true prayer.

Do I hear somebody saying, "*But there are persons who really pray, or who think they do, but who do not get an answer.*" That is quite true, for *there are a great many persons who do formally pray, and do not truly pray*. They offer a dead prayer—there is no life in it. The heart is not at work, there is no faith, there is no communion! Now, if a man will obtain of God, he must ask in faith, nothing wavering. How can he that doubts, expect that he shall be heard? I must believe, if I come to God, that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him! And if I will not so believe, in vain do I expect to be answered!

But, brothers and sisters *do not suppose that prayer will be answered in every case according to the impulse of the suppliant, or that God will give us just whatever we like to pray for*. No more dangerous power could be committed to mortals! If the Lord would say to me, "I will give you whatever you wish for," I should tremble at the responsibility! Infinite knowledge, alone, could regulate unlimited choice. It would be a prerogative not to be entrusted to any but God! Only suppose what would occur if every prayer that everybody offers were to be answered. It is pretty certain no child of God would ever resign his creature life. There would be sure to be something or other that would prompt each one to live. We should have all the aged men who lived in the days of David still here, as spectators, if not as competitors in this world's struggles. I think, too, it is very likely that none of us would ever have any trials. We would be sure to pray not to have them and then there would be no room for faith to be exercised and no room for God to be glorified! The world would come to a dreadful pass if men were entrusted with an absolute power to have whatever they liked! It would be, indeed, a terrible curse for any man to be put in possession of such a faculty as that! You have no right to ask of God what He has not promised. Somebody prayed the other day that he might be led to ask a person to give him 500 pounds. He was so led, or he said he was, and he asked me to do it! All I could say was that whenever I was "led" to do it, I would do it, but just then I

was not led. Another person was led to pray that I might build him a cottage. Well, I was not led. A young man was once led, in answer to prayer, to ask me to let him preach for me at the Tabernacle. I was obliged to tell him, also, that when I had had it revealed to me, as it had been to him, I would then cheerfully obey the revelation, but it was lop-sided as yet, and had only been revealed to one person, and not to the other! Such fanaticism surely grows up where you get the idea that God will give you anything you ask for. He will do no such thing! He will give you what He has promised to give you, and if in His Word, He has promised to bestow it, you have but to ask in faith and He will be as good as His Word! Hold to that. If it is not a promised blessing in some form or other, you have neither the right to ask for it, nor the right to accept it!

Should any man say, "I asked for a blessing that was plainly promised, but did not obtain it," I should then say, *are you equally clear that the obtaining of it would be for your good?* "Yes," you say, "it would make me comfortable." Just so, but is it for your good to be comfortable? "And it would get me out of my difficulty." But may it not be for your lasting good to be in the difficulty, and may there not be something in the world a great deal higher for you and for me than merely to be comfortable and to get out of difficulties? "Not as I will, but as You will," was the prayer of the man who had more power in prayer than all of us put together—"Not as I will, but as You will." We must always put that in. God does not give up His prerogative as King when He bids us pray and promises us to answer. He still holds everything in His own hands. You say to your child, "My dear, I will give you anything that is for your good." He asks you to let him have his father's razors to play with. You know that very soon he will be cutting himself, and you say, "No, my child, that is preposterous." Or he asks you to let him have those sweets that are poisonous and you say, "No, my dear child, I have no doubt they taste sweet to your palate, but think of the bitter medicines you would have to take afterwards, and of how much mischief they would do you. No, I cannot let you have those." So it is with our God. He denies us many things we wish for because they are not good for us. But there is one thing that is certain—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If it is really good for you, you shall have it and God shall be glorified by it!

To sum up all I have been saying tonight, I want, dear friends, these two promises to stand vividly set forth before your eyes—"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." I want to stir you up to prayer. Do let us have more prayer during this year than we have ever had. It has been by prayer that we have been established up till now. When we were very few at Park Street, before I had the pleasure of knowing the most of you, among the best signs of the coming blessing was your numerously-attended prayer-meetings. We had a little vestry there and I think we tried it about twice but it was no use—we could not get in, but we must go into the chapel. Oh, there were prayers there that have been turned

into answers since! There were many times when we could not speak because we felt so much of the presence of God that we had need to sit still and pour out in tears and sobs the groans that could not be uttered. We did pray with real, mighty, prevailing prayer—and then there came a blessing. Wherever we went, God was with us! Wherever the Word was preached—whether in Exeter Hall or the Surrey Music-Hall—it mattered not in what place—the Word was blessed! And though I am sometimes afraid that we shall get slack in prayer, yet when I frequently see the whole of this basement full, and see you sitting in the aisles on Monday evening (though some careless people say, "Oh, it is only a prayer-meeting!"), it does cheer and make glad my heart. We cannot lose the blessing while we keep the spirit of prayer! I want you to pray still more. Among other topics, I suggest to you much more prayer for your children and for your families. We must have them saved, beloved. We cannot bear it that our children should be cast away! The angel said to Lot, "Have you here any beside?" I say that to each of you tonight. Have you in London any beside? You have seen some saved—are there any left? Is there one left? Oh, Father, never cease to pray till that one child is brought to God! Let your prayers go up perpetually, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" When you have done with your families, pray for your neighbors. You need never be short of objects for petition in this great city which is so full of sin! In these times of poverty and distress, men, perhaps, are more easily reached than they ever were. Let us pray more for them and may the eternal God soften them in their distress and bring them to Himself. I claim myself to have a very special right to the prayers of some here. I think I have a right to the prayers of all the members of this Church, but on some of you in particular I have a claim which none can dispute, for it has been through the Word preached here that you have been brought from darkness to the light of God, and I charge you, my children in Christ, by the love which I trust subsists in your hearts, never forget me in your prayers! You know not how much I need it. It is not possible for any but God to know how much I need the daily prayers of the Lord's people! Others of you are members of other Churches. Well, pray for your ministers and pray for us all. The weakest of us will be strong when you pray! The strongest will grow weak when you flag. Brothers and sisters, pray for us that we may be faithful, earnest, useful! And we say, as you shall pray for us, so may God help you in that day when you shall draw near unto Him for yourselves in distress. Pray for all your fellow Church members. Pray for the backsliding, pray for any that are faltering, pray, I beseech you, for our work connected with the Church here. I ask your prayers for our college, in particular, that our brothers who are going out to preach the gospel may go as God-sent servants, having their feet winged with love and their souls fired with zeal!

Again and again, and again would I say it! If I should never say another word to you, I think I would conclude by saying: brothers and

sisters pray for us! Pray for yourselves and your families and your neighbors! "Continue in prayer." "Watch and pray." Watch continually, but pray, also, and the Lord hear you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:41-48; 6:1-8.

Verse 41. *And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two.* If you can do him any service, do it cheerfully, do it readily. Do what he wants of you.

42. *Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you, turn not away.* This is the spirit of the Christian—to live with the view of doing service.

43-46. *You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them who love you, what reward have you?* You have done what anybody would do.

46-48. *Do not even the publicans do the same? And if you salute your brethren, only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans do so? Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.* Rise out of ordinary manhood. Get beyond what others might expect of you. Have a high standard. "Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

MATTHEW 6:1-8.

Verse 1. *Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.* Our blessed Lord does not tell His disciples to give alms, but He takes it for granted that they do. How could they be His disciples if they did not do so? But He tells them to take care that they do not do this in order to get honor and credit from it. Oh, how much is done in this world that would be very good, but it is spoiled in the doing through the motive done to be seen of men! "You have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

2. *Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.* So that they will never have another! They have been paid once for it by the approbation of their fellow men. They will never have any further reward.

3-5. *But when you do alms let not your left hand know what your right hand does: that your alms may be in secret: and your Father who sees in secret, Himself, shall reward you openly. And when you pray*—He does

not tell His disciples to pray, but again takes it for granted that they do—and he cannot be a Christian who does not pray. "A prayerless soul is a Christless soul." "When you pray"—

5. *You shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.* All they will ever get. People say, "What a wonderfully pious man he is to pray up at the street corner." Yes, but that is the reward. The prayer will die where it was offered.

6. *But you, when you pray, enter into your closet.* Get into some quiet nook—some secret place—no matter where.

6. *And when you have shut your door*—So that nobody can hear you—not wishing anybody to know even that you are at prayer. "When you have shut your door."—

6-8. *Pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret, shall reward you openly. And when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like unto they, for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.* Prayers are never measured by the yard in heaven. They are estimated by their weight. If there is earnestness in them—truth, sincerity—God accepts them however brief they are. Indeed, brevity is often an excellence in prayer. Let us never, therefore, use vain repetitions.

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OUR YOUTH RENEWED
NO. 3417

A SERMON
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"Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."
Psalm 103:5.

IN this delightful Psalm, one remarks how David finds something of praise within him in everything of which he thinks. There are some desponding, morbid, murmuring, ungrateful souls who find reasons for complaining everywhere, but a man of David's spirit, on the contrary, sucks honey out of every flower and praises God in connection with everything! I noticed, while I was reading just now, how many of these things would have made others mourn, but they only called forth from David's soul, songs of praise! For instance, "Who forgives all your iniquities"—some would be forever complaining that they had sins and that those sins were a burden, but David sings of sin as pardoned! Some would be mourning before God that they were not well in health, complaining of their sicknesses, but David sang of Him, "Who heals all your diseases." Morbid minds will be fretting about death and about what might come after death, but David says, "Who redeems your life from destruction." And now, in the view of his temporal and spiritual blessedness, he pens this verse with which to crown his song, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

I invite you first notice in this verse and as you notice, ask that you may enjoy—

I. SATISFACTION.

David speaks of his mouth being *satisfied* with good things. Satisfaction. A rare word! It rings like a silver bell—satisfaction. The richest man in England has not found it. The greatest conqueror has never won it. The proudest emperor cannot command it. Satisfaction! It is no more natural to man than it was to the horseleech to cease from craving and crying for itself, "Give! Give!" As well might the sea be thought to be full or its billows to be still, as the heart of man to be thought to be satisfied! It is a spiritual blessing—it is a divine grace that comes from the great satisfying God—the God who is, Himself, all-sufficient, is the only One who can be sufficient to fill the heart of man. Satisfaction! Why, that means enough, and enough is a feast!

David had enough of temporals and so, I trust, have we. If we are of the apostle's mind, we have, for having food and raiment, we are therewith content. David had spiritual riches and that satisfied him, and so have we, for if we have Christ, we have all things, for, first, Christ is all and next, He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? For all things are yours, whether things present or things to come; all are yours and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You have enough, then, for you have all things! Your spirit is content with what it has—no, more than content—you can say with David, "My cup runs over." In receiving Christ into your soul, you have received more than your soul can hold—you are filled with all the fullness of God!

The text, in speaking of satisfaction, uses terms which denote satisfaction. "Who satisfies *your mouth* with good things." In the mouth is the palate. It is the place in which there is a sensuous kind of enjoyment, which is here put as a figure of a higher and spiritual delight. We do not merely receive God's good mercies—we enjoy them! We have not lost our taste for them. We do not swallow the honey of the divine mercy as though it were so much tasteless white of an egg, but we know, through having our senses exercised and taught of the good Spirit, how to get the flavor, the taste of the word and to enjoy it. "He satisfies your mouth." We have, all of us, desires after pleasures which are natural to us, but believing men have desires after higher pleasures—and these desires are, for the time being, satisfied until we get into yonder realm where our capacities are enlarged, our desires shall be increased and there, too, we shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and shall drink of the river of His pleasures forevermore! Until then, we are satisfied with Christ, satisfied with His salvation, satisfied with the Holy Spirit, satisfied with all His gracious operations, satisfied with the covenant of grace, satisfied with its sureness, satisfied with the largeness of its provisions, satisfied with the love of God, satisfied, indeed, with all that the Lord wills, for we can say that His will is our will! There is enough, then, and there is enjoyment of that enough.

Note as you take the words, "Who satisfies your mouth with *good things*." *See the variety of the satisfaction that is given*. The mercies bestowed are not only good—they are not *a* good thing—but "*good things*." The Christian's spiritual wealth consists of all manner of good things. As we showed you last Thursday night—of Christ's fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. He gives more grace. He is the God of all grace. All sorts of blessings are provided for the believer and the satisfaction which he enjoys is the result of receiving all the blessings that he can ever need. "He satisfies your mouth with good things," that is, with pardons bought with blood, with justifying righteousness, perfect and complete—with adoption and all the privileges belonging thereto—with sanctification and all its gracious results! Good things, superlatively

good things, beloved! Not merely on good doctrines and good opinions shall you feed, but on real things, real blessings, and these not all of one sort, nor after one fashion, but like the fruit of that tree which becomes near to the throne of God, and which bears its fruit every month, and has a variety of fruits to suit the tastes of all who come hungering to eat thereof!

The excellence also of the mercy which satisfies us is mentioned in the text. "Who satisfies your mouth with good things"—emphatically good. Many of "the good things of this life," as we commonly say, are only good in a very modified sense. They are easily made into curses and they often become temptations. But the good things of divine grace are so good that they never can be anything else but good, and so good that they make our bad things good! I mean that they make our bitter affliction sweet and turn our trials into joys! He that gets Christ has such a good thing that no tongue shall ever tell the goodness it. He that gets everlasting love and all the streams that gush from that deep and fathomless fountain, gets things so good, and in the most superlative sense of that word, that they are like God, Himself, who is essentially good. Ah, Christian, what a happy lot is yours! To have good things from the good God and to have an abundance of them, and to have yourself so ravished in the enjoyment of them that your soul can say, "I am satisfied! It is enough. I am content. My soul is overflowing with the good things of God!"

Once more, this satisfaction is *continual*. The word is in the present tense, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things." It is not, "did satisfy it," though that is true. He did satisfy my mouth with good things when first I came to Him and perceived the beauty of my Lord Jesus. Often since then has He made His servant to sit at the banquet table and there, in the presence of his enemies has he been fed. But the text is in the present and that means who *now* satisfies, who, to-morrow when it comes, shall still be your present help and still shall satisfy—who not only will satisfy you in heaven—though that is true, for I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness—but who even now, as far as your capacity goes, continually satisfies you in things here below, not with things below, but with things above—satisfied with God while yet absent from the Lord. Is not this blessing, being in the present tense, peculiarly delightful? But it is just that to which the worldling cannot come! All his good things are generally in the past or the future. I mean his good spiritual things. He will tell you of what he once felt, or else he hopes that they may yet be in the days to come, and that one of these days he may be saved. But the genuine religion of Christ is known by its bearing the motto of "today"—*present* salvation! There is no religion under heaven except the evangelical truth of God that teaches present salvation!

I think I have read some such passage as this by an eminent cardinal, since departed, and gone somewhere—I do not know where, for he has gone somewhere where they have "Masses" for the repose of his soul, and surely that cannot be in heaven! Surely, they would not need to pray for the repose of the souls that are there! But this departed cardinal says something like this—"How delightful to die after having received the saved viaticum from the hands of God's priest, with the memorial of the cross upon your bosom and the crucifix upheld by holy hands before your expiring eyes! To pass out of this world with the sound of the passing bell in your ears and then to lie awhile, while gathered round you are the prayers of holy men and blessed virgins consecrated to God in the neighboring convent. To be carried out with the songs of choristers, with the perfume of incense and with attending monks and friars. To be put into holy ground, consecrated by sacred rites, amidst the reading of words long honored by being used by the holy Catholic church—to have the consecrated earth saturated with holy water falling upon the coffin lid that bears the memorial of the cross," and so on, and so on, and so on. How delightful! How delightful he makes it all out to be, as if it all were a theater—nothing more—a piece of show! What good could there be to a soul in all that performance, and all that tag raggedy and I know not what besides? What consolation could it be to a departing spirit? But that evidently is the ultimatum, the highest reward that can be obtained by that kind of faith!

But, beloved, we speak out of this book of God what we know and have proved! And we tell you that you may be saved NOW! The pardon of sin is not a thing merely for dying moments— it is a thing for this very present hour! What says David? "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imparts not iniquity; blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." What says Paul? "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." I dwell then, with a lingering delight upon the present tense of these words, "Who satisfies"—today—"your mouth with good things"—makes you even now a happy believer, a rejoicing believer, a hopeful believer, a contented child of God, looking for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and hoping to be found among the waiting, worshiping company who "worship Christ Jesus in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh." That is the first thought of the text, then—satisfaction.

Pass on now to the second thought, which is—

II. RENEWAL.

"So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Beloved, *there is need of this*. Every Christian has need that his soul should be restored—should be refreshed, re-invigorated, newly quickened. As to those who are saved, there is a constant need restoring them to their first love. This is promised in the words before us. I say there is need of it. There is need

of it, first, because of the ordinary wear and tear which operate upon spiritual life, as well as upon every other form of life. You cannot serve God, you cannot praise, you cannot pray, you cannot do anything without some expenditure of strength and, therefore, you need to have that strength renewed. Moreover, in such a world as this, combating with temptations, bearing up against the current of society, and I know not what besides, of difficulty, takes away our strength. We need, therefore, to go and drink again of the brook by the way, that we may lift up our head once again. The ordinary wear and tear of spiritual life requires renewal. Besides that, we are often *the subjects of sinful decline*. Backsliding is too common a complaint among Christians. We can ascend to the top of the mountain and dwell with God, but our foot soon begins to descend. There is a gravitation towards sinfulness in the best of men. Oh, that it were not so, but we are very conscious that it is so and, therefore, we need to have the renewal.

And yet again, *we sometimes fall into sorrowful spiritual diseases.* I mean apart from sin. We may get depressed in spirit. We may be nervous, fearful, timid. We may almost come to the borders of despair. We may cry out with David, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me, my heart is consumed because of grief." We may be brought very low. Well, then, again we shall need renewal. So, what with wear and tear, what with sinful inclination to decline, and what with the sorrowful diseases which may come upon our mind, we often need renewing. Mark, now, the peculiar *excellence of the renewing* that is spoken of in the text. David says, "So that *your youth* is renewed." There is great deal to be admired in the youth of the believer. Youth is *the time of beauty*. After a while, the furrows are plowed upon our brow, and the gray hairs are scattered here and there, but the young man and the maiden rejoice in the beauty of their youth. And I am sure it is beautiful to see a young Christian. There is something so admirable in his carriage and bearing, in his first ardor his, first love and zeal, his first jealous sensitiveness and tenderness of heart, his carefulness of walk and so on, that we cannot but admire him! But thank God, we need not give up these things when our Christian youth, as to time, has gone! Thank God, He can renew our youth to us spiritually when we grow old bodily! And there is a beauty about the aged Christian who is living near to God and dwelling on the borders of heaven, quite as fair to look upon as the beauty of the young believer! So God gives to His people from day to day a peculiar beauty in each season of life—and thus their youth is renewed!

Youth, again, is the time *for vigor*. The young man can run. He is strong. He has even waste powers to throw away! And often how strong are the young men in Christ Jesus! They are strong and have overcome the wicked one. Alas, it sometimes happens that growth in years does

not bring growth in grace—and we have known some who have grown weak and feeble as years have passed over their heads. But God can renew to us all the vigor we ever had! All the strength we had for service during the first 20 years of our Christian life, He can bring back to us again! Though we may have been living under a starving ministry, and so have lost our strength. Though we may have neglected much communion with Christ, and so have lost our vigor, He can give it all back again, and once more we shall run, and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint! Youth, again, is the time for *ardor*, for *fervency*, for *enterprise*. I would not say a word that might depreciate the wisdom and mature prudence of old age, but for all that, the most of things that are done in the world must be done by the young blood. The radical element comes in to stir the conservative element and quicken it into activity. In the Christian church there must be young blood coming in, and if there is not, it is generally an ill time with that church. But surely, beloved, it need not be that our first ardor, and enterprise, and hopefulness should leave us. God can renew it to us at any time during our spiritual career. He can renew our youth like the eagle's by renewing our courage for Him, our confidence in Him, our energy towards Him, our determination for Him, our willingness to run risks in His cause, our ardor to tell to others what Christ's love has been in our hearts. If you have lost that youth, cry to God tonight for it and He, by His Spirit, will renew your youth to you! "Even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Youth, too, is the time for *joy*. We expect young people to be merry, and young Christians may well make merry and be glad, now that they are brought into the house of feasting. God often makes the early part of our Christian career to be smooth—He screens us from the harder trials that will be necessary for us afterwards—but there is no reason why the joy of the Lord should ever depart from a Christian.

I have not known many, but I have known some few Christians who are just as happy and joyful as they ever were in the brightest period of their lives and have continued so by the twenty years together! I do not believe that spiritual decline, though it is very common, is at all inevitable. I believe it to be as unnecessary as it is sinful. We might always retain that early joy and delight. I must confess my own experience is that whatever joy I had in Christ 20 years ago, I have much more, now. Whatever I had that could delight me concerning Him was shallow and superficial, then, compared with the deeper delight my spirit finds in His service, in His work, in His people and especially in Himself! There is no reason why we should not continue to be young. A dear friend of yours who has lately gone to heaven, who was close on the verge of 80 years, and whom you all knew well, why, he was as much a boy as

any of us in the things of God! There was not one among us that was more hopeful or more enterprising than was our dear venerable father. We had only just to think of any good thing for Christ, and instead of being, as some have a tendency to be when they get old, rather inclined to be a drag on the wheel for fear lest the young people should go too fast, he was always ready to gird up his loins and run like Elijah before the chariot, and do a little more than anybody else if he could! I pray that that may be our case—that we may bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright! So may it be with us, and right on as long as ever we shall live may He renew our youth like the eagle's! I shall now need your attention for only a few minutes for a third point. We have had satisfaction and renewal. The third thing in the text is—

III. A SIMILITUDE.

"So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." How is that? Socrates and the old naturalists used to say that when eagles get to be very old, they lost their old beak and talons, and feathers, and turned young again. I suppose people used to believe that in those times, but happily there is nobody who believes such rubbish as that now! I am quite sure that David did not believe it, for my persuasion is the more I look into the Bible, though some have said that the Bible was only meant to teach us religion and that we must not look for accuracy as to scientific facts, that that is a mistake—and that the Bible never makes a mistake in natural history, in physics, or in anything else—is as much inspired about one thing as about another! There is nothing in this text to lead us to believe that David meant that—nothing at all! Some have thought and I think they are correct, that the allusion is to the newly-molting of the eagle. As with every other bird at that time, they appear haggard, and then when their feathers are grown again, it makes them appear to renew their youth. I observe that many naturalists whose works I have consulted on the subject declare that the molting of the eagle is not sufficiently severe to produce any appreciable change, and that David must have been a very acute observer, indeed, if he could have detected such an alteration, and they seem to think that the allusion is to the well-known longevity of the eagle, which lives on, and on, and on, when many other birds have passed through many generations. The grand old monarch of the craggy rocks is still young when generations of other birds have passed away. So our youth is renewed like the eagle's—that is to say, our spiritual life continues on, and on, and on through time—right into eternity!

Let me, then, conduct your thoughts to the eagle for a minute. How is the eagle's youth renewed? I suppose in four things—in its sight, its flight, its might and its fighting.

The eagle has a keen eye, but its eye would grow dim unless there was a constant renewal of its youth and, therefore, *its eyesight is renewed*. The eagle-eye belongs to every gracious man. He can see farther than the

eagle can. He can see beyond the gates of pearl—he can see farther than that—to the throne of God! Yes, farther than that—into the heart of God. He can say—

"The streams of love I trace
Up to their fountain, God.
And in His mighty breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me."

But the eagle eye of faith is often clouded with unbelief, and it is a blessing for us that God increases our faith and that, once again, we can see invisible things and rejoice to behold what has never been given to mortal eye to see.

The eagle is a bird of strong flight, and that *flight may be reckoned as a part of its youth which is renewed*. Large as it is, sometimes measuring from six to eight feet broad when its wings are outspread, yet as soon as it vanishes out of sight it is lost in the blaze of the sun. At another time the eagle is on its flight, simply making progress. So with the Christian. His youth is renewed. He mounts upwards in communion with God, higher, higher, higher. His motto is—

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
This still my cry shall be—
Nearer to Thee, nearer to Thee!"

Up he mounts like the eagle, or at other times he goes onward in his Christian pathway, going from strength to strength until he appears before his God. Now, it is a mercy for us that the Lord is pleased to renew our power of fellowship with Himself—our power of making progress in the divine life—just as He renews the eagle's youth.

The eagle has great *power and might*, too. He had need to be strong, or when he carries his prey to his young ones, he might soon weary. And you and I have souls to feed, and work to do for God and for His kingdom—and we need that our might should be renewed, like the eagle's, that we may be strong for every service imposed upon us.

And then *the eagle is made to fight*. It smells the battle afar off and delights in carnage. And the Christian, though he is a man of peace, is also a man of war. From his youth up he has to contend with his corruptions and fight with spiritual wickedness in high places! And he needs that his power to fight should be daily renewed, even as is the eagle's. May we experience day by day what it is to have our youth renewed in these respects. But, now, let us ask the pressing and practical question, how is it that the eagle's youth is renewed? Is it not *because there is a life within which renews it?* God has so constituted the eagle that it shall live on—God has so constituted a believer that he shall live on. He has put a living, incorruptible seed within us that cannot die, and the water of life that He has given to us, is in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Therefore is our youth renewed like the

eagle's. There is a holy nature, a spiritual immortality of grace bestowed upon us and, therefore, is our youth renewed.

The eagle's strength is renewed *by the food it eats*. That is indicated in the text, "Who satisfies your *mouth* with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." When the eagle has satisfied his hunger, he is strong again and when you and I have fed upon the Word of God—especially upon the incarnate Word of God—when we have been privileged to eat His flesh and drink His blood, as spiritual men know how, ah, then again, our youth has been renewed!

The eagle's strength is renewed *by the air he breathes*. Not here below, in this smoky atmosphere, but up there, in the clear azure, where all is bright—there does the eagle breathe the pure air and thus renew his strength. So the Christian renews his strength, not here among groveling gold hunters or pleasure hunters, or fame hunters, but up, up there in the rarefied atmosphere of communion with God! There he grows strong, again, and comes down from the heaven of heavens with his face glowing with the radiance of renewed youth, renewed by breathing the atmosphere of the skies!

The eagle's youth is renewed *as the season returns*, or, if the reference I gave to some naturalists is correct, there is a season for renewal. So when the times for God's Spirit to visit us with times of refreshing come, then, and our strength is renewed. When we feel once more the Holy Spirit bedewing us and our heart gets to be like Gideon's fleece and we are saturated, then, like the eagle's, our strength is renewed!

But I shall weary you, for there is so much scope here, if I continued to speak. I shall rather leave you to think the matter over than attempt to work out the fullness of such a text as this. And thus I must bring you to the last truth of God which I desire to enforce—

IV. A DIVINE QUICKENER.

Does not David say, "*Who* satisfies your mouth with good things"?—referring here to God, Himself. To make short work of this last point, let me say to every believer here who has been satisfied, who has had grace restored to him and his youth renewed like the eagle's—you have *had all this from God!* You have never had your soul renewed from anywhere or anyone else but from Him! You have never had your mouth filled with good things except by God. Every temporal mercy has His mark upon it, for He sent it. Those houses, those children, that competence of yours—all came from Him. As to every *spiritual* blessing, you must see His mark thereon—

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

Well, it all comes from God! Then remember that and let it be all the dearer to you! Let it make your soul cling still closer to God to think that all these blessings have come from Him.

Well, then, if all has come from God, be it remembered with that fact that *all has been through God*. From Him and through Him—I mean that no mercy would have been a mercy if God Himself had not made the mercy—and that no spiritual gift could have been yours unless God Himself had been in the gift! In fact, there is no good thing until you get God Himself—

"Less than Yourself cannot suffice,
My comfort to restore."

Life is nourished, not so much by bread, as by God's decree that bread should nourish us, for, "man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." So the ordinances do not feed your soul, it is God *in* the ordinances! It is not the sacramental bread and wine. It is not baptism. It is not coming up to listen to a poor mortal like ourselves. It is not even private prayer—it is God *in* the prayer, God *in* the preacher, God *in* the ordinance, so that you not only have everything *from* God, but that which satisfies and renews you is God Himself! Oh, to say, "My Lord and my God: the Lord is the portion of my soul!" This is sweetness, indeed.

Well, then, as you get everything from God, and by God, *ascribe everything to God*. Let nothing pass by without praise. Reckon that nothing comes to you by chance. Do not conclude anything to be your desert or your earning. Bless God for it all! "Oh, clap your hands, all you people. Come into His courts with thanksgiving. Praise Him with cymbals, even the high-sounding cymbals." Let Him have the best of your songs, for you have the best of His gifts. Praise Him with a new song, for you have new mercies for which to sing.

And if you thus ascribe everything to God, take care *that you use everything for God*. Let your temporal mercies be consecrated to Him. Give Him the first fruits of all your increase, so shall your barns be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst with new wine. Give to God all your spiritual strength and whenever you feel that you are renewed in it, do not shake yourselves as though your strength were your own, and you might use it as you like—but when the Spirit of the Lord moves upon you as He did upon Samson in the camp of Dan, go out and smite the Philistines as he did. Go and help in the Master's work and the Master's children—watch over the Master's sheep, fight the Master's foes and thus shall you continue to have your mouth satisfied with good things and your youth renewed because the Lord will see that you are not wasting it, or spending it upon yourselves, but giving it all to Him.

I am sure I grieve much that such a text as this should not have a bearing upon you all. But alas, there are some here, there are some here who are *not* satisfied and you never will be, my dear hearer, till you get Christ! There are some here whose youth is not renewed. No, it were a pity that it should be. You must be born-again! You *must*, you MUST be born-again! Oh, that you may now be born-again, for otherwise for you to

renew your youth would be to renew your sins and increase your ruin! My dear friend, what you need most is a new heart—and there is only One who can give it to you, and that is He who made heaven and earth, even Christ Jesus! What you need is to have your sins washed away and it is only He who can do it, who first filled the channels of the deep and who now can wash away your sins in His own blood. Trust Him and it is done! Trust Him and it is done altogether. Trust Him and it is done altogether and forever! He that believes in Him is saved, for He who cannot lie has said it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Be obedient to that double command and, in obedience, you shall find that God is faithful to His covenant, to His Son and to you to whom the promise is made—and you shall be saved! God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 42.

Verse 1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul, after You, O God.* It is said that when they cannot find water, they sometimes let loose a hart, which, flying over the desert sand, by instinct seems to scent out the water brook. If he cannot find it, however, the stag is subject to a burning thirst. He stands and pants. His sides heave while he thirsts. So says David, "As the hart pants (or "brays") "after the water brooks."

2. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Not God's worship only. Not God's people, but God Himself he thirsts for! Oh, for such a thirst! The next best thing to having God is to have an insatiable thirst for Him. Do you think a soul ever could be cast away that longed for God? Impossible! There is never a soul in hell that had any sincere longings after God. Grace is in your heart, dear hearer. That thirst is grace if you are longing after the living God.

3. *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* "You are forsaken. God has forgotten you." At the very thought of this, he had the salt meat of his tears and nothing else, for there is nothing that touches a Christian's heart and wounds him to the quick like that. "Where is your God?"

4, 5. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.* See how he clings to God in the dark! When the question cuts through his soul, "Where is your God?" he seems to say, "I love none but He. I will follow

hard after Him. He is everything to me. I will be sick till He heals me. I will be in the dark till He gives me light. I look to none but to my God."

6. *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.* Or the little hill. I knew You there. There did You meet with me and I remember this. And can You have met me in love so often, and will You cast me away now? You did there manifest Yourself to me—as You do not unto the world, and You are an unchanging lover. Will You not come to me again?

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts.* Heaven's troubles and earth's trials seem to clasp hands and form a waterspout. The deep of Your dark purposes seems to echo to the deep of human malice and Satanic wrath. "Deep calls to deep."

7. *All Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* You have concentrated an ocean upon my devoted head!

8. *Yet.* Oh, what a glorious, "yet," that is! How it swims! Never was there a swimming suit like that which is made of hope!

8. *The LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* How dear God gets to be to a gracious man in the time of trouble. Just now he called God the health of his countenance. Now he calls Him his very life. "My prayer unto the God of my life."

9-11. *I will say unto God my rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why am I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted, within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Or, as the old Psalm puts it—

"Yes, my own God is He."

A sweet collocation of words, indeed! "Yes, my own God is He." He seems to revel in God—to find intense delight in God. God is everything to him!

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AN UNALTERABLE LAW
NO. 3418

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 1914,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission."
Hebrews 9:22.

EVERYWHERE under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy—scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste—and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith! The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship. The effusion of blood was the appointed rite and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains and on the vestments of the priests was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bid to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the apostle refers to a literal fact when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law of God, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin except by blood. In one case, only, was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass-offering, referred to as an alternative in Leviticus 5:11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons. But if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin-offering, without oil or

frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given! The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law—no, not even for the extremely poor! Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not, any of us, to bring an offering any more than an offering to bring—but we have, all of us, to take the offering which has already been presented and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of Himself, made in our place—there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come—"Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that—

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION—that is to say, the remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Blood has been shed and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law of God, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word, remission, means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, canceled and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquaintance and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained! Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance is possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confesses his sin and forsakes it, then shall he find mercy; God has so declared it, and He will not be unfaithful to His Word. "But is there not," one asks, "a sin which is unto death?" Yes, verily, though I know not what it is, nor do we think that any who have inquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is. This much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense, even, than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened—his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron and, henceforth, he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery—yes, for *murder*, there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin!

And *this forgiveness which is possible is*, according to the Scriptures complete. That is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin and leave him accountable for the rest, but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed—he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred! He is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's book against you! If you have believed, you are forgiven—forgiven not partially, but altogether! The handwriting that was against you is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ and can never be pleaded against you anymore forever! The pardon is complete!

Moreover, *this is a present pardon*. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved. But we preach to you in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions—a pardon given in an instant—the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus! Not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease and the sin that dwells in us must be daily and hourly mortified. But as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to His justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once! It will be given to any of you tonight who accept it—yes, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it! Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven forever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the judgment seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God, Himself, vouchsafes, He will never revoke!

I will add to this one other remark. *The man who gets this pardon may know he has it.* Did he merely *hope* he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely *trust* he had it, many a qualm might startle him. But to *know* that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart! Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction and assurance! Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word! God's own Word it is that says, "Whoever believes in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned! It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as He gives it to me. "Oh," says one, "how happy would I be if this might be my case." You have well spoken,

for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. "But," says another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." You reason after the manner of the sons of men! Know, then, that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err—it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man—He pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder and sing, "Who is a God like unto You, that passes by transgression, iniquity and sin?" When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens! When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances. But when He forgives, He displays the riches of His grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend! Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue, He does in a moment put away, for He delights in mercy! And judgment is His strange work. "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live." This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me! There is no remission except with blood—but there is remission, for the blood has been shed!

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that—

II. THOUGH THERE IS PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD. That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you *should* be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God's holy law. But be it known unto you that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin! If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you! Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift and is sign of grace—but there is no atoning power in repentance! In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission! But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness is given up and temperance becomes the rule? What if licentiousness is abandoned and chastity adorns the character? What if dishonest dealing is relinquished and integrity is scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, 'tis well! I would to God such reformations took place everywhere—yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into further debt—and past delinquencies are not condoned by future

good behavior. So sin is not remitted by reformation! Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past in the days that you have transgressed against Him. "What, then," says the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their humbling of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they are sincere, I would not quit, rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh, dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin! I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth and if the saints in heaven could all join—all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word! No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer, itself, can never blot out a sin without the blood! "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may!

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there are those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin—and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from bathing and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul! A strange infatuation, certainly! Yet today, in India, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvelous sufferings and distortions in the hope of getting rid of sin! To what purpose is it all? I think I hear the Lord say, "What is this to Me that you did bow your head like a bulrush, and wrapped yourself in sackcloth, and ate ashes with your bread, and mingled wormwood with your drink? You have broken My law—these things cannot repair it! You have done injury to My honor by your sin, but where is the righteousness that reflects honor upon My name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "How shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas, it was all in vain! Here stands the sentence. Here forever must it stand—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy Him!

Observe again how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah, futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind—it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very apostle,

of whom it was said gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in His death. It is a symbol—it is nothing more! Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the "Mass," as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is "an unbloody sacrifice," yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin? We fling this text in their faces—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case for it is without the *shedding* of blood—without the blood-shedding, the blood as distinct from the flesh—without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin!

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go still deeper. Jesus Christ, Himself, cannot save us apart from His blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly when it affirms that the *example* of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that He can now forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so! Not the holiness of Jesus! Not the life of Jesus! Not the death of Jesus, but the BLOOD of Jesus only, for, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in His glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism—that it holds too much before the sinner's eyes Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the cross, or we can never be saved! Your faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." I remember one person who was united with this Church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a Church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon Him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon from Christ crucified! I did not know and until I had seen Him as shedding His blood and making propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important—"Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ Himself! It is the sacrifice that He has offered for us that is the means of putting away our sin—this, and nothing else! Let us pass on a little further with the same truth of God—

III. THE REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake; but it is blasphemy to suppose that! The law of God, then, being a righteous law and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for Him not to carry out the penalty! Would you have Him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die—would you have God to be a liar? Shall He eat His words to save His creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The law's sentence must be carried out! It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of His holiness, He must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, could He save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon Himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave Him, stands in their standing and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious substitute bares His arm and He says, "Strike, O, sword, but strike Me and let My people go!" Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the law pierced and His blood was shed, the blood not of One who was only man, but of One who, by His being an eternal Spirit, was able to offer up Himself without spot unto God in a way which gave infinite efficacy to His sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered Himself without spot to God. Being in His own nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man, as it were, within Himself by reason of the majesty of His person, He was able to offer atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency!

What our Lord suffered, none of us can tell. I am sure of this—I would not disparage or underestimate His physical sufferings—the tortures He endured in His body—but I am equally sure that we can, none of us, exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as His! They are beyond all conception! So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was He, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by His Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish! "Yet it pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief." His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them—"unknown sufferings, great griefs." Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ—it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust—I speak with

reverence, but yet with holy boldness—it were unjust on the part of the infinite majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my substitute. If my Surety took my sin, He released me, and I am clear! Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Savior? Who shall commit me to the flames of hell, when Christ, my substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to His charge, answered for them, expiated them and received the token of quittance from them, in that He was raised from the dead that He might openly vindicate that justification in which, by grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it—have we all accepted it? Oh, my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you! You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you quibble at accepting Christ! You stumble at this stumbling stone! You split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I refuse to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God? Look, then, at that passage—"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavored to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head! Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great judge. You may labor, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples, but as the Lord lives, there is no pardon for you except through this shedding of blood! Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by Him when your own remedy is revealed by Him!

He bids you take the way which He appoints, but if you reject it, you must die! Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood is on your own head. You are warned!

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission! If you have come to Christ, you are saved. If you can say from your very heart—

"My faith does lay her hand,
On that dear head of Yours,
When like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin."

Then your sin is gone! Where is that young man? Where is that young woman? Where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, "We would be pardoned now"? Oh, look, look, look, look to the crucified Savior and you are pardoned! You may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God's atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, your sins,

which are many, are forgiven you! Son, rejoice, for your transgressions are blotted out!

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the center, the pith and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward contentment as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, "If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me." This is the soul-saving doctrine—grip it and you shall have laid hold of eternal life! Reject it and you reject it to your confusion! Oh, keep to this! Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True, but let it also have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith into the Wartembergers' heads and he felt half-inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads in order to get it in! I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh, how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail—"The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up His life in pouring out His blood—it is *this* that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to Him—pardon now, complete pardon, pardon forever! Look away from all other confidences and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the incarnate God who has gone into the heaven, and who lives today to plead before His Father's throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, He poured forth for sinners! As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening near—as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have strived to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation! And if you reject it, do me this favor, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, His gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved! But, by God's grace , I would rather meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Savior! And then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by His blood to receive honor, and power, and dominion forever and ever." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 57.

**A lament for the death of the righteous—
many of them put to death by persecution.**

Verses 1, 2. *The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. They shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.* When there is a storm coming on, you may see the shepherds among the hills gathering their sheep and taking them home. And when good men die in large numbers and the Church's ranks are thinned, it is sometimes a token that bad times are coming on—and so God takes away the righteous from the evil to come. Oh, did men know what the world loses when a good man dies, they would regret it far more than the death of emperors and kings who fear not God! But as for those who are made righteous by the grace of God, they need not fear to die. To them it will be a rest—a sleep with Jesus—till the trumpet of the resurrection—and all the evil that will come upon the world will not touch them. They shall rest till the Master comes! Now, the rest of the chapter is a very terrible description of the sin of the people of Isaiah's day. And at last it contains a very brilliant display of the grace of God.

3, 4. *But draw near here, you sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the harlot. Against whom do you sport yourselves? Against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood?* Because this people so exalted against God and His gospel, God would not allow that they were the true seed of Israel at all. He makes them out to be a false, degenerate breed—and He asks them how they dare to sport against His prophets and draw out the tongue, and make a wide mouth against those who spoke for the God of Israel.

5. *Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valley under the cliffs of the rocks?* The Lord had said that they should offer sacrifices only on one altar at Jerusalem—and to Him alone—but they had set up altars under all the ancient oaks to worship all sorts of gods. In addition to this, they had gone so far after the cruel way of the pagans that they offered their own children in sacrifice in the valleys, under the cliffs and the rocks.

6. *Among the smooth stones of the stream is your portion: they, they are your lot; even to them have you poured a drink offering, you have offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?* They had set up the smooth stones which they had found in the brook, and made them into altars—no, made gods of them—for when man wants to make a god, anything will do, whether it is the fetish of the cannibal, or the round robin of the Ritualist. It little matters which. A piece of bread will do, for a god, as well as a piece of stone. Anything will man worship, sooner than worship the great, invisible, eternal God!

7, 8. *Upon a lofty and high mountain have you set your bed: even there you went up to offer sacrifice. Behind the doors, also, and the posts have you set up your remembrance.* Where they ought to have put up texts of

Scripture and the remembrance of God's law, they had set up memorials of their false gods everywhere, for when men become superstitious and worship falsely, they seem to be far more eager about it than those who worship the true God. They go on all fours at it, and give themselves wholly up to their superstitions.

8, 9. *For you have uncovered yourself to another than Me, and are gone up. You have enlarged your bed and made you a covenant with them. You loved their bed where you saw it. And you went to the king with ointment, and did increase your perfumes and did send your messengers far off, and did debase yourself even unto hell.* When they were in trouble, instead of going to God, they went to the king of Egypt, that he might come and help them against the king of Assyria—but they would never turn to God! They loved idols and so they trusted in an arm of flesh. They forgot the invincible arm which had overthrown Pharaoh at the Red Sea and worked such wondrous miracles for the deliverance of His people. And they made gods of the kings of the earth and trusted in them, "and did debase yourself even unto Hell."

10. *You are wearied in the greatness of your way.* They did so much and they were so superstitious, that they even wearied themselves with it.

10. *Yet said you not, There is no hope: you have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved.* So long as they did but live, they did not think that there was any hope of anything better—and so they were not grieved for all their sin and all their trouble.

11. *And of whom have you been afraid or feared, that you have lied and have not remembered Me, nor laid it to your heart? Have not I held My peace even of old, and you fear Me not?* This is the old trouble—that because God does not smite down sinners, then and there, they take liberties with Him. They do not know that His patience—His slackness, as they call it—is long-suffering because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And so He puts up His sword. Yet He says, "Have not I held My peace, even of old, and you fear Me not?"

12. *I will declare your righteousness, and your works; for they shall not profit you.* They said, "Why, we are very righteous. Have not we got a god in every corner? As for our works, we have plenty of them. Have not we temples built everywhere, and altars set up on every hill and in every valley?" "Yes," says God, "such is your righteousness. They shall not profit you."

13. *When you cry, let your collection of idols deliver you: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain—* Oh, what a sarcasm! But how just. You that love not God, when you are in trouble, let your sins deliver you if they can! Let your pleasures comfort you!

14, 15. *And one shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* We dwell in time and, by-and-by, we are hurried into eternity—but God always dwells in eternity! It is a very beautiful thought that He should have two dwelling places. A blasphemer once met a humble Christian and he said, "Pray, is yours a great God or a little God?" "Well," said he, "He is so great a God that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He condescends to make Himself so little that He can dwell in my poor humble heart." God has two temples. The one is the high and holy place—the other is the lowly and the humble place. May we have Him in our hearts—and then shall we be in His heaven before long.

16. *For I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry.* God does not like being angry, and though sin provokes Him, yet He feels not at ease when He is wrathful.

16. *For the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made*. It would destroy them. Man could not bear God's anger forever.

17-19. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him, also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips.* God teaches men how to speak words of penitence, and faith, and prayer and praise.

19. *Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, says the LORD; and I will heal him.* He puts it twice over, because it is such a prodigy of grace that God should heal sinners that are so polluted with sin! He puts it over again. "I will heal him."

20. *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* "*Work up*" such is the word—"whose waters work up mire and dirt" continually, as it were, in a work, and bringing up its filthiness from the bottom—bringing it to the shore—taking away the brightness from every wave and the crystal blue from every drop. Its waters cast up mire and dirt.

21. *There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.*

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GOD, THE HUSBAND OF HIS PEOPLE
NO. 3419

A SERMON
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"Although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord."
Jeremiah 31:32.

SIN is greatly aggravated by the mercy of God, of which the sinner has been a partaker. Sin in a child of God is peculiarly sinful. Instead of its being a trifle, as some men seem to think, it is a very solemn matter, indeed. To have had deep drafts of divine love and then to deeply offend against that love is no light thing. This seems to have been the crying part of Israel's sin. "Although I was a husband unto them."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God's ancient people, Israel, seem to have lived and passed across the page of history on purpose that they might remain forever the picture of ourselves. Whenever you read of their backsliding, of their idolatries, of their provoking of God's Spirit, you may shut the book and say, "Within my heart there is all this and my life is as like to this as in a glass, face answers to face." We must not be slow to condemn their sin, but we must always remember that there are two culprits at the bar—and that when we condemn them we also condemn ourselves!

Now, at this time, we shall first of all, spend a few minutes in *considering the indictment which God brought against His people Israel*—they had sinned—"although," He said, "I was a husband unto them." Secondly, *we shall have to plead guilty to the indictment for ourselves.* And then, thirdly, we shall *offer some suggestions of amendment that should arise out of the painful and penitent reflections* of this evening. First, then, let us consider very earnestly and humbly—

I. THE INDICTMENT WHICH GOD BROUGHT AGAINST ISRAEL.

Their sin was aggravated because God was a husband unto them. How was this? He was a husband to them in that *He set His special love upon them* as a husband does upon his bride. He found them, as He says, in a desert land, in a howling wilderness. He found them, as we know, literally, in the land of Egypt, in the house of bondage where their lives were made bitter in the cruel slavery of making bricks for their tyrant masters. But He so loved them that with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He redeemed them. All His plagues He brought on Pharaoh and upon the fields of Zoan. He magnified His power, even on the tribes of Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea He glorified Himself by the destruction of all the hosts of Egypt. But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hands of Moses and Aaron. A husband, having

loved his bride, and finding her in slavery, would never cease until the utmost that could be done had been done for her liberty and happiness! And God was thus a husband unto His people. He says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."

He was a husband unto them, further, *in that He made them and them, only, to be His special people*. As the husband turns not his eyes to others, but sets his heart upon the one peculiar one, so did the Lord towards His people, Israel. And what people were like unto them—what people to whom God manifested Himself so clearly? There were other nations greater than they, but God did not send His Truth unto them, but they lived and perished in darkness. But God, in His sovereign grace, set His heart on Israel—Israel He loved—and Israel, alone!

He was a husband unto them, in the next place, *in that He remained faithful to them*. He had taken them, as it were, for better or for worse—and worse, it was, with terrible preponderance! They grieved His Spirit and provoked Him to anger, yet He cast not away His people. Even to this day He is still a husband unto Israel, and the day shall come when the scattered and the dispersed of Judah shall be gathered with all their brethren into their own land. And where they sat down and wept, and mourned over the desolation of their cities, they shall once again wake the harp with joy and gladness! God has been a husband to that people in the faithfulness which He exhibited towards them.

He was their husband, too, in this sense that *He communed with them most lovingly*. There were many appearances which the Lord made to His people by His prophets and He did great wonders and worked many signs and miracles. Besides that, He revealed Himself in the tabernacle and in the temple—in the sacrifice and in the offerings. True, in not so clear a light as He has revealed Himself to us, but still, with marvelous brightness as compared with the darkness in which the whole world was lying. As a husband reveals himself in love with his spouse, so did the Lord as a husband unto His ancient Church.

In addition to this, *He took care to provide for His people, Israel,* as a husband does, when with all his worldly goods he does endow her whom he has chosen. What people were like they—who ate angels' food? Yes, they ate manna to the fullest. If they needed water, the Rock furnished it to them! He brought oil out of the flinty rock when they needed it. All that they needed in the wilderness was supplied bounteously to them. Their garments grew not old; neither were their feet sore by the space of 40 years, though they passed through that howling wilderness where no supplies could be drawn! No people were ever better provided for than they, for even their luxury was sometimes at least gratified—when they asked for flesh, the quails descended and they were fattened thereon.

In addition to that, the God who had become their husband *protected them* as the husband does his wife. He chased the Amalekites before them! He allowed no people to withstand them when they went forth to battle—and the Lord led the van. Though He chastened them before their enemies for their sins, yet when they returned, He made one of them to

smite a thousand and to put ten thousand to flight. Marvelous were the deliverances which the Lord worked for His people. Time would fail us to tell of Gideon and of Barak, of Sampson and of Jephtha and of all that the Lord, the husband of Israel, did in the deliverance of His spouse!

Nor did He rest *until He had brought His people, Israel, into that quiet and settled state which is the expectation of those who enter into the marriage relationship*. Under their own vines and their own fig trees He made them to sit down and rest. He brought them to land that flowed with milk and honey, out of whose hills they could dig brass. He drove out the heathen before them, and gave them their land for a heritage, even a heritage forever for His people, Israel, and there the spouse of God might long have enjoyed her rest and her peace, had it not been that she broke her covenant although He had been a husband unto her.

Now, beloved, just think, before we turn away from this, what a wonderful picture this is of how the Lord has dealt with such of us as are His believing people. Think of His love to us *when He brought us out of Egypt*. We remember well, some of us, the days of our bondage, for the iron entered into our soul. We can never forget those deep convictions, those terrible lashes of the law and our own endeavors to make bricks without straw that we might save ourselves by our works. How gloriously He brought us forth! How He made us to eat of the paschal lamb, and how the blood-mark was put upon the lintel and the two side posts! And we learned what it was for God to look upon the blood and to pass over us. And what a triumphant day that was when all our sins were drowned in the shoreless flood of the Savior's atonement! What a shout went up from our hearts that day—louder and sweeter than even that of the daughters of Israel when they followed Miriam with their tabrets and timbrels to the dance! We did say then and in recollection of it, we will say it again, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" As for our sins, the depths have covered them; there is not one of them left! Those Egyptians, whom we saw through our tears, we shall see no more forever!

From that day, how God has been pleased to prove that He is a husband to us, *by His special love to us*! We never can doubt that doctrine of His special love. I hate to see a contracted mind that will not tolerate the thought that God has a benevolence towards *all* His creatures. His tender mercies are over all His works, but do let us never in the thought of that forget that there is also a peculiar and special affection which He has towards His own chosen whom He brings to Christ! He loves not the world as He loves His spouse! God has no affection towards the ungodly such as He has towards those whom He has united unto Himself and made to be His, as the spouse is to her husband, in a vital, affectionate, intense, eternal union!

God has been a husband to us certainly in that not only has He chosen us especially in His love, but also in *that He has been marvelously faithful in that love*. I can scarcely speak to you without

feeling the tears well up in my eyes when I think of my own unfaithfulness to Him who loved me before the earth was. Oh, which is the stranger of the two—that He should love us or that we should treat Him so unfaithfully?—

"Yet, though I have Him oft forgot,
His loving-kindness changes not."

Precious truth of God! He has been a husband unto us. He has never thought of divorce. Is it not written that "He hates putting away"? And so He does and He has not put us away, but we are as dear to Him, now, as we were of old, and as we shall be when we stand before His face without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

Remember, my brothers and sisters, also, in thinking over how God has been a husband to us, as He was to Israel, that *He has been pleased to provide for us as He did for Israel*. Providentially, in temporal matters, we have been provided for. Perhaps some of you could not tell how you have been led in a very intricate pathway. There have been times when you have been on the verge of need, and periods, certainly, when you had nothing to spare. And yet, up to this moment, He that feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies has not let you starve, and you can sing to the praise of His faithfulness that bread has been given you and your waters have been sure. But it has been specially so in spiritual things. Do you ever know what it is to be drained right out in spirituals—to come right to the very bottom—lower than the poor widow when she had but a handful of meal to make one cake and then die? Alas, some of us know what it is to be brought to extreme spiritual poverty and a sense of nothingness in ourselves that well-nigh breaks us to pieces and lowers us into the abyss of despair! But though the tide has ebbed out fearfully, there has always been enough water for every galley of grace to float—and though the night has been very dark, there has always been light enough for the soul to find its way somehow! And though at times the tempest has howled terribly through the gloom, yet there has always been a harbor, so that we have been enabled to outride the hurricane—and so we shall yet outride all the storms we encounter until we reach the port of bliss! He has well provided for us and, therein, has He been a husband unto us.

And equally well has He *protected us*. We little know how much we owe to the protection of providence. We sometimes forget our dangers. I was amused to hear of a sailor when he was out in the Channel. You would think he was in great danger, saying, "What a dreadful thing it must be, to be on land in such an hour, with chimney-pots flying about and tiles falling off the houses. Who knows who may be killed if they are not safe at sea in such a storm!" We do not always reckon upon these immunities from danger which God gives us, or know how much they cost. Indeed, if providence goes very smoothly with us, we do not seem to notice it at all! A father and a son, living at some distance from each other, agreed to meet half-way on a certain day. The son, after he had saluted his father, said, "I have met with a most remarkable providence

on the road! My horse fell three times, and yet I was not at all hurt." "Ah," said the father, "I have had an equally remarkable Providence! I rode my horse all the way and he did not even stumble." We do not often notice the hand of providence in that kind of thing as we ought to do. The preservations of our life—oh we do not know how many there are! Now and then we have a surprising one which we can observe—and we jot that down in our diary—but we have many more which are not noticed by us. And as for spiritual preservations, my brothers and sisters, incessantly in danger as we are from temptations from without, and corruptions from within, from our circumstances, from the world, from the flesh, from the devil—God has, indeed, been a husband to us and a wall of fire round about us, protecting us, else we had not been here among His people tonight—but we would have been numbered among the castaways who have gone back into perdition!

So I might continue, for I think we may add that last point. God has given to many of us just *that settled rest* which He gave to His people Israel when they came to Canaan. He has been a husband to us and as Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, you shall find rest in the house of your husband," so have we found rest in Jesus Christ—a peace of God which passes all understanding! And we have come to a land that flows with milk and honey. We have crossed the Jordan of doubts and fears, and though we have not driven out the Canaanites of daily temptation, yet we still possess the land, for we that have believed do enter into rest.

This then is the indictment against us, that although He has been a husband unto us, we have not acted towards Him as such a husband's love deserves. So we turn now to the next great thought, which is this—

II. WE HAVE TO PLEAD GUILTY TO THE INDICTMENT AGAINST OURSELVES.

Dear brothers and sisters, I desire not to speak so much to you as to myself. And I pray of you that my voice may be accepted as your own voice to yourselves and if anything comes home to the conscience, open the door to it—let it wound you and let it grieve you—and let it awaken you to something nobler. God grant that it may.

What have been the peculiar sins that we, as Christian people, have committed against the love of God who has been as a husband to us? Well, first, it is a very grievous offense against the marriage state *when the heart of the bride wanders*—when she is not sure, after all, that her husband is the man of her choice, and the man whom, above all others, she esteems. Now— I am afraid we have commonly committed such an offense against our union with God. Our thoughts have often wandered—wandered from our God. Our dearest earthly friends have sometimes tempted our hearts away. Verily I perceive that we often idolize children—but even worse—for in a certain sense it is worse that more sordid idolatry, the love of gold, the desire to be rich, has led many a soul astray from its chaste, simple, ardent affection to the God of love. Our very books and our studies may decoy us from our God. Yes, our own

ministers, whom we love, and even what we hear from them, may stand between us and God! The man that will be an idolater will make a god of anything, as the poor Hottentots do with a bit of rag which they will call a god, and worship it! We may make a god of anything, and how quick we are to do it! Oh, our God, our God, our God! Do You condescend to make Yourself a husband to us? Oh, can there be anything compared to You? What shall we even think of as second to You? You are fullness of joy! You are infinity of good! What fools, what madmen, what sinners of a scarlet dye are we when we let our heart even wink its eye, as it were, to anything else, much less go astray and miss the love which we ought to give to God alone! That is the first sin of which we may stand convicted—wandering in heart from God, although He has been a husband unto us.

Our second sin, probably, is *that we have been negligent in His service*. It is the wife's joy to please her husband and unkindness or negligence from her becomes a grievous mischief in the household circle. Now, if God becomes a husband unto us, what ought we to do for Him? I think He might come tonight and say, "I have something against you," and He might look us in the face and say, "I have not wearied you with sacrifice, but you have wearied Me with your sins. You have brought Me no sweet canes, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices." Much that we might have done for our Lord's glory we have negligently left undone. Many and many a fair opportunity of speaking well of His great name has slipped by, unused. Brothers and sisters, is it not so? I read once in a letter from a brother that he had attained unto perfect sanctification for 20 years! Oh, if it were true, what would I give if I could say the same! I do not believe it or that any one of us has for 20 *minutes* done all that he could for his Master, much less for 20 years! There must have been sins of omission, at least! I dare not look back upon a single sermon without feeling that I ought to have preached it better, nor ever rise from my knees in prayer without feeling that I ought to have prayed more earnestly and to have come nearer to God. Everything seems marred and spoiled. We will strive after perfection, but who among us has attained it? Have we not been negligent in the loving kindness which we ought to have manifested toward Him who has been a husband to us?

Further than that, brothers and sisters, have we not been very much to blame in *the slackness of our communion?* The wife desires to see her husband. She says—

"There is nae luck about the house,
When the gude man's awe!"

She cannot be satisfied without his presence! She says there is music in the sound of his footstep when she hears it on the stairs. She loves to meet him when he comes home from his daily labor. It is her joy to be in his company. Has it been so with us? Oh, brothers and sisters, you have come up, sometimes, to this tabernacle and you have listened to me, but you have not had any desire to get near to God, or if you have, it has been a very faint desire—and you have gone away without seeing Him! And day after day will pass with some professors without a word with the

Master—without a single glimpse of the Savior! They seem to be content when the great good Lord, who is a husband to them is far away. It must not be so anymore! Let us confess the sin. I fear it is so with most of us.

A further sin against God, our husband, is this, that I fear *we have often been loose in our trust in Him*. It would be a sad thing if the wife did not believe her husband's word and if she could not trust her husband's heart. Now, it has been so between us and God sometimes. He cannot lie! Moreover, He has given us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for Him to lie that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us in the gospel. He has never broken a promise yet—if we never doubted God till God gave us cause to doubt Him—doubting would be unknown! And yet have we not been base enough, when some new trial has come, to sit down and say, "Shall I get through this? Will the promise be fulfilled now? Will not the Lord, after all, leave His servant to perish?" Shame on us! Shame on us! Shame on us! The Lord forgive us our unbelief, and strengthen our faith!

Once more, is there not this sin very common among professors—that even *the idea of this relationship of God has not crossed some professors' minds?* This is a sweeping charge to bring, but the doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ, and of the marriage of the believer to Christ, is not even thought of by many professing Christians. They are believers in Christ and they look to the precious blood, but they have not entered into that which is within the veil. They have not sought to know those choicer and deeper things. Well, but is this right, that God should be a husband unto us, and yet that we should not recognize the relation? Married, and not know it? God, your husband, and you never think of Him? Does this blessed fact never tone your life, nor give a color to your actions, never check your hand, nor nerve it for a holy deed? Is this all put away, as if there were nothing in it, but perhaps a pretty fancy, or a word or two that might be listened to, but might as well be forgotten? Oh, brothers and sisters, this is sin, indeed, and I am sure that there are few of us that are not guilty, probably none of us, for oftentimes we have forgotten this union, though we have known and understood it! We have walked towards God as if we were strangers to Him and there were no relationship by blood between us and our God through Jesus Christ!

Thus have I read the indictment, and thus would I plead guilty. Thus would I weigh, and thus would I ask each professing Christian here to weigh the charges as they come against them, and say how far they concern him. And now to close; a few words by way of—

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR AMENDMENT.

It is idle to be always regretting, but never reforming—to be forever confessing, but never making an advance in the right direction. Now, first, dear brothers and sisters—sitting here tonight while God's gracious rain is falling on the earth, may His rain fall on our hearts—let us *admire the condescension of God* that He should say, "I have been a husband unto you." It is a depth of grace that He who made the heaven and the

earth and who is infinitely great and glorious, should condescend to come into anything like such a relation as this with His poor creatures whom He has made and whose breath is in their nostrils. Oh, what a stoop—from the highest loftiness of glory—to call Himself a husband to a worm!

Adore next, I pray you, *the faithfulness with which hitherto God has carried out this relationship*. I have asked you to remember it. Now, adoringly bow your hearts at the thought of it. Oh, God, we bless You, You have not left us. We praise Your name that You have continued so truly a husband to our souls and that notwithstanding all our sin, and care, and woe!

Let us, brothers and sisters, from henceforth *seek to love the Lord foremost*. A great man, taking his wife with him to a noble entertainment that was given by Cyrus, was asked by her husband on his return what she thought of Darius, and she replied, "I never thought of Darius. I never thought of anybody but my husband." And oh, were it not a grand thing if our hearts chiefly thought of God? Other things must, of course, come across the mind and, for a while, engross it, but the first free thought of the believer should be of the glorious One who loved him from before the world—and will love him when the world has passed away!

And as we set God first in our love, so, next, let us try tonight that we *set Him first in all our actions*. "Seek you first—*first*—the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Let the supreme aim of life be not business, not the family, not personal pleasure, but our God! Let all be secondary and subordinate to Him. Set Him on high in your spirit and let everything contribute to His service and kingdom.

And that being done, let us *seek to dwell with our God*. This is the true and effective way of reforming. Instead of having breaks of communion, little periods of it now and then, like oases in the desert, we should seek to have constant communion with Him. What a delightful hymn that is—

"Son of my soul, You Savior dear!"

We often sing it. I wish we could practice it and that it were ours always, to abide with Him, because without Him we could not live and without Him we dare not die. May we learn the art of fellowship with God in the turmoil of business. To have fellowship with God in the closet, in the study, or in the chamber is not always easy, but to have fellowship with Him in the noise of busy life is difficult—but to this we ought to attain. May we be able to attain to it, so that we may never leave the society of Christ, go where we may.

And, brothers and sisters, *if there is anything that we have not done for Christ*, anything that we could do now, tonight, anything that we feel we ought to do tomorrow, let us do it! Let us not be saying that we have left undone these things, but let us set to work to do them. The wife gives to her husband her whole self—let us give to our loving God our whole spirit, soul and body! Be it our prayer that there may not be an unconsecrated hair upon our heads, not a single heaving of the lungs, nor a circulation of the blood, but what in the whole shall be

acknowledged. We would not desire to keep even a little spot for the flesh, or make provision for the lusts thereof. Pray that God would sanctify us wholly. Oh, God, do this! And it will be best for us to turn the whole subject into an earnest, loving, longing prayer. Oh, You who are a husband to my soul, come to me, visit me! I know I have offended You, but Your mercy is great. Reveal Yourself to me! I am cold and dead, and like a clod of earth, but Lord, You can make the clod a star, to burn as fire and shine as gloriously as the sun! Only Your presence I want, and my sins will flee, and my weakness be swallowed up in strength. If I am unholy, Your presence through Jesus Christ shall put my sins away. If I am dead, Your presence would be my life! Oh come, Lord, come to me for Jesus' sake!

Now, I know that to some here all this seems like an idle tale. Well, well dear friends, I wish it were not so! But you must be born-again and until you are born-again you will not understand this. But if you do not understand this simple talk which believers have with one another, depend upon it, you will never be able to enter where they sing in nobler notes before the throne of God! May God convince you of your need of a Savior and bring you to put your trust in Jesus, for there is life in Him, and in Him, alone! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55; JEREMIAH 30:1-11.

It is the language of infinite mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, poor and miserable through sin and, God, instead of driving us from His presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

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 the freeness of divine love? See how God, who knows the needs of souls, provides all things necessary for them—water—the water of life and, as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely! Yes, He stands like the salesman crying in the market, and cries, "Ho! Ho! Everyone that thirsts!" But, mark, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for ourselves—for He says, "He that has no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price." All that you need, dear friend, God is ready to give you! Yes, He invites you to come and receive it! He presses upon you the good things of the covenant of grace. Why do you stand back? Do you want these good things? Then come and welcome! It is God who bids you come.

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below

that can satisfy you! Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* God has real food for your soul—something that will make you truly happy. He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it if you will but come and have it! You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it!

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live*—Then who would not hear—who would not give attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?

3. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Will God enter into covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah, that He will! "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

4. *Behold, I have given Him*—That is, the Son of David, Jesus the Christ, "I have given Him."

4. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* If you need anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the witness to the character of God! Do you need a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has given His Son to be such a leader to you! Oh, who would not enlist beneath His banner?

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD, Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* Here God speaks to Jesus, whom He has made a commander, and He tells Him that He shall not be without a people, for those who never knew Him shall come to Him. There are some in this house tonight who have not yet yielded themselves to Christ—some of whom He will say, "Tonight I must abide in your house"—and when that voice of power is heard, their hearts will yield and they will become the disciples of Jesus!

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found.* And that is tonight, for the promise of finding is still given to everyone who seeks.

6. *Call you upon Him while He is near.* And He is near, for in all places where His name is recorded, there He has promised to be. Wherever the gospel is preached, we have Christ's word for it—"Lo, I am with you always." So, then, call upon Him while He is near.

7-9. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Oh, that we could rise to God's thoughts—that we could speak His thoughts of love—that we could

really believe that He is ready, now, to receive and forgive us, and could, therefore, fly into His arms without hesitancy or delay! God help us to do it!

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.* Trust, then, in the gospel, which is the Word of God, for it cannot fail you! Rest yourselves in the divine promise of pardon, for it cannot drop to the ground. It must accomplish the divine will!

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.* "For," if you do this—if you forsake your sins—if you turn unto God—God can make such joy in the heart that all the world shall be full of joy! When a man feels that his sins are forgiven, then nature seems replete with ditty and the hills, rocks and trees all proclaim the presence of a gracious God! Until then, when the heart is heavy, Nature seems dull and dreary—but oh, may the grace of God so light up our hearts that all the world may be lit up for us.

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

JEREMIAH 30:1-11.

Verses 1, 2. *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book.* Too good to be lost! The prophets said much when they did not write, but this particular chapter and the next were to be carefully written down. God here begins to deal with His guilty people in a way of love and mercy. It is a very strange chapter, one of the richest, one of the most cheering in the whole of God's Word! Therefore, write it in a book.

3. *For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.* Souls get into captivity. God has ways of restoring them. Tonight I expect, and believe, that many captives will be restored by the grace of God to rest and comfort! Will you be one of them? Poor mourner, pray now that you may be! Ask God that tonight He may give you freedom from your captivity.

4, 5. *And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.* "Why" you say, "I thought you began to read words of comfort. Now there is a drop!" Yes, there always is. Whenever God is going to comfort a man, He first makes him see his

need of comfort. There is always stripping before there is clothing! On God's part there is always emptying before there is filling.

6. *Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?* Everywhere, when the time of mercy came, it was a bad time, a dark time—a time of inward throbs, throes and travail.

7. *Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it.* But he shall be saved out of it! What a flash of lightning across the black face of the cloud. "He shall be saved out of it."

8, 9. *For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.* See how the chapter has gotten back to the comforting strain again? After the bass notes, we run up the scale. We have come to comfort again! I should not wonder if we have to go back, however, for so it is—God's mercy is a checkered work, black and white, sorrow and salvation.

10, 11. *Therefore fear you not, O My servant, Jacob, says the LORD, neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.* What a beautiful collection of words for a troubled heart! And they are not beautiful words only, but there is a deep, true meaning in them—"Shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." I pray God that many here who are much afraid, and cannot be quiet, but are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, may get into this blissful state tonight!

11. *For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you.* God may destroy the wicked, and He will—but not His people, His own beloved—His heart goes after them. "I will not make a full end of you."

11. *Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure and will not leave you altogether unpunished.* You will have to smart for it. If you are God's child, you will have to be brought home with many a tear and many a sigh. Your sorrow, tonight, is a part of a heavenly discipline by which you shall be saved!

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COULD HE NOT? AH! BUT HE WOULD NOT
NO. 3420

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And some of them said—Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"
John 11:37.

HERE was very good reasoning. Jesus Christ had opened the eyes of the blind—could He not, therefore, have healed Lazarus of the disease which proved fatal? Of course He could! He who can avert one evil can avert another. It could have been no more difficult for Christ to have turned aside the fever, or whatever it may have been which afflicted Lazarus, than to have opened the eyes of a man who was born blind. The first was impossible, but that achieved, no difficulties remained. "Impossible" is a word which does not fall into language when you have to deal with Christ and, therefore, when He has once proved, by a miracle, that He is truly the Christ, then it is clear that, ever afterwards, nothing is difficult or impossible for Him.

The same truth of God, in another shape, holds good, namely, that when Christ has conferred one blessing, He can also confer another. He is not as we are who, with one gift, have exhausted our stock and who can only bestow good wishes afterwards because we have no more means. But Jesus Christ is just as full of power as if He had never exerted that power. And after a thousand miracles, He is just as willing and as able to bestow further favors! One evil averted is a good argument that another can be—one good received is a good argument that another may be received from the same divine hand!

Stop a minute, therefore, and encourage your hearts with such reasoning as this. "The Lord that delivered you out of six troubles, can He not also deliver you out of the seventh? The Lord, who has been with you these 40 years in the wilderness, shall He leave you in this 45th or 50th year? He that has brought you thus far and bestowed upon you early tokens of His faithfulness, is it a hard thing for you to believe that He will continue to do the same? You have been preserved out of many dangers—why not out of another? You have been provided in necessities—why not be provided for again? You have been raised up when most are cast down—why not raised up again? You have found a way out of the very depths, when the pains of hell got hold upon you and the snares of the devil surrounded you—why can there not be a way found for another rescue?" The Lord that has done, can do, and is doing! That He has done so in the past is a guarantee that He will do so in the present and in the future! He has already made an investment—if I may

so speak—of His love and of His grace and of His faithfulness upon you and He will not lose what He has already spent, but He will carry on the good work to perfection, till He shall bring you to Himself in everlasting glory! Comfort yourself, then, Christian, with this blessed remembrance of your past experience and rest assured that this man, who opened your eyes when you were blind, can keep your life from spiritual death! Yes, and were you dead, yet should you live by His strength, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what you ask, or even think!

The same encouragement may be suggested to any here who are anxious about their souls. The salvation of anyone ought to be an encouragement to any other. If God has saved one sinner, why not another? If the precious blood of Jesus has made one drunk sober, why not another? And if among the white-robed hosts there are some who had defiled their garments with the foulest stains, why should not I yet be there by the same blood-washing and the same mercy of my gracious God? He that opened the eyes of one blind man can open the eyes of all blind men if so it pleases Him—and He that gives perfect pardon and acceptance to one, can give to another the same, wherever He chooses to bestow them! Let no man despair! There are examples of great sinners saved on purpose to encourage others to trust in Christ. I care not how aggravated your sins may have been, I am quite sure they have been already paralleled in some other cases—in some other cases, too, where salvation has ultimately come! You are not beyond the divine range. You have not sinned yourself yet into hell. Mercy yet can reach you! The blood can yet cleanse you! The divine bosom can yet receive you and even the heaven of God can yet find room for you, though you are the chief of sinners! This is good argument, we say—this which was used by Jesus. What has been done can be done. If Christ does one form of good, He can do another. If He opens the eyes of the blind man, He can cause that the sick shall not die!

But now, after that encouragement, there comes up a great difficulty. It is certain that if Christ had willed it, Lazarus need not have died. Then Mary need not have sat still in the house weeping. Then Martha need not have said, with sorrow and with a broken heart, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." There was no need that Lazarus should suffer all that pain, all that languishing and pass through the gates of the grave—no absolute need for it! Christ could, if He had chosen, have prevented that man from dying and, what is more, if Christ willed it, He could prevent all your troubles and all mine. If He chose, none of His people need ever have so much as a headache, or a pin's prick of the finger! They need not, one of them, ever be poor, or have any losses or any crosses. They need, none of them, ever be tempted, for He could chain up the devil. They need, none of them die, for He could take them up to heaven, like Elijah, or translate them, like Enoch. It stands proof positive, if He could open the eyes of the blind, He could, if He would, prevent any of His people from sickness, from death and from all other ills! It were possible for Christ, if He so willed it, to avert all our

sufferings and all our losses from us. *Then why does He not do it?* "Behold how He loved him!" said the Jews, and yet the next thing they said was, "Well, but if He opened the eyes of the blind, could He not, if He had willed it, have prevented this man's dying?" Yet He did not do it—and Lazarus died."

Now, I am quite sure, brothers and sisters, if you had a dear one at home that was sick, and I came in to see you, and I could, with a word, raise your sick friend, I dare not go out of your room without doing it! You would feel very grieved with me if I did. You would think it very unkind and, moreover, I am sure I could not find it in my heart not to do it. Speak a word? Why, I would speak any number of words, if I could raise your sick ones from being sick, and keep them from dying! You would think me very unkind if I did not, and so these Jews could not comprehend it. They said of Christ that He burst into tears at the thought of Lazarus being dead! They said, as they saw Him in that genuine burst of sacred passion, "Behold how He loved him!" And they could not comprehend it, that with a power which could open the eyes of the blind, and which must be sufficient to prevent the death of Lazarus, yet He did not prevent it, but the loving Christ allowed His friend, Lazarus, to sleep till he was laid four days in the grave and His body began to stink with corruption!

Brothers and sisters, we are now about to look the question in the face—and what shall we say about it? The first thing we shall say about it is this, that—

I. IT IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT FOR US TO MAKE INQUIRIES AS TO THE LOVE AND THE WISDOM OF OUR LORD.

It may seem a very strange thing to us that He does not prevent the afflictions which are so grievous, and that He does not give us some of those mercies which we think would make us so comfortable. But we have no right to ask questions. A servant must not be always asking his master, "Why do you do this?" Or, "Why do you do that?" And the scholar is not expected to understand all the doings of the professor at whose feet he sits. A master-builder would soon discharge the carpenter on the work who should always be saying, "Why should that piece of timber be of that shape," or, "Why must those stones be placed in such a position?" The architect is supposed to know the plan, not the Irish laborer! It is enough for the architect to know, without every small body on the work understanding everything that is to be done. We are not, therefore, to be always asking questions. There is another spirit that ought to rule us, rather than the spirit of captious criticism. A man goes and takes stones, and he puts some of them into the earth, deep down. Some of them He places higher up, one upon another. Some he daubs with mortar, some he places where they cannot be seen and some he polishes and puts into the corners. Are the stones to say to the builder, "Why do you place me here?" Or, "Why do you place me there?" The potter takes his lumps of clay and puts them on his knees—and one vessel is made to dishonor

and another is made a graceful form to honor—but shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why do you make me thus?" It is not for the thing that is created to begin to question its creator, for then the creator might well reply, "Who are you and where were you when I made the heaven and the earth? When I balanced the clouds and laid the foundations of the earth? Declare now, if you can answer Me!" That wonderful sermon from the mouth of God Himself, at the close of the book of Job rolls like crashes of thunder over our heads and makes us cower down conscious of our insignificance! And when we dare to lift up our heads once more, we find upon our lips words like those which came from the mouth of Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." For you and for me to think to understand God is as though some tiny insect, whose whole life was comprehended in an hour, should expect to understand the marches of the heavens and to comprehend the revolutions of the spheres! The child by your side, taking up a shell full of water, has no idea of what the sea is, and you, when you look at God's ways, see no more of God's ways than that little shell full, as it were, compared with the sea! Stand still and see that He is God! Let Him be exalted in the earth! Yes, let Him be exalted in the heavens! He gives no account of His matters. He does as He wills in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. Ah, Lord, it is better for us to lie passive in Your hands than to be attempting to sit upon Your throne, holding the balance and judging Your work! What if He does not make me rich, but lets me pine in poverty? What if He does not heal me, but allows me to linger out a life of sorrow? What if He does not bless my undertaking, but He permits heavy trials to overcome me? I will not ask Him why! "I was dumb with silence. I opened not my mouth because You did it"—that is the spirit in which we may look at this question. One thing more I want you to remember, and that is this—

II. THAT WHATEVER GOD MAY DO OR MAY NOT DO WITH US, IT IS ALWAYS THE CHRISTIAN'S WISDOM TO STAND TO THIS—THAT CHRIST IS ALWAYS LOVE.

The Jews said, "Behold how He loved him!" They could see that by His tears, though He let him die. Now, there were good reasons, though the Jews might not see the reasons and, brothers and sisters, there are good reasons why God withholds that right hand of His which is so full of bounty and why at other times He does stretch it out—and good reasons why He lifts that left hand of His which is so heavy to smite, and brings it down upon you, the chosen child of His heart! But do not think that Christ can be otherwise than kind? If you have trusted in Him, never believe that He can hate or forget you. Never think that He can suspend His affection towards you. No, never once will He deal with you according to any other rule than that of love—never once! The dispensation may be very dark, but judge not by appearances. Your conscience may be very guilty, but He is greater than your guilt. Your heart may condemn you, yet can He absolve you and His love is not measured by even your

consciousness of His presence. He has forgiven you and He will not visit you in wrath for sin! No, though Satan tells you that repeated strokes must argue an angry God, he is the father of lies from the beginning—believe not that which he suggests! It cannot be possible that God is unkind! The camels are destroyed, the oxen are stolen, the children have perished, the body is covered with sore boils, but, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," says the triumphant patriarch. "Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Be then as Job was and as David was when, being about to describe the uneasiness of his mind on account of the affliction of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, he began the Psalm by saying, "Truly God is good to Israel," as if he started with that and nothing could ever drive him from it! Though the wicked prospered and the righteous were chastened every morning, yet God was good to His own covenant people in the most supreme and emphatic sense! But now let us come to this question, again, for it still looks difficult. If faith makes no inquiries and resignation shall be content, still—

III. THERE IS DIFFICULTY.

Let us see now. If Christ had prevented Lazarus's death, *what would have happened?* He might have done, if He had liked, but, in the first place, *Christ would not have been glorified by raising Lazarus from the dead*. If Lazarus does not die, he cannot be raised, and that manifestation of miraculous power could not be evinced. You will let Lazarus die, then—you all agree to that—that Christ may have an opportunity of raising him again. See, then, if you do not have a trouble—and Christ can prevent it if He wills—but if you are not brought into trouble, you cannot have the deliverance, Christ cannot put out His hand of love to save you, if there is nothing to save you from! Oh, then, be quite content to bear trouble, in order that your blessed Lord Jesus may make Himself illustrious as He comes to you in the very nick of time and delivers you out of the depth of your distress!

In the next place, *if Lazarus had not died, Lazarus himself would not have been so honored*. Everybody said afterwards, "That is Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead." He was a marked man and I am sure if you were Lazarus, you would say, "Ah, well, it is worthwhile to die to be raised again to have the honor of such a favor." Now, beloved, if you are not tried and troubled, you cannot become one of the experienced saints! It cannot be said of you by your brothers and sisters, "That man has passed through six troubles and through seven, and yet the Lord's faithfulness has been proved in them all." You will miss great pleasure if you miss great affliction! Depend upon it, you will be more a loser by missing trouble than you have ever imagined!

In the next place, *Mary and Martha would not have had such a sweet lesson from Christ*. Their poor eyes were red, I doubt not with their four days' weeping, and the previous days' watching and nursing. But then,

oh what joy they had when they saw their dear brother restored again! Such a meeting did make amends for all the grief of parting! And though they had heard the Lord Jesus talk about the resurrection and the life, they heard that dear powerful voice cry, "Lazarus, come forth." Why, it was for their education, their spiritual profit and benefit that the Lord allows Lazarus to die! He might have prevented it, but they were such gainers by the affliction that it proved His love that He did not deny them the benefit of the trial!

Mark, again, if Lazarus had not died, *then those few would not have been converted because they saw Lazarus rise from the dead*—and it is said, "Therefore, many of the Jews believed on Him." Well they might! It was a wonderful sermon to see a dead man come forth bound in his grave clothes! But how could he have thus come forth if he had not died? It was for the benefit of those spectators that the trial was allowed to come. Oh, you do not know, some of you, how many precious souls may have their destiny—speaking after the manner of men—wrapped up in your affliction! There is a necessity, for the good of others, that through your testimony others may believe—that you should be brought into the very depths and made to be sad, that afterwards God may interpose for your rescue!

Yet again, *the result of the resurrection of Lazarus was that our Lord rode in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem*. There seems to me to be a connection between these two things. If you read the next chapter, you find our Lord taken in triumph through the streets, with palm branches and great shouts. And probably that which moved the multitude to do it, the immediate cause, was this marvelous miracle which Christ had worked. Oh, beloved, Christ often gets great triumph among the rolls of men from the deep trials of His people, out of which He does rescue them and shall not you and I be well content that He should stand back and hide His face and even seem to be an enemy to us, if, out of all this, His glory shall spring? If He shall get hosannas and shouting, and the waving of palm branches—and if men on earth and angels in heaven shall do Him extraordinary homage because of the work He works in us—oh, shall we not be content that our choicest joys shall wither and our best comforts for a while shall die?

In the case of Lazarus, you can all see that though he need not have died—in one respect Christ could have kept him alive—yet *it was a great proof of love on Christ's part that Lazarus did die*. Now, I believe that everything else that has happened in the world, if we had light enough to see it, would turn out to be the same. I know it is a difficult question, sometimes, to make out why God permits certain evils. When people say, as the Negro did, "Well, now, God is greater than de devil, why don't He kill de devil?" I am sure I cannot answer the question, but I am very well persuaded that if, on the whole, it would be the best thing to do, to kill the devil, He would do it! And it is, after all, in a most mysterious way, the best thing for His people, and the most glorious thing for Himself, that the devil should be permitted. The Fall—what a mysterious thing

that is! It might have been prevented. I cannot hold any limit to the omnipotence of God—if He had willed it, there need not have been a Fall. Then why did He permit it? I reply to that in the same spirit. I do not know, and I do not want to know—but I think I can see such a display of divine mercy, and love and grace, and every other attribute, in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Fall, terrible thing as it was, seems to be a grand platform on which the glory of God could be displayed!

When the Lord brought His people out of Egypt, they might have gone right straight to Canaan. Why did He not take them there at once? Why did He make them go round by the Red Sea and come to that difficult place? Why—why did He not, indeed? They would not have had half the fears, nor half the terrors. No, but then remember, there would not have been so many Egyptians drowned. And there would not have been such grand shouts, nor such sweet clashing of Miriam's cymbals, nor such beating of timbrels, nor such dancing of nimble feet. And they would not have said, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider, He has cast into the sea!" All the difficulty only led to a greater triumph! God was glorified! His enemies were put to confusion and His people's memories were stored with thoughts of the mighty works of God which might stimulate their faith as long as the world should stand. It is best as it is. God orders all things right, after all, and though He might prevent this, and does not, and He might give us that, and does not, we believe it is all for the best and bow our heads, and wait till the light shines, that we may understand more of the reason why.

Now, beloved, the point I want to come to is this—depend upon it, that as I have proved in the case of Lazarus, it was the best thing that the worst thing should happen—so it is in your case! You are in trouble tonight. Now, Christ could have prevented it, could have carried you to heaven on a featherbed if He had chosen. He could have made you ride to heaven all the way in a chariot that never jolted—on a paved road right straight up to paradise, without a single rut, or any stones on it—but He chose not to do so. Now—

IV. LET US SEE IF WE CANNOT FIND A REASON.

If we cannot, it will not matter if you believe it is right. Still we will try. The roughness of the road that you are travailing now, *may it not be necessary to wean you from* this world? Oh, but the goods of this world are like bird lime to birds—they stick to our feet and keep us from mounting towards heaven. "Ah," said one, as he looked abroad on his gardens and house and park, "these are the things that make it hard to die." Yes, and these are the things that make it hard to live near to God! When a man's heart begins to be content with the things of this world. When he finds his satisfaction *here*, he is not inclined to look up to his God. Now, perhaps you are one of that kind that could not bear too much prosperity. Every gardener will tell you that there are some of his flowers that he cannot put in the glare of the sun, for they would never

do there. So with you—you grow better in the shade. Your nearness to heaven and your soul's health require this affliction.

Besides, may it not be that this affliction is sent on purpose to try *your faith because it is weak*? "What?" you say, "Try my faith because it is weak? I thought you would have said *not* try it because it is weak." Ah, but faith grows by trial. When faith is weak, a too heavy trial would crush it, but a suitable trial is ruled by God for the strengthening of it. You must—you must grow! The Lord would not have His children be stunted and dwarfed—and this trial is sent that you may be made to grow.

Further, you may not only be made to grow in faith this way, but *also in close communion with your God*. I have read lately one old Puritan whose opinion is that we never grow, except in affliction. I could not endorse that, but I am afraid there is a great deal of truth in it, for almost all the sunshiny days we have, we waste, and when God is very gracious to us in temporals, we generally find that these lean cattle of our ingratitude will eat up the fat cattle of God's mercies! We grow best, depend upon it, when the wind blows us away from our natural havens to the great port of peace which is found in communion with God in Christ Jesus! When our soul has nowhere else to fly to for shelter, she flies to Christ. When she sees all her crutches and all her props broken away, and all her foundations made to reel, then she casts her arms about her own dear Lord and there she hangs in rapture and simple child-like love and confidence! And she is brought nearer to God than she ever was by the strength of her trials—and that is always a divine result, a divinely valuable result. It is a great mercy, if nothing else should come of it—a great mercy to have troubles if they should have this result!

Brothers and Sisters, if Christ would, He could prevent our having affliction, but He will not prevent them *because He wants to make something of us*. For instance, He wants to make some of us to be comforters to others, but how can you comfort others in trouble when you have never experienced the like? Oh, what poor hands some of us make in trying to comfort some of God's saints who have been in much deeper water than we have ever sailed on! Why, we find they look upon us as mere boys and wonder how we have the impertinence to bring consolation to them! But when we can say, "I have just experienced the very trial you are now passing through—and the Lord sanctified it and supported me under it." then the mourner opens wide his ears and the soul receives our comfort as though it were honey dropping from the comb!

My dear brothers and sisters, you *will never be qualified to understand and explains some of the promises without trials*. Some of God's promises cannot be read except by the firelight of affliction. There is a kind of invisible ink that people sometimes use, which does not show till you hold it to the fire—and some of the promises seem to be written in that kind of ink. You do not understand them until you get a trial, but in the

trial you find out that God has fitted every word of the consolation to the providence in which He has placed you. But, indeed, my brothers and sisters, when I consider the infinite variety of blessings which come to us drawn by the team of black horses that our Father always keeps for this purpose. When I consider how God is glorified by the endurance of the saints and by the divine graces which they receive in consequence of tribulation. When I consider how their joy will be swollen at the last, when they come to their rest, by the remembrance of their pilgrimage here below, I can but think that it is a fine mark of special mercy that God does not allow His people to go into the fat fields of unbroken prosperity, but into the fields of trial and of trouble—that they may be enriched and that their souls may be established.

Come then, let every murmuring thought be gone! Let every dark suspicion be discarded. Let us kiss the hand that smites us, and look up to our Father's face, even when He chastens us! And in this way we shall soon find the trial turn to joy, the bitter cup will become sweet and resignation will sweeten all!

If these words shall have ministered any consolation to God's suffering ones, my heart shall be glad. I sometimes need such thoughts, myself, and there are times when if I could have them spoken to me by somebody else, they would be to me like the paths of God which drop with fatness. Now there may be some of you—I know you are tried and troubled—to whom this will be just the very word. If so, do not let Satan take it away from you. Do lay hold of it by faith and feed upon it with joy and comfort. Yes. "Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God. Speak comfortably unto Jerusalem." So I would that you may be happy and a rejoicing people in the midst of all your troubles.

But, alas, this does not belong to all of you. It is only comfort to those who belong to Christ—some of you do not belong to Him and have never trusted Him. The Lord bring you this very night to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Those about to be baptized say to you tonight, "We avow ourselves to be believers in Jesus! We are buried in water to show that we desire to be dead to all the world and buried in the death of Christ. We rise out of it to show that we desire to live in newness of life by the quickening power of the resurrection of Christ."

You will have no right to this ordinance until you have trusted the Savior. When you have trusted Him. When you have relied fully upon Him. When He becomes all-in-all to you, then may you take the sign, because the thing signified is yours!

May the Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:25-40.

By the help of God's Holy Spirit, this Psalm may serve for the purposes of self-examination, for we may ask ourselves as we read, "Do I feel that

way? Are my prayers like those of this good man? Is my experience like his?" We may often ask ourselves, "Am I as watchful, as careful and as fond of God's Word as he was?" Such questions will do us good.

Verse 25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your word.* He does not like to feel the cleaving of his soul to the dust. There are some that feel it, and they seem content to continue in that condition. But no sooner does David feel it than he cries "Quicken You me." A sense of sin is of small value unless it leads us to desire to escape out of it. "Quicken You me. I lie as dead as if it were dust to dust. My soul seems cleaving to it, as if it had come to its own, and meant to rest there! But, Lord, give me life. Your word promises me life. You have ways laid down in Your word for giving life. Quicken You me according to Your word."

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statues.* I have told you all about myself. Now tell me about Yourself. "Teach me Your statutes."

27. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* It is a bad thing to talk of what we do not understand. And he who shall preach what he has never experienced is very likely to do so. Yet beloved, there is no understanding God's precepts except He shall teach them to us. We are void of understanding. He must enlighten. He must instruct. "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts." Some are very anxious to understand the doctrines, and some to understand the prophecies. All well and good, but, "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts." Give me practical godliness. Help me to live to Your praise, "so shall I talk of Your wondrous works." I will not talk till You have taught me. But when You have taught me, then my subject shall be Your wondrous works. The wondrous work of making me to understand—You shall be something to speak about! And all the wondrous works of nature, providence and grace shall be the subject of my continual conversation.

28. *My soul melts for heaviness*—For the best of men sometimes suffer the sharpest sorrows. Hearts of stone are not likely to be so sensitive as hearts of flesh. "My soul melts for heaviness."

28. *Strengthen You me according unto Your word.* He wants strength, but he does not want to obtain it in any way but the way of God's appointment. "*According unto Your word.*" Somewhat like our hymn, which says—

"He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my physician be.
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

"Strengthen You me," but let it be "according to Your word."

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your law graciously.* Let me not lie. Let me not be tempted to lie. Let me not be pestered with the lies of others. Remove the way of lying far from me and oh, by Your grace, give me to know the law. That is a remarkable

combination of words. “Grant me Your law graciously.” Has law anything to do with grace? Yes, such a law as he speaks of—the law in the heart—the law in the hand of Christ—the law written in the life of the believer—not the law of merit and of salvation by works, but, “grant me Your law graciously.”

30. *I have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me.* As a seaman spreads out the chart before him, that he may follow the right channel and not miss his track—as a traveler spreads out his map that he may keep to the right way. “I have chosen the way of truth. Your judgments have I laid before me.”

31. *I have stuck unto Your testimonies.* As if I were glued to them—sealed to them. They said I was very old-fashioned. They said I did not keep pace with the times. They said I was not a man of thought. I did not care about that. “I have stuck unto Your testimonies.”

31. *O LORD, put me not to shame.* And He never will! If we stick to Him, we may be quite sure that we shall come forth out of every difficulty and every opposition triumphantly!. “Put me not to shame.” And although he thus spoke, yet you perceive the activity of his soul.

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.* Give my heart freedom. Knock off my fetters. Take away my heaviness. Remove from me my ignorance. Give my soul room and she will run, but it will be in the ways of Your commandments.

33. *Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep them unto the end.* Here is the art of finally persevering. Here is the way of continuing to the end—and the same shall be saved. We must begin with a teachable spirit. He that is not willing to learn, has not begun a right. We ought to disciple all nations, but he who will not learn is not yet discipled. “Teach me.” But the teaching we must have must come from God. “Teach me, O Lord. I am not content to have the word secondhand. Be You my schoolmaster. Teach me, O Lord. I shall never learn unless You teach me. You who did make me. You who did give me a new heart. You must write that law upon my heart, or it will never be written there. Teach me, O Lord. Teach me the way of Your statutes. Teach me practical godliness. So teach it to me that I stall learn it and put it into practice. And if I am taught of You, then I shall keep it unto the end.”

34. *Give me understanding and I shall keep Your law: yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* A want of understanding is a very great lack. There is little wonder that men turn aside from an outward religion which has never taken possession of their thoughts and minds. If they only subscribe to the creed which they have never studied. If they only carry out a life—the mere shell of a life—the inward principles of which they do not know, they will soon turn aside. “Give me understanding and I shall keep Your law.”

35. *Make me go in the path of Your commandments; for therein do I delight.* “Not only teach me the way, but make me go in it! Take hold of me as a mother does her little child, and teach me how to walk and help

me in the walking." Make me go. It is a feeble word—a most expressive prayer. "Make me go, for therein do I delight." When a man delights in God's way, he will be sure to be made to go in it.

36. *Incline my heart unto Your testimonies.* Bend it that way—incline it.

36. *And not to covetousness.* For, naturally, my heart would go after the world and cleave to its riches, its treasures, and begin to covet! But, Lord, bend it the other way. If you do not love God's testimonies, the tendency will be to become a lover of the world. "Incline my heart unto Your testimonies and not to covetousness."

37. *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.* Or, "make my eyes to pass from beholding vanity." I am a runner in the race. Do not let me stop to look at anything, but may my eyes pass by vanity. Let me not be like she in the fable who paused to gather the golden apples in the race—and so lost it and was deceived. If the world's golden apples are thrown in my way, make my eyes to pass from beholding vanity.

37. *And quicken You me in Your way.* More life towards You will deaden me to the world. The more I follow after God, the less shall I care to follow after the world.

38. *Establish Your word unto Your servant.* Make it fast, firm, sure.

38. *Who is devoted to Your fear.* I am established in You. Establish the word in me. You have bound me fast to Your altar. Oh, give me the fast blessings and sure mercies of David!

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Your judgments are good.* I fear lest I bring a reproach upon You, and then upon myself. Oh, suffer me not to do so! I am not afraid of the reproach of the world. I count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. But, oh, let them never have to charge me with sin and let me not fall into such pecuniary difficulties or other troubles, that men will be able to make a charge against me out of them. Help me to provide things honest in the sight of all men. "Take away my reproach, which I fear, for Your judgments are good."

40. *Behold, I have longed after Your precepts: quicken me in Your righteousness.*

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PRAYER MEETINGS
NO. 3421

A SERMON
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"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."
Acts 1:14.

IN all those churches which are not altogether tied and bound by liturgies and rituals, it has been common to hold meetings for social prayer. We call them prayer meetings. Now, it may be profitable, now and then, to look over some of our institutions, to see whether they are Scriptural—to notice their defects, to see in what respect they may be improved, or to observe their merits—that we may be induced still further to carry them on. The subject, therefore, this evening, suggested to me by the fact that we are going to meet for a day of prayer tomorrow, is that of prayer=meetings—assemblies of the people of God for worship of that peculiar kind which consists in each one expressing his desire before the Lord. Let us, then, go through very briefly—

I. THE APOSTOLIC HISTORY OF MEETINGS FOR PRAYER.

These meetings must have been very common, indeed. They were, doubtless, everyday things, but still there are some few records of the facts connected with them which may be instructive. The first meeting for prayer which we find after our Lord's ascension to heaven is the one mentioned in the text—and we are led from it to remark that *united prayer is the comfort of a disconsolate Church*. Can you judge of the sorrow which filled the hearts of the disciples when their Lord was gone from them? They were an army without a leader, a flock without a shepherd, a family without a head. Exposed to innumerable trials, the strong, brazen wall of His presence, which had been round about them, was now withdrawn. In the deep desolation of their spirits they resorted to prayer. They were like a flock of sheep that will huddle together in a storm, or come closer, each to its fellow, when they hear the sound of the wolf. Poor defenseless creatures as they were, they yet loved to come together and would die together if necessary. They felt that nothing made them so happy, nothing so emboldened them, nothing so strengthened them to bear their daily difficulties as to draw near to God in common supplication! Beloved, let every church learn the value of its prayer meetings in its dark hours! When the pastor is dead, and when it has been difficult to find a suitable successor. When, it may be, there are problems and divisions. When death falls upon honored members, when poverty comes in, when there is a spiritual dearth, when the Holy Spirit appears to have withdrawn Himself—there is but one remedy for these

and a thousand other evils—and that one remedy is contained in this short sentence, "Let us pray." Those churches which are now writing, "Ichabod," on their walls and who sorrowfully confess that the congregation is slowly dwindling, might soon restore their numbers if they did but know how to pray! Brothers and sisters, though they are dispirited, now, defeat would then soon become success, their spirits being revived by drawing near to God! And if any of you are personally afflicted and troubled in your estate, you shall find that after coming up to the house of God, your own private prayer chamber will be peculiarly comforting to you! And after that, come and unite with the saints of God who have, probably, all of them, experienced assaults like yours. And as you hear them pouring out sighs similar to yours and making requests such as you would make, but scarcely know how to word them, you will see the footprints of the flock and, by-and-by, you shall see the Shepherd, Himself! One of the first uses of the prayer meeting, then, is to encourage a discouraged people.

Again, if you look at the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you will perceive that *the prayer meeting is the place for the reception of divine power*. "They were all with one accord in one place," making their prayers and, as they waited there, suddenly they heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, and the cloven tongues descended upon them and they were clothed with the power which Jesus had promised them. And what a difference it made in them! Common fishermen became the extraordinary messengers of heaven! Illiterate men spoke with tongues that they had never, themselves, heard! They began to reveal mysteries which had not been revealed to philosophers or kings! These men were lifted out of the level of ordinary humanity and became God-inspired, filled with the Deity, Himself, who came to dwell in their hearts and minds! The result was that poor wavering Peter became bold as a lion and the impetuous John, who would have called fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, had another fire fall upon him—one not to destroy, but to rescue and bless!

Now, the great need of the Church in all times is the power of the Holy Spirit. "I believe in the Holy Spirit," says the creed, but how many, or rather how few are there who really do believe in Him? There is a mysterious, supernatural energy which comes from the third person of the blessed Trinity which really, at this day, falls upon men—as really as when Peter spoke with unknown tongues or worked miracles. And though the power of working miracles is not given now, yet spiritual power is given and this spiritual power is as manifest, and just as certainly with us, today, if we possess the Spirit, as it was with the apostles! Now, if we want to get this, the most likely place in which to find it is the prayer meeting. I will guarantee you that the best teachers of the school, the men who are of the right spirit, are those who will be found here tomorrow evening. I will guarantee you that the best ministers are those who do not despise the gathering of the people of God! And I am sure that the cream of the Christian Church will be found

on the whole—of course, other things are to be considered, too—among those who most commonly assemble for prayer. Oh, yes, this is the place to meet with the Holy Spirit and this is the way to get His mighty power! If we would have Him, we must meet in greater numbers! We must pray with greater fervency, we must watch with greater earnestness and believe with firmer steadfastness! The prayer meeting, then, has this second use—that it is the appointed place for the reception of power!

The next incident in this apostolic history you will find in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and there you will see that *the prayer meeting is the resource of a persecuted Church*. Turn to the 31st verse. Peter and John had been shut up in prison. The Scribes and Pharisees had persecuted the disciples of Christ. They resorted to prayer and we read that "when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Yes, all the persecutions of the separate members should be recorded in prayer before God, and if the whole Church, itself, should fall into disrepute through misrepresentation, or through the natural hostility of all men to the Church of God, then should it resort to its great friend for its defense!

Persecuting times are hence often very good for the Church because they compel her to pray. When the devil, like the wild boar out of the woods would break up the vineyard, the vines seem to flourish the more because they are watered with the dews of heaven in answer to prayer. Let the stakes smoke at Smithfield and the saints of God go up to heaven in chariots of fire—and then the Word of God multiplies exceedingly and the death of the martyrs brings down the blessing to themselves and the nation in which they dwell!

Anything that would make us pray would be a blessing—and if ever we should come to times of persecution again, we must fly to the shadow of the eternal and, keeping close together in simple, intense prayer—we shall find a shelter from the blast.

Still keeping to the Acts of the Apostles, in the 12th chapter you find *the prayer meeting made a means of individual deliverance*. You know the story well. Peter was in prison and Herod promised himself the great pleasure of putting him to death. He was sleeping one night, chained between two soldiers—and the keepers of the door kept the prison. But prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. The walls of the prison were very thick, but prayer was made without ceasing. The soldiers were very watchful—there were 16 of them, appointed to watch Peter by turns—four at a time—and he was chained by both hands to two of them. Yet prayer was made without ceasing of the Church for him—and prayer laughs altogether at stone walls, handcuffs, iron bars and gates of brass! And so, in the middle of the night an angel smote Peter upon the side and raised him up—and his chains fell off! He put his garments about him—every door opened as he advanced—and Peter

found himself in the street, and wondered whether he was awake, or whether it was a vision. And when he got to the house where they were at prayer, they were all equally surprised and thought it must be Peter's spirit—that it could never be Peter, himself! Yet there he was, in very flesh and blood, released from his prison in answer to their prayers! And so in the prayer meeting, the Church of God may plead for individuals. It may not be God's will, there may be no necessity for it, that every one of God's people should be brought out of prison, or raised up from sickness, or saved from need—but if it is the Master's will and is a right thing, He will grant it! And, so, when we come together we may unite in particular and personal supplications! I do not doubt that many a life has been spared in answer to united prayer, that many a soul that has been, as it were, spirit-burdened, has obtained gracious liberty through the prayers of the brothers and sisters. It would be well if we often put up our prayers for one another, remembering those who are in bonds as being bound with them. Observe here, then, another valuable use of the Christian prayer meeting!

Further on, in the next chapter, we find a prayer meeting *suggesting missionary operations*. While the servants of God were met together—see the second verse of the 13th chapter—fasting and in prayer, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them," and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

We sit down and we begin to figure away the expense of such-and-such a form of Christian service—and we think that would be a good plan. And the other, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth—all pieces of human machinery. But I think if we were more often on our knees about God's work, we should more often do right—and the right methods and the right men, and the right plans would come to us! Christ is the head of the Church—and who thinks so much about the Church as the head of the Church? And while we wait upon Him, I do not doubt but what fresh plans and fresh schemes will be marked out, and that different kinds of men will be called to the work as distinctly as if angels had touched their lips with a live coal from off the burning altar, and who may be "separated" to teach the Word, where, perhaps, it has never reached before! England needs many who shall shake her and waken her out of her sleep. She needs a new race of Whitefields and of Wesleys—of men who are before their age only because they are more suited to its culture! She needs some Boanerges who shall thunder out the Word of God, some men who shall be like lightning in carrying out their holy mission! She needs men who will preach the truth of God and tell it to her poor men, yes, and to her rich men, too! And if ever we are to get these, it must be in answer to prayer! Oh, that we would but pray for such men and, having got them, pray that God would make them full of Himself, for they cannot run over with blessings to others until they are, themselves, full of blessing! We would understand what the prayer meeting is, if we did this. I look forward to tomorrow for a blessing of this

kind. There may be sitting here, now, some young man to whom China may be under obligation, or of whom India shall be glad. I do not know who it may be, but there may be one here who shall yet bring up diamonds from the very depths, and who shall be inspired to do so in answer to our prayers!

Once more, I will remind you of a prayer meeting which, perhaps, you have forgotten, but which is recorded in the 16th chapter of the Acts. What was *the first Christian service that was held in Europe?* Do you know? Why, it was a prayer meeting! The very first service was not an Episcopal ordination, nor even the preaching of a sermon, for Paul went to the place where prayer was known to be made by the riverside—and there he met with Lydia and preached to her—and her heart was so opened that she received the truth of God! So, then, a prayer meeting became in Europe the first foothold of the gospel! Europeans, you ought never to forget, disown, or think lightly of prayer meetings. How you ought to value them! Very often, I do not doubt, in a Christian enterprise, the first foothold that a cause gets is the prayer meeting. You, brothers and sisters, some of you live in some of the dark parts of this city, and you would like to see a cause for Christ there. Well, begin with a prayer meeting just as Paul did! Or you live in a small village, perhaps, where there is no church with whom you can worship. Well then, hold a prayer meeting! This costs you nothing! This will enrich you! This will serve for a beginning, and although you may not be content with that as the only service on the Sabbath after some little time, yet begin with it! This then, is the missionary's lever—he begins with the prayer meeting.

Thus have I, as briefly as I could, gone through the early history of prayer meetings and shown you the extreme value of such to the Church of God. And now, secondly, and very briefly, indeed—

II. WHAT ARE THE USES OF THE PRAYER MEETING?

The prayer meeting is useful to us in itself, and also very useful from the answer which its gets, and brings to us from God.

It is a very useful thing for Christians to pray with each other, even apart from the answer. God has made our piety to be a thing which shall be personal, but yet He looks for family piety. Happy is the household where the altar burns day and night with the sweet perfume of family worship! He also gives us more extended views and makes us feel that all the saints are our brothers and sisters and that, therefore, our meetings as Christian families, and as Christian Churches in the prayer meeting, become the exponents and natural outgrowth of social godliness. We sing together and pray together—and thus our Christian brotherhood is manifested to the world—and is the more enjoyed by ourselves.

The prayer meeting serves this purpose and sometimes *it also generates devotion.* Some of the brothers and sisters may be very dull and heavy, but others who are at that time in a lively state of mind may stimulate and excite them. I must confess very often to deriving much fire from some of our brothers and sisters who pray here on Monday

evenings, when God gives them grace to really pray. When you have been busy all day, and are not able to shake off the cares of business, you get warmed up by getting near to each other in your prayers. And, more than that, the united fires being placed together on the hearth, the coals are made to burn with greater power. There is a kind of divine excitement that comes upon us, sometimes, at the prayer meeting. I recollect in one of our meetings for fasting and prayer, the intense excitement there was, not fleshly, but deeply spiritual. How we felt ourselves bowed down at one time, and then lifted up again at another! I have sometimes sat side by side with a brother who has said, "Can you bear this much longer? I feel it is too much for my physical frame." Oh, the calm delight which springs from close communion with the invisible God! Such days as I have sometimes had have laid me prostrate all the next day from very joy, from very excess of delight! Oh, this is good for us! This is good for you! Even though the outward man decays, yet shall not the inward man, but be renewed from day to day! Oh, it is a grand thing thus to be made fit again, with joints all oiled, and muscles all braced, and nerves all strung for the battle of life! United prayer, then, serves this purpose, and therefore is it valuable.

But, again, united prayer is useful *inasmuch as God has promised extraordinary and peculiar blessings in connection with it*, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in heaven." God asks agreement and once the saints agree, He pledges Himself that the prayer of His agreeing ones shall be answered! Why, see what accumulated force there is in prayer, when one after another pours out his vehement desires—when many seem to be tugging at the rope, when many seem to be knocking at mercy's gate—when the mighty cries of many burning hearts come up to heaven! When, my beloved, you go and shake the very gates thereof with the powerful battering-ram of a holy vehemence and a sacred importunity, then is it that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence! When first one, and then another, and yet another, throws his whole soul into the prayer, the kingdom of heaven is conquered and the victory becomes great, indeed!

As I was sitting a little while and thinking over this text, I thought of the accumulated love of God which there is in a prayer meeting because God loves every one of His children. Very well, then, there is so much love for one, and here is another, and there is so much love for him, and then, if God's love to one of His people is a reason for answering his requests—if here are 10 present, there is 10 times the reason—and if there are a thousand such, then surely there must be a thousand-fold force of love to move our heavenly Father to grant the accumulated desires of the assembly!

The prayer meeting is an institution which ought to be very precious to us and to be cherished very much by us as a church, for to it we owe everything. When our comparatively little chapel was all but empty, was

it not a well-known fact that the prayer meeting was always full? And when the church increased, and the place was scarcely large enough, it was the prayer meeting that did it all! When we went to Exeter Hall, we were a praying people, indeed. And when we entered on the larger speculation, as it seemed, of the Surrey Music Hall, what cries and tears went up to heaven for our success! And so it has been ever since. It is in the spirit of prayer that our strength lies! And if we lose this, the locks will be shorn from Samson and the Church of God will become weak as water. And though, we, as Samson did, go and try to shake ourselves as at other times, we shall hear the cry, "The Philistines are upon you," and our eyes will be put out, and our glory will depart unless we continue mighty and earnest in prayer. But now, once again, let us ask—

III. WHAT ARE THE HINDRANCES TO THE PRAYER MEETING?

Now listen, for perhaps some of you will hear something about yourselves. What are the hindrances to the prayer meeting? There are some hindrances before the people come. *Unholiness* hinders prayer. A man cannot walk contrary to God and then expect to have his prayers heard. "If you abide in My commandments, you shall abide in My love." There is a promise made to those keeping the commands. Such shall have power with God! But, on the other hand, inconsistent Christians shall not be answered.

Discord always spoils prayer. When believers do not agree and are picking holes in each other's coats, they do not really love one another—and then their prayers cannot succeed. Discord spoils prayer, and so also does *hypocrisy,* for hypocrites will creep in—you cannot help it—and the more a church flourishes, the more, I believe, do hypocrites get in, just as you see many a noxious creeping thing come and get into a garden after a shower of rain. The very things that make glad the flowers bring out these noxious things—and so hypocrites get in and steal much of the church's sap away and help spoil the prayer meeting. Now, which among you does this belong to? I am not reflecting upon any person in particular, but God knows why some of you do not ever come to the prayer meeting. Some of you, I know, have business that really prevents your coming, and others have service for Him that keeps them away, but surely some of our friends who have no other imperative engagement or duty do constantly keep away from the prayer meeting. I only wish that their conscience were even half-awake, for I am sure it would make them smart for neglecting this duty. I would that they would feel ashamed that they have missed this very great privilege, for had they come with us, they might have drawn near to God and been healed of their pretenses.

But there are some things which hinder the prayer meeting when we are at it. One is *long prayers*. It is dreadful to hear a brother pray us into a good frame, and then, by his long prayer, pray us out of it again! You remember what John Macdonald once said, "When I am in a bad frame I always pray short, because my prayer will not be of any use, and when I am in a good frame I pray short, because if other people are in a good

frame, too, I might, if I kept on longer, pray them into a bad frame." Long prayers, then, spoil prayer meetings, for long prayers and true devotion in our public assemblies seem pretty much to be divorced from one another! And prayer meetings are also hindered when those who get up to pray do not pray, but *preach a little sermon*, and tell the Lord all about themselves, though He knows them better than they do, instead of asking at once for what they need. Prayer meetings are often hindered by *a lack of directness* and by beating about the bush. I admired a prayer I heard last Monday night in which a brother said, "Lord, the orphanage needs £3,000—be pleased to send it." That was a straightforward application. Another brother would have said, "Lord, we have great difficulties in our work. Please help us," but this brother just stated the case and I think he believed that God would hear him. Another way to never grow weary in prayer is to do as a good Scotsman said he did. He said, "I never go to God unless I have business to do with Him, unless there is something I want to praise Him for, to confess, or to seek at His hands." We must come not merely with well-rounded and polished periods, but really to pray, and really to praise, and really to confess and seek cleansing! And if we do this, the prayer meeting shall not disappoint us.

Prayer meetings are sometimes hindered by *a want of real earnestness* in those who pray, and in those who pray in silence. Ah, brothers and sisters, one warm, hearty prayer is worth a score of those packed in ice! I fear that much of our prayer is lost because we do not sufficiently throw our hearts into it. It is possible for us to attend the meeting and all the while be thinking of the home, the infant in the cradle, or the shop, the field, the farm, the factory, the counting-house, and I know not what besides! Is it any wonder, then, that prayer stops? The brother who prays may be burning with earnest desire, but his prayer lags because we are not backing it with silent fervor and passionate longing for God's blessing. Oh, brothers and sisters, we have often spoiled our prayer meetings thus! We have each, I fear, in our turn done something towards it—let us pray that we may never again so transgress.

But the prayer meeting may also be spoiled *after we have been to it*. "How?" you ask. Why, by our asking a blessing and then not expecting to receive it! God has promised that He will do to us according to our faith, but if our faith is nothing, then the answer will also be nothing. *Inconsistency*, too, in not practically carrying out your desires will also spoil the prayer meeting. If you ask God to convert souls, but you will not do anything for those souls; if you ask God to save your children, but you will not talk to them about their salvation; if you ask God to save your neighbors, and you do not distribute tracts among them, nor do anything else for them, are you not altogether a hypocrite? You pray for what you do not put out your hand to get! You pray for fruit, but you will not put out your hand to pluck it, and all this spoils the prayer meeting. Earnest prayer, however, is always to be followed up by persevering efforts—and then the result will be great, indeed! But for a moment will I

occupy your time upon the next point, and then we have done. It is this—

IV. WHAT SHOULD BE THE GREAT OBJECTIVE OF THE PRAYER MEETING—AND THAT FOR WHICH WE SHOULD SEEK THE ANSWER?

First, it must be the *glory of God* or else the petition is not sufficiently put up. How much of the Lord's Prayer consists in prayers for God, rather than for ourselves? "Hallowed be Your name: Your kingdom come: Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." And then comes, "Give us this day our daily bread." Do we not often begin by asking for the bread, and leave the glory of God to be put into a corner? Pray that King Jesus may have His own! Pray that the royal crown may be set upon that dear head that once was girt with thorns! Pray that the thrones of the heathen may totter from their pedestals, and that Jesus may be acknowledged King of kings and Lord of lords! This is to be the grand objective of our prayer! You recollect how David put it, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." For the coming of Christ in power, for the extension of His kingdom, for the downfall of error, for the end of the times of darkness, for the ingathering of the Jews and the Gentiles—for all these things let us pray in order that God may be glorified, and on that account alone!

And then, in subservience to that, let us pray *for a blessing on the Church*. We ought to exercise a little of our love for one another in praying for our fellow members. Pray for the minister, for he needs it most. His necessities in that direction are the greatest and, therefore, let him always be remembered. Pray for the Church officers. Pray for the workers in all organizations. Pray for the sufferers. Pray for the strong, for the weak, for the rich, for the poor, for the trembling, for the sick, for the backsliding, for the sinful. Yes, for every part of the one great body of Jesus let our supplications perpetually ascend. Let our prayers be continual, that the holy oil of which we read may run down from the head even to the skirts of the garment!

Then we should also pray for *the conversion of the ungodly*. Oh, this ought to be like a burden on our hearts! This ought to be prayed out of the lowest depths of a soul that is all aglow with sympathy for them. They are dying! They are dying! They are dying without hope! I stood yesterday at the grave's brink at the funeral of one of our brothers, an elder of the church. The place that knew him once, will know him no more, and someone else now occupies the seat where he formerly sat. It was a great joy to know that he had rested on the rock so long and that he had now entered into the rest which Jesus had promised him. But oh, to stand by those who die without hope is grim work—this is to sorrow without alleviation, to mourn without any sweet reflection to wipe away the tears! Oh, my hearers, will you die in your sins? Will you live in your sins, for if you live in them, you *will* die in them! My hearers, will you die without a Savior? Will you live without a Savior? For if you live without Him, you will assuredly die without Him! It is of no use my preaching to

the people, my dear Christian brothers and sisters, unless you pray for them! It is of no use holding special services for the quickening of the spiritually dead unless the Holy Spirit is brought into the field by our prayers! It may be that you who pray have more to do with the blessed results than we who preach! I think I have told you of the old monkish story of the monk who had been very successful in his preaching, but a message came from heaven to him that it would not have been so if it had not been for the prayers of an old deaf brother monk who sat upon the pulpit stairs and pleaded with God for the conversion of the hearers. It may be so. We may appear to the eyes of men to have the credit of success, but all the while the real honor may belong to someone else! And I do certainly, myself, always ascribe the conversions worked in this house to the prayers of God's people. Let it always be so ascribed and let God have the whole glory of it! But do pray for conversions. Never give up on your unconverted wife, husband! Never cease to pray for your unconverted children. Never let the devil tempt you to be dumb concerning your ungodly neighbors, but day and night, in the house and by the way, lift up your hearts to God in real prayer, and say to Him, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" He has given us His pledge that He will answer—believe it and you shall see it, and you shall have the joy of it while His shall be the glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 4:8-33.

Peter and John were summoned before the priests to give an account for having healed the lame man, and for having preached in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. In the eighth verse we read—

Verses 8-12. *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, You rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day are examined for the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Nothing can exceed the directness, the comprehensiveness and the boldness of this statement! He not only declares the name of Christ to be the wonder-working name, but he charges them with His murder, reasserts the resurrection—no, further—he cuts at the root of all their ceremonial righteousness and declares that they must be saved by this hated and despised name, or else perish forever! Under all circumstances, let the servant of God behave himself boldly! Let him remember that this is the hour he ought always to speak, and that when the honor of his Master and the welfare of souls are concerned, it is not for him to withhold, but to speak out the truth of God!

13. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. And they took notice of them that they had been with Jesus.* Where else could such holy courage have been learned? They spoke, in their measure, just as the great Master did, of whom it is written, "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes." They did not speak with the timid, hesitating manner of a preacher who seems to hold the balance of probabilities between the right and the wrong, the false and the true, but with the demonstration of a hearty conviction of the truth of the principles which they uttered. So Christ spoke, and, having learned of Him, so spoke His disciples!

14. *And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.* Converts shut the mouths of adversaries. The good done by the gospel will always be a dumb-foundering argument to the ungodly.

16-20. *But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that, indeed, a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem: and we cannot deny it. But that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that they speak, henceforth, to no man in this name. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Like the vessel full of new wine, which must have vent or burst, so is the man who is filled with the knowledge of Jesus! He must speak. He must—

"Tell to others round,
What a dear Savior he has found."

It is no matter of choice with him, for, as Paul says, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." As the old prophet has it, "The word of the Lord was as fire in my bones," and if it is the true Word of God, it will soon burn its way out!

21-22. *So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.* Therefore it was the more remarkable—forty years lame and yet healed! But how great is the grace displayed in the salvation of an aged sinner—forty years dead in trespasses and in sins—fifty, sixty, seventy, or even 80 years, a faithful servant of the black tyrant and yet made to follow the new and better Master! What a triumph of grace is that which snatches the sere brand out of the burning when it is so fitted for the fire!

23. *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.* You can always tell a man by his company. Had these people been ungodly, they would have done as the ungodly do when they come out of prison—they would have

gone off to their old pot-companions. But they are believers, and so they go to their own company.

24-28. *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, You are God, which have made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. Who by the mouth of Your servant, David, have said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before, to be done.* How strangely this doctrine of predestination comes in just there! They are singing of the wickedness of men, and the triumph which God gets over it—and so this is the very sum and substance of the song—that when wicked men think that God's decrees will be forever put away by the destruction of His Son, they themselves are then actually doing what God had "determined before to be done." The wildest discord makes harmony in the ear of God! Man may be in rebellion against the Most High, but he is still abjectly the slave of God's predestination! And let man sin with his free will, even to the most extreme length of folly, yet even then God has a bit in his mouth and a bridle upon his jaws, and knows how to rule and govern him according to His own good pleasure! The ferocity of kings and priests does but fulfill the counsel of God!

29-33. *And now, Lord, behold their threats and grant unto Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching forth Your hand to heal: and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the holy Child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

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A CALL TO THE DEPRESSED
NO. 3422

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1914,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Shake yourself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem: loosen yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Isaiah 52:2.

I SHALL not attempt at this time to decipher the history of the prophecy with which these words are associated. To the Hebrew nation they were big with counsel, bright with hope. Apart, however, from the connection in which it stands, this verse supplies a pointed practical address of sterling value not to be limited by any private interpretation. Such a charge was well fitted for Israel of old. Such counsel would be suitable to any church in a low condition. Such advice is equally adapted to any Christian who has fallen into a low state, who is groveling in the dust or among the ashes of Sodom. He is told to rise from the ground and sit down upon a throne, for Christ has made him a king and a priest. He is admonished to unbind all the cords that are upon him, that he may be free and happy in the Lord. To those of you, then, who have sunk into this distressing plight, my text contains a vigorous appeal! Let me try to interpret it. First of all, I notice the obvious fact—

I. SOME OF GOD'S TRUE PEOPLE ARE IN A VERY SAD CONDITION.

This is an important consideration to us just now. If just on the eve of battle a commander should discover that an epidemic has broken out among his troops, he will be extremely anxious that any available remedy shall be tried, for if the soldiers are sick, how can they be expected to behave well on the morrow? So it will sometimes happen that when we mean to serve our Master most, we are impeded in Church action by the prevalence of some spiritual disease among the members of the Church. Perhaps I may be the means, tonight, of finding out the sick ones, and indicating their symptoms, and—who can tell—perhaps this very night, before you come to the table, the blessed remedy may be applied, and at the table, while you are feasting with Christ, your souls may become perfectly restored!

Sometimes the children of God fall into a grievous state *as to their faith* and their assurance of their own interest in Christ. They doubt whether they are Christians at all, whether their experience is genuine, whether they ever did really repent with a truly broken heart, whether they have received the precious faith—the faith of God's elect. At such times they question all their graces and they are not able to get a satisfactory answer from anyone. At the same time these people of God may be so walking in outward consistency that everybody else thinks

well of them. No one has any suspicion of them, but they grievously suspect themselves and are tormented with the fear that they have a name to live, and are dead. I have known at such times that there will come at the back of all this some terrible doubts about the substantial truths of our faith. "What?" You say, "doubts about the Godhead—doubts about the Savior—doubts about the world to come?" Yes, yes, and to the true people of God! They will hate these doubts and, in their hearts they will still believe all the great fundamental and cardinal truths—but yet will they be sore put to it and be frequently distressed. Thoughtful minds, and men of reading will have philosophical doubts buzzing about them like mosquitoes on a summer's day. Others who are ignorant of philosophy and, perhaps, it is well that they are, will be troubled with doubts of a rougher, coarser quality. Although they will not permit them so to dwell in their hearts so that they actually become unbelievers—yet they will be sorely distressed with questions which they cannot answer, with enigmas which they know not how to solve, and with strange intertwistings of difficulty which they know not how to untie. Perhaps, too, at such a time as this, there will be over all and worse than all, a state of dreadful indifference creeping over them. They want to feel, but cannot feel. They would gladly wring tears of blood out of their eyes, but not even an ordinary tear will drop. They want to be cut to pieces! They would welcome the most poignant sorrow, but they can only say—

"If anything is felt, 'tis only pain,
To feel I cannot feel."

In such cases, true believers are sure to resort to the extraordinary use of the means of grace. I mean they will add to their ordinary use, something more. Have you never been in such a state that the Bible has become uninteresting, or the only passages of Scripture that seemed to strike you were dreadful threats concerning your own coming doom, as you thought—not a word of comfort, not a syllable that makes glad your spirit? You have gone to prayer and the heavens have seemed to be brass! And worse still, your own heart seemed to be brass, too, and you could not stir it up to anything like an intensity of desire. You did not wonder that you got no answer. You would have wondered if such a prayer as yours could be heard at all! Ah, and then you have gone up to the assembly of God's people where at other times your heart has danced within you with holy joy! The minister was not changed. Perhaps at first you thought he was, but on more attentive bearing, you noticed that there was the same truths of God and spoken in the same honest fashion, but you could not hear it as you once did. Clouds without rain and wells without water—all the ordinances seemed to be to you. And all the while, though you felt that you could not live like this, and said—

"Dear Lord, and shall I always live,
At this poor dying rate?"

yet somehow or other you could not get out of it. You felt like one manacled, as though a nightmare were upon you. You were distressed. You could not stir to break the spell! Your spirit cried out as best it

could, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the worst of it was that you did not feel that you were wretched enough, and you did not seem to cry enough! You were afraid you would sink into a terrible lethargy which would be the forerunner to a spiritual death altogether.

Well, my dear friends, I should not wonder but you brought this very much upon yourselves. If you are in this state tonight, I would exhort you to question whether this is not the result of what you have often been warned of. Perhaps you slackened prayer. Perhaps in your happier days you grieved the Holy Spirit just when you were most joyful and happy in His love. It may be that you grew worldly, or, perhaps, a long succession of little things, none of which you noticed at the time, have contributed to swell the stream of your present distress. At any rate, whatever may be the cause of this state, I grieve that you are in it—grieve for my own sake, for your sake, for the sake of this church—and for the sake of the world around you, for, my brothers and sisters, your testimony is, to a great extent, silenced and your strength to bear it weakened. That face of yours, once so happy, was a living advertisement of the gospel! Your cheerful temperament under trial was an invitation to sinners to come and find a like joy. But now you are distressed and you go mourning without the light of the sun. What can you do while you abide in such a state as that? You are like the bruised reed out of which no music can come, or like the smoking flax that yields no light, but only a dolorous and nauseous smoke. I am grieved that it should be so, because were you now to attempt a verbal testimony for Christ, it would be feeble and could not produce any great result. I remember when I began to teach in the Sunday school. I was very young in grace then, having said to the class of boys whom I was teaching that Jesus Christ saved all those who believed in Him. One of the boys asked me the question, "Teacher, do you believe in Him?" I replied, "Yes, I hope I do." And he inquired again, "But are you not sure?" I had to look to myself to know what answer I should give. The lad was not content with my repeating, "I hope so." He would have it, "If you have believed in Christ, you are saved." And I felt at that time that I could not teach until I could say, "I know that it is so." I must be able to speak of what I had tasted and handled of the good word of life! So, brothers, you will find that you only perplex those whom you gladly would persuade if, by your doubts, you provoke them to say, "How can you expect us to believe at our mouth what you hesitate to seal with the witness of your own heart?" Unless the joy of the Lord is your strength, your soul will breathe a heavy atmosphere and your utterance will be checked, if it is not *choked* by your misgivings! It is your confidence in Christ and the peace it brings you, that helps you to speak to others as a true witness, because you are an experimental witness of the power of true religion. Your verbal testimony, I say, is weakened—I fear to a very great extent by the fog and vapor of your scruples, the scruples of a conscience that droops and

flags. It is sad to think that while you are looking to your own soul in doubt whether you are saved or not, you have but little energy to spare in caring about the souls of others! Indeed, it is your first concern to see that you, yourself, are saved. Till that all-important matter is resolved, your zeal for your neighbor's welfare is ill-timed. Why busy yourselves to keep other men's vineyards, while your own is left to be overgrown with weeds? And then, my dear friends, another melancholy aspect of this disability is that all this while you are a detriment to your fellow Christians. It is hard enough to fight with Satan, but it is all the harder work for the army to have to carry so many sick folk with it, for it involves much more toil. You, whose faith is all but gone, are like the baggage of an army—you hinder the rapid march of the brave soldiers of the cross! How you depress others that are around you! Once your voice was that of a brave hero and you encouraged the troops, but now you pine and cry, and make others hang their harps upon the willows and learn the same doleful tune as your own! It is a sad thing. I do not condemn you, but I greatly pity you, and I also greatly pity the Church of God, and the cause of God, that it loses so much by you who ought, in gratitude to Christ, do so much for Him. Alas, that the people of God should be sunk into so mournful a condition!

II. THERE IS A SPECIAL EXPECTATION FOR THEM.

This is pressed in all earnest. Hear, it, oh, ailing Christian! "Shake yourself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem: loosen yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

Now, my brother, content not yourself any longer with the state into which you have fallen. May the Holy Spirit come to you and prompt you to strike. Strive to get out of this condition into one of happiness and strength. Let me try to encourage you a little, and may God enable you to the utmost.

Remember, my dear friend—suppose I am now talking to you, alone. I almost wish I could grip your hand and look you close in the face—*remember from where you have fallen*. Think of the peaceful hours you once enjoyed. Oh, your stony heart was not always so cold! The Word of God was not always so dry! The sanctuary was not always so unprofitable! You have wrestled and prevailed—you know you have! You have pleaded with God and you have had the desire of your heart. You have communed with Christ and your soul has been like the chariots of Aminadab! And can you bear to think of this and not cry—

"Return, O holy dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest!"?

Can you once have known these things and had the flavor of them in your mouth, without hungering and thirsting after them again? Think of them and, perhaps, while you are musing upon the past, you may be helped by strong desires to return unto the place from which you went out.

Think of the danger you are in at present. Who are they that are most likely to fall into open sin? They are those who walk at a distance from

Christ. If you live in close communion with Jesus, you shall so share of your Shepherd's company that you shall hear the wolf's howl, but you shall not be likely to feel his fangs. I believe that when any professor falls into a filthy sin, it is not the beginning, but the culmination of a process and growth in iniquity! The open sin comes at the heels of a long succession of neglected prayers, of neglected worship of God in the family, a neglect of all communion with Christ and negligence of every good thing. It is the fruit, not the seed of the evil, which poisons the air and excites the public contempt. Beware, then, O professor!—you who have lost the light of God's countenance—beware! Beware, I pray you, of that ill-condition of soul which is the prolific parent of all distempers!

Remember, too, that there is real cause for apprehension *that you never were safe*. It is just possible that those doubts you feel are no insinuations of Satan, but the suggestions of an enlightened conscience, or even the whispers of the Holy Spirit! Unless you are, indeed, a Christian, in all probability, unless you now turn to God, you will become the willing servitor of the devil. Unless you now, with full purpose of heart, seek Christ, perhaps the time has come when you will turn aside, like Balaam, for reward, or perish in the gainsaying of Korah. In some of those shapes in which wicked men have perished, you may despondingly or presumptuously rush on to destruction and precipitate your final doom! Beware again, I say, O cold professor—in God's name, beware of trifling when you have so much reason to tremble!

My dear friend, I would put another thought into your mind which may help you. Perhaps you may think it is rather hampering than helping you and tends more to depress than to deliver you. Remember *how justly you might now be left to your own devices*. You became carnally secure. You sinned away the light of God's countenance. You grieved His Spirit. What if He were now to say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone"? What if from this day the Spirit should no more strive with you? What if, after all, though you have talked and preached to others, you yourself should be a castaway? I do but mention this to awaken you, my brother, if you are insensible. You know how sometimes the surgeon fears that a man should sleep himself to death, and he will even drive pins into him, or make him walk and drag him about the chamber so as to awaken him. I would say anything, however sharp, if I might but wake you out of your lethargy! I know you would welcome it and, in due time, thank me for the severity of the operation.

But I shall refrain, for I think there is a better way than this. I want you to arise and shake yourself from the dust, my poor desponding friend, because if the worst is the worst and you are no Christian, no true believer, yet, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be white as snow." What if it has been all a mistake and you never ought to have made a profession? Remember *Jesus Christ receives sinners*—come to Him now! I always find this the

short way out of a long dreary road, a quick relief for acute maladies, a ready antidote for doubts and fears. The devil has been arguing with Christians for so many years that he understands the case against them a great deal better than any of us do, and if we begin to controvert with him, we shall soon find that that old hater of man will soon get the mastery over us! But if we say, "I give in, Satan—I give in. I am a sinner—the chief of sinners—have you anything more to say? I give in, but I answer you with this—'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. I believe in Him and my sins are, therefore, washed away!'" This is the high road to perfect comfort! I beg you, my dear brother, to take it at once! Hear the Word of the Spirit, which says, "Repent, and do your first works." The very first works were repentance and faith, and so even begin again! Away to the fountain filled with blood! Away to the cross, and give that life-look once more! Away to the finished substitutionary sacrifice and beneath the crimson canopy of the atonement, hide your guilty head! Oh, if you do this, your light shall break forth as the morning, and your glory as the noonday! The Lord help you to do this, now, and end the strife!

Let me also remind any Christian here who is full of doubt and with the bands of his neck tight upon him, *that the blood has not changed its power to cleanse*. If it cleansed you 20 years ago, it can cleanse you still! Remember, Jesus has not lost His power to save, nor has He changed His character for willingness to save to the uttermost—

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill,
He receives poor sinners still."

Come, then, to the unchanging Savior! You who have been treacherous—you whose hearts have played the harlot to Christ—come back, for His love to you has not waned! "Return unto Me, O backsliding daughter, says the Lord; for I am married unto you." The prodigal's heart may change towards his Father, but his Father's heart never changes towards him. Return, then, for mercy waits you, and not judgment! He is God and not man, else you had been consumed! Return tonight, for He will put away your sin like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Duly acknowledge your wandering. Humble yourself because of your treachery and say, "My Father, You shall be the guide of my youth," and you shall be restored perfectly, and your former joy shall come back to you!

Do I hear you say, "But I am not fit to come back to Christ, and have joy in Him at once"? Oh, sir, were you fit at first? No! And you are not fit now, but come and welcome! Christ wants nothing from you! Come and trust Him and perfect salvation is yours. "Oh, but I cannot bear to look Him in the face, for I have lived so long without walking in His counsel." So much the more reason that you should not live another hour without Him! I charge you, my poor distressed brother—I charge you, my troubled sister—by the love that Christ has to you, come to Him now! Behold, He stands at the door and knocks! If you will open to Him, though the house is not furnished, nor the table covered with a festival

for Him as it should be, yet will He come in and sup with you, even with you, and you shall sup with Him tonight! I see no reason why the most desponding Christian, here, should not rejoice before he comes to the table of the Lord! I do not know why the most barren among us should not be made fruitful! This I do know, that we are not straitened in Him, we are not straitened in His willingness to bless, nor in His ability to comfort! Oh, believe in Him, Christian! Believe Him. If you are not a Christian, cast yourself at His feet. He will not let you perish! Lay hold, if it is but of the hem of His garment and do not let Him go! Even now shake yourself from the dust and put on your beautiful garments.

III. A GLAD OBLIGATION HENCEFORTH RESTS UPON THEM.

I must close with this remark. I know there are many of God's people in the state I have been describing. I have the pain, sometimes, of trying to cheer them. I only hope that what I have said tonight may be blessed of God to them. I fully anticipate it. Here, then, is the practical point. "*When you are converted, strengthen your brothers and sisters.*"

Look out for those who are in the same state as you have been in—and be very tender toward them. As you know their case, and have traversed that howling desert, you will be able to direct them. I have described your case because I fear that I have sometimes been on the verge of it myself. I have found recovery by a fresh resort to the love of Christ and a simple renewal of my trust in Him. I can, therefore, enter into your feelings and ask you to try the same remedy. After you have found the remedy to be a good one, it is but a small return, and certainly it is due from you, to tell others how you have been restored!

Some of you, beloved, have never been thus carried into captivity. I pray God you never may be. There is no necessity for it, but let me entreat you to walk very tenderly with your God. We serve a jealous God. He will wink at many an act of insubordination done by His enemies, the one-tenth of which, if done by His favorite ones, His elect, His darlings—He will hide His face from them at once! "You, only, have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Says He not, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"? A sinner may go on wantonly unrebuked. He may add house to house and field to field, and he may think himself secure—God will deal with him in the next world. But the heir of heaven is under a discipline of divine love and God will deal with him in this world! And among the chastisements of departure from Christ will be the loss of comfort, the loss of power to do good and I know not what other affliction added thereunto in his soul or in his circumstance. Dear brothers and sisters, walk carefully, then—while you have the light of God, walk in the light! Oh, prize the sweet love of Christ! Never, never let it go. Say unto your soul, when Christ is in your heart, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor wake my love until He pleases." Introduce no rival's love, and no worldliness! Fall into no

inconsistencies, but pray for grace that with holy jealousy you may still dwell in the light of God and find favor in His eyes.

And being thus kept near to God, and being strong in the power of His might, *come and give back the strength to Him from whom you derived it.* Stand up for Christ! I believe we are never happier than when we have plenty to do. Idleness is the mother of vexation. A Christian, who does but little for Christ, unless he is prevented from doing it by suffering, will, as a rule, be a miserable man or woman! You active Christians, active in body and nimble in spirit—you joyous Christians who walk in the light of God's countenance—"work while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work." Let us pledge each other tonight that we will now seek the good of Zion. Members of this church, none of you be unfaithful to the loyalty which you owe to Christ in this, the hour when we seek to press forward as one man in the battle of our Master! I would stand side by side with you to take my share—but what can one do if he works alone? My brothers in office will not be backward, I know, but what can we do? Keep step with us, my brothers and sisters, in pleading for souls, in proclaiming the gospel, in seeking to win the many to the knowledge of the Savior—and the Lord will bless us, even our own God will bless us! Shaking ourselves from the dust, and breaking off the bands of our own sloth, God will come with His crown of benediction and place it on His Church's head! And when we get that coveted prize, let us hold it fast, that no man takes it from us. Let us go forward as a church in indissoluble union and in unwearied service, until He shall come whose, "Well done!" shall be our best reward!

The Lord bless you! And at His table may the King's sweet spikenard give forth a delightful perfume to every spiritual heart. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 138; ISAIAH 55:1-11; ROMANS 8:28-39.

Verse 1. *I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto You.* We cannot be too much occupied in the praises of God. He rightly deserves all the thanksgivings we can bring to Him. It is the great engagement of heaven. Let us begin the music here. If we would be heavenly-minded on earth, we must be filled with the praises of God! Notice how David resolves that in praising God it shall be done heartily. "I will praise You with my whole heart." If there is ever a thing that ought to be done enthusiastically, it is the praising of God! I cannot bear to hear God's praises chirped out elegantly by polite people—as if they were ashamed of what they were doing. Nor can I bear to see a mass of pipes and bellows left by itself to blow the praises of God by machinery—instead of men and women praising Him with their heart! Oh, how acceptable it must be to God to hear the heart speak! As for the tongue and voice, however sweet their sound, there is little in it. It is the heart! Soul music is the soul of music. "I will praise You with my whole heart." See how bold the psalmist is about this. "Before the gods," he says," will I

do it. Before the angels, before the kings and great ones that think themselves little gods. I will speak to the honor of Jehovah's name. Yes, and in the idol temples, where their worshipers will be greatly angry about it. I will praise You with my whole heart. Before the gods will I present praise unto You."

2. *I will worship toward Your holy temple.* That was God's way of worship. In the old times there was the shrine of God—there was the one altar which world render praise acceptable. David takes care to render praise to God in God's way. And that is a great principle in worship—to avoid will-worship and to endeavor to present sacrifices such as God prescribes. "I will worship toward the holy temple." What blessed reasons are here given for praising. "I will praise You for Your lovingkindness." Is not that the grandest word in any language—lovingkindness? It is a compound of perfect sweets to make up yet more perfect sweetness—kindness and love mixed together. A marvelous blend! Lovingkindness gave the promise, but truth takes care to see it fulfilled. "So will I praise Your name."

2. *And praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and for Your truth, for You have magnified Your word.* That is, "Your word of promise—Your gospel which You have applied with power to my soul. You have made it to seem lustrous beyond anything else I have ever seen of You, O my God! Therefore will I magnify You, because You have magnified Your word."

2, 3. *Above all Your name. In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.* Ah, this is what ties a man to praise. Answered prayer is sure to lead us to adoring gratitude. Notice that he says that God answered him not by taking away his trouble, but by strengthening him! With strength in his soul. You see it does not matter whether He takes away the load, or strengthens the back to bear it. And that is often the method by which He answers His servants' cries. Not strength of body—perhaps he would have liked that—but strength of soul. And oh, when the soul in strong, bodily weakness is but a very small drawback. No, the weakness of the body may sometimes tend to illustrate the more the greatness of the power of God. Let us read that verse again, for some of us can set our seal to it. "In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul."

4, 5. *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O LORD, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.* David was a king, and kings would learn from him. You and I are not kings, but we may exercise a very beneficial influence in our own circle of acquaintances if we make bold to praise God when others can hear us. Let us speak well of His name. Wherever we go, let us have a good word for our Master. When others want to know what sort of God we serve, may they gather it from our holy joy and exultant confidence at all times!

6. *Though the LORD is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knows afar off.* A glance of them is quite enough for Him. He has no wish to know any more about them, He so hates them! Nothing can separate God from a soul so much as pride. It is that which causes the rejection of the gospel. Men will not have the humbling gospel—the sinners' gospel. They are too fine, too good, too lofty—and so they do not want God, neither does His soul desire them. "For the proud He knows afar off."

7. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.* He was a king but he had his trouble. A throne is not a place wherein we can shelter ourselves from trial. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble"—like a man that is to rush through a fire—"yet I shall be safe," he says, "for You will revive me—give me new life. When it seems as if my life would be destroyed, You will quicken me again."

7, 8. *You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.* Note the confident spirit that runs through all this. There is a childlike trust in God and there is a gladsome praise of God for what has been already received at his hands. Oh for more of this spirit—the spirit that makes music to the Lord for the past and trusts Him for the present and the future. Some more blessed words of comfort from—

ISAIAH 55:1-11.

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.* Remark the wonderful condescension of God, that though the gifts of His grace are so precious that all the world could not buy them, yet He condescends to ask His creature to have those gifts. He stands, as it were, like one who has goods to sell, and He cries, "Ho! Such-and-such a passerby, turn here: give ear in this way. Ho! Everyone that thirsts." If, then, there is any soul that wants God, O soul, God desires you infinitely more than you desire Him! And He invites you to come to Him. Do not delay!

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* Seeking happiness in a thousand ways with much toil and trouble, but with bitter disappointment.

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* God invites His creature to listen to Him. "Do," He says "but lend Me your ear a little. Do but hearken diligently to what I have to tell you." Oh, should not God's message of love command the attention of all mankind?

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me! Hear, and your soul shall live.* Salvation does not come to men through the eye, but through the ear. Not what you see in the finery of the priest or the altar. That can do you no good. But listen to the gospel. It is by ear-gate that God's mercy

comes triumphant into the soul of man. "Incline your ear and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shad live."

3. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Here God will strike hands with the sinner and enter into a compact with him—a covenant of mercy and of grace through Jesus Christ, the Savior!

4. *Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people.* To bear witness to men of what God is.

4. *A leader and commander to the people.* For Christ loves the people and He leads them rightly. He will lead them to glory!

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that know not You shall run unto You because of the LORD, Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* The promise is to Christ! Today are these words fulfilled in our ears, for in calling these British Isles to know Christ, God has given to the Lord Jesus a people that knew Him not. What did our forefathers know of Jesus when He was here below? And yet in this land He has multitudes of hearts that love His name! Oh, that God would give this whole house full of souls to Christ tonight! What a box it would make full of jewels! Oh, that the gracious Father would bestow it on His Son!

6-11. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so 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.* Therefore, we are not at all afraid about the success of the preaching of the gospel. Some will be saved tonight wherever Jesus Christ is preached! My dear unsaved hearer, will it be you? I pray it may be. May the Lord grant that this may be the last night of your unregeneracy, and be your spiritual birth night! Some *will* be saved! Will *you* be of the number?

ROMANS 8:28-39.

Verses 28-30. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* No breaks between the links of this chain! Foreknowledge is welded to the predestination—the predestination is infallibly linked with

the calling! The calling with the justification and the justification with the glorification. There is no hint given that there may be a flaw or break in the series. Get a hold of any one and you possess the whole! The called man is the predestinated man. Let him be sure of that. And the justified man shall be a glorified man. Let him have no doubt whatever about that.

31. *What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* A great many, but they are all nothing. If God is for us, all they that are against us are not worth mentioning! They are ciphers. If He were on their side, then the one would swell the ciphers to the fullest, but if He is not there, we may put them all into the scale and reckon them as less than nothing!

32, 33. *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* Who, indeed?

33, 34. *It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?* No one can, for—

34. *It is Christ that died.* And so put our sins to death.

34. *Yes, rather, that is risen again.* And so has justified us.

34. *Who is even at the right hand of God.* And so has carried us into heaven by His representing us there.

34. *Who also makes intercession for us.* Whose everlasting pleas, therefore, silences all the accusations of the devil!

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* They have all been tried. In different ages of the world, the saints have undergone all these, and yet has never one of them been taken away from the love of Christ! They have not left off loving Him, nor has He left off loving them. They have been tried, I say.

36. *As it is written. For Your sake we are killed all the daylong; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* What is the result of it?

37-39. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Hallelujah! Blessed be His name!

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BEHOLDING GOD'S CHURCH
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"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 generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."
Psalm 48:12-14.

THE proper study of the Christian is Christ. Next to that subject is the Church. And though I would by no means ever urge you to think of the Church as for a moment, to put her in comparison with her Lord, yet think of her in relation to Him. You will not dishonor the sun by remembering that there is a moon! You will not lessen the glory of "the King in His beauty" by remembering that the Queen, His spouse, is "all glorious within." You will not think any less of Christ for thinking much of His Church. So tonight I shall invite you to a consideration of the honor, and glory, and dignity of the Church of God as set forth in these verses. And our first point will be *the survey which should be taken of the Church*—"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider well her palaces." Secondly, *here is the objective of this survey*—"That you may tell it to the generation following." And here is, thirdly, *a very excellent reason given for our seeking to accomplish this objective*—"For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." So, then, let us think awhile of—

I. THE SURVEY WHICH WE SHOULD TAKE if we would become practically useful to coming generations—the survey we ought to take of the Church of God.

And let us begin by saying it *should be complete*. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her"—go completely round the wall. The Church is set forth as a walled city. The description calls to my mind the city of Chester. There you have the old wall standing, with here and there a most picturesque tower or turret. Now Jerusalem stood in that way, and the Church of God is likened to Jerusalem. "Go round about her"—make a complete circuit of all her walls, try to be acquainted with all of Church history, with that which concerns apostolic times, and that which had to do with the ages of the first Christian persecution; with the Reformation, with the sufferings of our fathers and covenanting sires. And then on to the present day, let your survey of the Church, as far as possible, include all portions of it. Remember that your denomination is not the whole of

Zion—that although you do well to look carefully to the quarter in which your house is situated, yet there are other houses of God's servants in other parts of the city—and you should take a survey of those regions as well as those in which you immediately dwell. See how your brothers and sisters in Christ fare and take their pledge and report. Let it never be a joy to a Baptist if he hears that some Congregational Church does not prosper. Let it always be a joy to a Presbyterian when he hears that a Wesleyan is doing good. Let it be a great joy to us if any part of the Church of God prospers! And if in any place there is decay or decline, let us bear in our prayers that particular portion of the Church of God, and pray Him to strengthen that part of the city wall against the foe. Let your survey of the Church be as complete as you can make it. "Go round about her."

Let it also be frequent. I am afraid that some persons think very little, indeed, of the Church of God. I mean that while they know how the shop, and the State, and the world generally are getting on, they could scarcely tell how many members were added to the one church to which they belong. Certainly they know little about other sections of the Church and, perhaps, care as little as they know! It should not be so with the citizens of Zion! The time to favor Zion will come when God's servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof—when the very least thing that concerns the Church of God shall be important to the citizens of Zion! Frequently, my dear friends look not only on your own things, but also on the things of others. Does not the text say, first, "Walk about Zion"? Then it adds, "Go round about her," as if, after having done it once, you were to do it again, and yet again, and again—always caring for the Church and constantly making an earnest, enthusiastic inspection as to the prosperity of the great cause of Christ in the land.

And *let your inspection and survey be deliberate*. "Count the towers thereof." Look at the detail, count the towers, and bring your careful pondering into the business. Do not give a mere glance, hurrying round and then saying, "I saw the city, but really do not know how many towers there were." Study the details of the church of which you are a member; try to look after the individual interests of your brothers and sisters. There may be a backslider to recover and rejoice over. There may be a mourner to comfort, a seeker to direct, or a faint heart to encourage. Mark well the towers! "Set your heart towards them," says the Hebrew—do not regard the interests of the Church of God as secondary to anything! If the Church prospers and Christ is glorified, all things else are little—but if there is defeat to the armies of Israel, nothing can console the Christian!

And *let your inspection of the Church of God be always earnest*. "Consider her palaces"—not a mere superficial look at the Church—reading the weekly paper—the weekly religious paper—which recounts the little events in your Zion, but consider well. I would to God we had many who in secret would so consider as to sigh and groan over the lack

of love and earnestness that there is just now. The wave of revival seems, now, to have passed over us—and we are now like the shore when the sea retreats from it with the fullness of its strength. There needs to be some men of wisdom to discern the times and, "to know what Israel ought to do." Each one of us who loves the Lord, and has a stake in the city as citizens, should seek to consider well its interests and endeavor to promote them earnestly and strenuously—seeking first to know thoroughly what they are—that we may render our share towards their serving. Although this exhortation may seem to some to be very tame and tritely commonplace, yet how much I wish we were all obedient to it—and surely, then, great practical results would follow! There are some who manifest a keen interest in all that happens in the Church. If there is a missionary going abroad, their prayers go with him. If there is a new voice lifted up for Christ, they are much more pleased than if they found a bag of gold! These same persons are often mourners in Zion when the gospel is not fully preached, when prayer-meetings are thinly attended, when no conversions are made, when worldliness sweeps over the Church. And the more we have of such men, the better—they are sure to be the very pick and cream of the Church, those who walk round Jerusalem, who go round about her—who mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces!

But now let us be obedient to one of our own rules, namely, to take a matter in detail. So, taking the text in detail, we have, first, to walk about Zion, which I take to mean let us inspect the Church herself—let it often be a theme with us—a theme of study. What is the Church of God? On what is it founded? It is built upon a rock and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Church of God stands fast in the immutable love of God according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. *The Church of God was designed by infinite wisdom*. It is not a corporation of men that come together according to their own agreement and will, and so at haphazard. It is not an organization framed by the shrewd wit and wisdom of man. God designed the true Church in eternity! He is the architect and builder of the temple in which He is, Himself, to dwell. Not only the great outline of that plan did He mark and settle, but every line of it; yes, and every stone of it—and when that stone shall be quarried and how it shall be quarried—and where it shall be placed, and when it shall be placed in the appointed spot! The divine will of God and the eternal purpose may be seen running through the whole of the Church, and it is well for us to look often to her foundations and look to the designer, the great artifice, who builds all things! This Church of God, as far as it is already built, has been built by divine power alone. Instruments have been used but all the power is of God! There have been builders and wise master-builders, but still, these have been the servants employed by the great builder of all! He that built all things is God. That is especially true in the Church of God. If there are any other buildings which have been put up by human might, they

will assuredly crumble from their place. Only that which God built will endure. All men's work will pass away and, perhaps, the sooner the better, for wood, and hay, and stubble would but destroy the beauty and the completeness of that building whose foundations are of precious stones, and whose walls shall glisten with gems in that day when the top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, "Grace, grace unto it!" The Church is a wonderful piece of architecture and well worth our walking round because, unlike any other, her strength is not merely material. The Church is built up of living stones. Life flows through the whole. We have seen marvelous buildings. As I have looked at the cathedral at Milan, I could hardly help thinking that it looked as if it had sprung up from the earth, watered by some miraculous shower! It seemed a thing of such beauty, but every stone was, after all, a stone. But the Church of God has grown under a divine, miraculous hand, and every stone, from the foundation to the pinnacle glows with life! Wondrous temple for a living God to dwell in! How should He dwell in temples made with hands, and pillars of iron, dust and ashes—things that were created but for baser uses? But He can live where hearts glow with emotion—where intelligence brightens with instruction, where holiness, peace and joy are the polished stones—the glory with which they glitter! It is a temple of living stones—you may well go round about it!

The temple has *a glorious history*, too. Strange histories have been connected with buildings. What would the stones of Stonehenge tell us if they could speak? What secrets might not the Pyramids reveal if for once they could break their solitary and solemn silence? Those far away temples of Carnac and Baalbec—what have they beheld? What armies have marched by them? What nations and generations have perished and passed beneath their shade? But this Zion, this habitation of the living God—her history how grand! When does it begin? In old eternity God has ordained her. Along the whole page of human history you trace her most distinctly. How gloriously does she shine forth at the Red Sea, when God works plagues on Zoan and breaks the dragon in the midst of the sea! How brightly does the Church shine when you mention such names as David and all his victories, or Sennacherib and his hosts slain by the avenging angel! The history of the Church of God is an aggregation of histories, all of them miraculous, for the Christian Church is a miracle so far as its life is concerned—it is life in the midst of death—not only life in the sepulcher, but life in the very midst of death itself. Spiritual life in these poor bodies is just such, but oh, brothers and sisters, I am afraid that we are too silent about the history of the Church! We hear continually of patriots singing of the brave days of old when their fathers fought the foe. We ought to sing more often the songs of Moses and the Lamb—that the Lord God has gotten to Himself the victory, and given to His people rest and conquest. The Church is worth going round, for her history is so bright.

But best of all, the Church should be surveyed by us, *because of Him who dwells within*. It shall be said of no other place, "Here Jehovah

specially and radiantly resides." I know men think of their ridged roofs and of their lofty pillars in their cathedrals, and think these ensure the divine indwelling, but He is no more inside that building than outside! God is to be found on the loftiest mountain, as well as in the valley—and where the preacher stands upon a log of wood upon the village green, the place is just as consecrated as though a thousand years it had heard nothing but the song of praise and the voice of prayer! There are no holy places now—these are done with! They are the beggarly elements of the law—in the living Church, built up of men and women who have been born unto God by His Spirit—there, Jehovah peculiarly dwells—in heaven and in the little heaven below in the midst of His elect people, whom He has ordained according to His purpose! There might be whole hours spent in talking about the Church, but enough of that first word, "Walk about Zion."

Brothers and sisters, I shall invite you next, in your survey of Zion, to *observe her conspicuous towers*. "Count the towers thereof." Shall I be counted fanciful if I say that these towers may guard the doctrines of the gospel which stand prominently round the Church of God, for the protection and succor of the citizens? I shall not, certainly. The enemy have always looked upon these as towers, for attacks have been made one after another upon the different parts of our most holy faith. For a long time our Reformers stood like a wall round the tower of justification by faith, and the whole battle seemed to be waged around that particular portion. After a while the conflict shifted—and it continues to do so from year to year and day to day. Sometimes we have had to contend for the true Deity of our blessed Lord; sometimes for the full and divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. There is not a tower in the whole compass of the walls that guard the Church, but what has had to maintain siege after siege, and bear upon it the brunt of the attack! And what is better, the shields of the mighty have been vilely cast away when Zion's troops have put the enemy to rout!

May not these towers also represent *the place of observation of the Church?* "Count the towers thereof." Where do God's watchmen go to observe the times and to see what is coming? Do they not go to the chamber of communion, to the place of prayer, to the teaching of Holy Scripture and get near to God? Then are they not able to see afar off and to mark where the foe will make his next assault? Surely I shall not be wrong if I say that in our times the pulpit has to become the tower of the watchmen. While that is well and faithfully maintained, no assaults of the foe shall prevail! As the Roman Catholic priests once said to Krummacher, "Unless you take the pulpit out of the way, we shall never be able to put you down." Let the Christian, then, go and count the towers of the Church! Let him watch the doctrines! Let him learn them! Let him understand them! Let him know how to defend them! Let every Christian pray for the minister of the gospel! Brothers and sisters, pray for him! Count the towers and if you see one that seems to be badly

manned with watchmen, ask that God's grace would raise up other and mightier men for the defense of Holy Zion! And if there is anything else, if there is any place that may not have a tower, think of it—think of it prayerfully—and carefully regard it in your prayers before God as an object of your solicitude!

But I must conduct you on, for our time flies. You are invited to *an inspection of the ramparts of defense*. "Mark you well her bulwarks." The bulwarks go entirely around the city—they are lines of ridges, ditches, trenches and fortifications. Now mark well the fortifications of the Church of God. God the eternal Father has thrown up a line of ramparts—the eternal purpose—who shall frustrate it? The everlasting covenant—who shall make it void? The promise and the oath, the two immutable things by which it is impossible for God to lie—who shall storm these two? Who shall break upon these two? We are safely defended behind them! The power of God—who shall defeat it; the wisdom of God—who shall outwit it; the presence of God—who shall deprive us of it; the love of God—who shall separate us from it? All these are the entrenchments of our Zion. When our foes have once looked upon them, they may well turn back with dismay. God, the blessed One, has been pleased to make lines of fortifications, too. He has offered His precious sacrifice—and between the Church and destruction there is the full stream of His atoning blood! Who, by any means, shall make the atonement void, or the cross of no effect? Between the Church and the foe stands the brass wall of the righteousness of Jesus Christ! God is not unfaithful, to forget the work of His dear Son. Stronger than iron is the intercession of Jesus Christ! For Zion's sake He will never cease or hold His peace, but will plead day and night for His people when they are tempted, that their faith fail not. And there is the mediatorial work of Christ, like a wall of fire about them. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Who shall break through, upon the Church, through *all* power? Surely these—

"Munitions of stupendous rock,
Our dwelling place shall be!"

And then there is the kingdom of Christ in the latter day promised to come—the promise of God to come with power and take His people to Himself. That is a sure guarantee of the security of the Church until the day of manifestation and the appearing of the Son of God!

Around the Church of God, too, the Holy Spirit has thrown up His rampart. He was pleased, first of all, to create the Church, and since that day He has preserved it safely. It is His to provide spiritual teaching. It is His to take of the things of Christ and show them unto it. It is His to comfort. It is His to sanctify. It is His to perfect. And all His gracious influences and operations are so many protections against the attacks off the foe. Aha! Aha, you enemy of Zion! If you had to do with poor puny men like us, you might soon put us to the rout! Your sophistries and worldly wisdom might soon bring us to the non-plus, but the Holy Spirit

is with us and is in us—and we shall answer you with a wisdom that you shall not be able to counter!

"The best of all is," said John Wesley, "that *God* is with us." "God with us! God with us" is the shout of our victorious host! "Emmanuel"—in this name we conquer—by this name we overcome! So you see, brothers and sisters, you may mark well her bulwarks—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have securely garrisoned and bulwarked the Church of the living God! You are called to notice, in the fourth place, *her palaces*. Concerning which but a word; of course the houses of Zion were inside the walls, and so were the dwelling places and the meeting places of believers who were all inside the line of defense. What kind of dwelling places are these that belong to the citizens of Zion? Are they cottages? Is it, "Mark you well her cottages"? No, not so. Is it, "Consider her alms houses"? No! It is, "Consider her *palaces*." Palaces are the abodes of those of the greatest wealth, of those having rank and dignity in life. Then am I to understand that the people of God are rich? They are not in earth's wealth very often—not in perishable gold and silver—but in what is infinitely better! They are rich in faith, rich in favor, rich in the loving-kindness of the Lord. Then am I to understand that the people of God are honorable? They are not with worldly honor, but God has said, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." And am I to remember that the people of God are royal? They are kings and priests! They are the true blood-royal of the universe. The blood-imperial is not in the veins of those who claim it, but in the veins of the descendants of the King of kings! Their ancestry is the highest under heaven! They are God's aristocracy. Consider, then, her palaces. Where are the palaces, and what are they? Consider then, my brothers and sisters, the place where the saints worship, for where the saints meet together for prayer and praise, *there* are the palaces! Consider them and mark them well, to love them and say, "How amiable are Your tabernacles, oh, Lord of hosts, my King and my God." Consider the palaces of Christian fellowship, for if it is in a barn—when Christians meet together, they make a palace of it! Consider the palace of fellowship with Christ. Wherever we meet with Him, we are at once in a palace! Consider the palaces of the promises—that it is better than a promise which is spoken of in that word, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust." These will be our dwelling places in all ages, and it is infinitely better than any earthly palace can possibly be!

"Consider her palaces." Thus I have gone into detail round the walls of Zion. Now, the second thing, very briefly, is—

II. THE OBJECTIVE TO BE ATTAINED BY OUR MAKING OURSELVES THUS ACQUAINTED WITH THE CHURCH OF GOD.

It is this—"That you may tell it to the generation following." The Church of God should take care that what God has done for one generation is told to the next. How much have you and I been helped by what our fathers told us? Those wonderful deeds that are kept on

record—what God did in the days of old—have ministered great consolation to us in this present age. Let us take care that we hand down to our sons and daughters a record of what God has done. The pith of the matter is just this—each Christian ought to take a deep interest in the work of God in his time, that he may know how to teach his children, and especially to teach those who are born unto the family of God. Teach the young Christian what God *has* done, *is* doing and *will* yet do for His Church! I am very thankful that I have around me a number of Christian people who take a deep interest in the cross of Jesus Christ. I believe that you are the people who will be sure to be succeeded by a generation who will take an equal interest in the same work. But if you were not, yourselves, interested, I could not suppose that it would be any concern to you to hand down the sacred traditions of your experience to the next generation. But now I trust that you will take care that there shall be kept alive in the world the record, the experimental record, of God's mighty acts towards His people in our day, even as in olden times! They speak of what the Lord did. Go you, each of you, and tell others what God has told you! Never hide the precious things that God reveals to you. What He speaks to you in the closet, proclaim upon housetops! Of course, it is well to learn first—do not try to teach before you have learned—but when you have learned, it is well to teach it immediately. Always mark well—"consider," says the text—"that you may tell it to others." May we train up in all our churches studious Christians, intelligent Christians, well-versed in all that concerns the Church of the living God! I believe that in proportion as Christian people are well-instructed, the attacks of the adversary will be repelled and defeated. But if we only gather together undisciplined bodies of men and women who merely come to hear preaching, but receive little or no instruction, they will become like flocks of sheep—the prey of the wolf whenever he shall come. Mark well, then the bulwarks of Zion, that when your turn comes to defend them, you may be at home in the battle—not come into the Church like a stranger, knowing nothing of what it is to do for Christ, or what Christ is doing for it. And now, lastly—

III. THERE IS A REASON GIVEN WHY WE SHOULD SEEK TO TRANSMIT THE RECORDS OF THE CHURCH TO OTHER GENERATIONS.

The story of God's love to His Church is to be told from one generation to another, and the reason is this—because "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." Observe, if Israel could change their God, it could as well forget what had occurred, but as she will have the same God forever and ever, let her remember what God did for her of old! And as that God will be the same to us, let each of us treasure up memories of what He has worked for us—for these are instructive as to what we may hope for in the future! He that helped you in years past will not fail you now. He that proved Himself faithful 20 years ago is faithful today. Is God all-sufficient in your childhood? Is God all-sufficient in your old age? With Him is no variableness, neither

shadow of turning. Remember, then, the past mercies are as forge ashes, from which you may gather the spark that may light the fire of today, and that even the future may be indebted to the same blaze!

Besides, we may well recollect what God has done, for if we tell it to others, we shall never have to retract, for God will continue to do the same as He always did. I am afraid that the Church has grown very faint-hearted as to the dealings of the Lord with her. We hardly expect to see such things done, as in the first age of the Church. "That was the heroic period," it is said, "but now we are in our decline." It is not so with this God of the apostles! This God of the martyrs! This God of the reformers! This God of Wesley and of Whitfield—this God is our God not for time only, but forever and ever—and I dare not give you any restricted sense of "forever and ever." There are some people who expect the Lord will want to turn us out of heaven at the end of a certain time, or they must think, so to carry out their belief, that "forever and ever" may mean only for a limited time! That is one of the modern heresies of these boasted times. But for my part I believe, "forever," means forever and ever! And this God is our God, not for ages and ages, but forever and ever, world without end—beyond any possibility of coming to a conclusion! And He will be the same God right through the ages, onward. "And He will be our guide even unto death." Now, the text is not altogether correct in the translation of the Hebrew, for, "unto death," might very well be rendered "out of—*beyond*—death." He will be our guide to the river Jordan, and He will be our guide through it! He will be our guide into Canaan, where we shall rest forever, and never more be driven out! Well, then, may we talk of what He has done, because He will always go on to do the same! We may keep on talking even to eternity, about what the Lord has done, for no period in eternity (if periods there can be) can ever witness any change in the Most High! He will still be the same just God to the ungodly, and the same gracious God to His own people forever and forever!

Oh, talk you, then, of His mighty acts! Study them, and learn them! And then speak of them with the tongue, like the pen of a ready writer, or if you go stammering, let the tongue of the dumb sing with you! Oh, to speak of the everlasting mercy of our God! On such a theme as this, they who have been heretofore silent may grow into orators, for the history of the Church of God and the story of God's love might well unloose our stammering tongues and make us tell of His immense, unsearchable love! Would to God that all the Church were orators for Him! Would that you who belong to this Church were! Many, I know, belong to divers sections of it, but alas, some are, perhaps, members of this Church, yet not members of the Church of God! And some of you are not even professedly members of God's Church. May you be converted! May you listen to the gospel, whose message you doubt! It is a message even to you—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This is the gospel that He has sent us to preach, saying these words, "Go you

into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be condemned." God bless and save you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 58:1-12; JEREMIAH 30.

Verses 1, 2. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching God.* And what a strange thing this is, that there are some people who take delight in the ordinances of God and yet they are living in the most shameful sin. I must confess this remains a mystery to me. But I hear of some who will attend prayer-meetings and seem to enjoy them—who are to be found in the house of God whenever the doors are opened, and yet, their characters will not bear the light of God. One would think that they would not wish to be told of their sins, and to come under a faithful ministry—and yet they do—and the more faithful that ministry is, the more they seem to like it, and yet go on in their sins! Oh, what strange blindness is this which loves the light and yet will not see by it—men that take to themselves niter and much soap, and yet will not wash—that heap up the bread about them as if they built a house with bread, and yet do not eat of it! Oh, infatuation most strange, to apparently love the gospel and yet not to receive it into the heart so as to be changed by it. See how God talks to this religious people.

3. *Why have we fasted, say they, and You see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.* They fasted and then they said, "Why did not God accept our fasting?" Why, because they made their poor servants work up to the very last all that they could do! They never gave them any rest. They exacted all their labors and they, themselves, while they pretended to faint, were taking their pleasure!

4. *Behold you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day so make your voice to be heard on high.* They were fond of getting into religious disputes. And when they had a fast day they fell to loggerheads about different doctrines, and they got angry with one another, till they began to smite with the fist of wickedness! And they thought that a day spent in that manner would be acceptable to God? What kind of a God would He be?

5, 6. *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loosen the bands of wickedness.* That is, if by any dishonesty you have got a man in your

power, set him free—if you have oppressed him, give him his rights. This in God's kind of fasting!

6. *To undo the heavy burden.* Not to exact from a man what you have no right to have, but what, perhaps, the law may allow you to get out of him. This is God's fasting—"to undo the heavy burdens."

6, 7. *And to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke. Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry?* It is God's kind of fasting to give what you would have eaten yourselves to the other's feast. "To deal your bread to the hungry."

7. *And that you bring the poor that are cast out of your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him: and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?* When you know that there are poor persons, perhaps of your own kith and kin—and, in one respect, we are all of one flesh—when we know that there are such, and yet refuse to help them, it is idle to talk about fasting! But if we would see to this, then comes this promise.

8, 9. *Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward. Then shall you call, and the LORD shall answer: you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger.* That is, the scorning the poor man.

9-11. *And speaking vanity. And if you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon day. And the LORD shall guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones.* You see, by giving comes getting! According to the philosophy of God, it is by watering others that we get watered ourselves! God feeds the man that feeds others. He made fat the bones of the hungry. Now God says He will make fat his bones. He satisfied the souls of those that were in drought as best he could, and now God will satisfy his soul in drought and make him—

11, 12. *And you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: you shall raise up the foundations of many generations and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.* God help us to obey His precept that we may partake in His promise!

JEREMIAH 30.

12. *For thus says the LORD, Your bruise is incurable and your wound is grievous.* See here is the bass again. We have got down into the sorrowful notes—all to make us sick of self and ready to receive the grace of God.

13, 14. *There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you.* Out of

sight, out of mind. They have forgotten you. Oh, when God wounds, it is a wound, indeed! When He breaks the heart, who can comfort? If He does but speak, the earth trembles. He touches the hills and they smoke—

"When He shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the iron bar?"

14, 15. *They seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased. Why cry you for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity.* "These are dark words," says one. If they are incurable, what more need be said? Ah, the things incurable with men are curable with God! Sin is the malady that none can cure but God alone.

15, 16. *Because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you. Therefore*—Now I read this, this morning, and I could not help dwelling upon this, "therefore." It looks like a *non sequitur*, but there is a real argument in it. Therefore, because you have now come to the worst, because you cannot help yourself, because you are ruined and undone—

16, 17. *All they that devour you shall be devoured: and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto you.* Oh, the sovereignty of divine grace! How it comes in when every hope is gone! Man's extremity is God's opportunity! An incurable sinner and, therefore, God comes to cure him! If you are brought so low that you cannot go any lower, God will put His everlasting arms underneath you. I speak to some, tonight, who are about to enter into peace, joy and rest. "I will restore health unto you; I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord."

17. *And I will heal you of your wounds, says the LORD; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.* They said, "There is no hope for that man, there is no relief for that woman. Therefore God means to give up all relief." Nothing pleases Him better than to undertake a desperate case! God is great at a dead lift. When all the world is palsied, then is God omnipotent.

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MEAT INDEED, AND DRINK INDEED
NO. 3424

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."
John 6:55.

THE crowd had followed Jesus for the loaves and fishes. He gently upbraids them for being guided by so carnal an appetite and impelled by so coarse a motive to follow Him. Then He tells them that there is a spiritual meat which is far better—a spiritual drink far richer than those things which nourish the body and gratify the animal tastes. After which, speaking of Himself *spiritually*, He says, "My flesh is meat indeed"—real meat, such as supports the soul, and, "My blood is drink indeed"—real drink, the best, the truest beverage, such as invigorates the spirit for immortality!

Why, you may ask, on the outset, *does our Lord speak of His flesh and blood as separated?* I tried to explain that some time ago when we gathered around this table. There must be, in the Lord's Supper, bread and wine—but bread *separated* from the wine—as our Lord speaks of His flesh as separate from His blood, and this was to indicate that it is as a dying Savior that He is most precious to us. The blood separated from the flesh indicates death. It is to the death of Jesus that the believer first turns His eyes and it is when considering the living, reigning Christ as having once been slain that our richest comfort comes to us. So it is not an unnecessary multiplication of words, or a vain repetition of the same idea, when our Lord says to us, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." He thereby denotes Himself as the *dying* Christ.

Taking the words as they stand, our first point will be that—

I. THE FLESH OF CHRIST IS MEAT INDEED—SPIRITUAL MEAT.

The likeness is emphatic—it is "meat indeed." It is like meat *because meat, or food, sustains the body*. The body could not be kept in vigor ordinarily or without a miracle, except by the use of food. We pine, we languish, we sicken, we die without bread! So the soul without Jesus, supposing it to be alive, must soon sicken, pine, be famished and decay. You, O believer, with all your strength would be weak as water at this moment if Jesus were not now your present support! All your past experience would go for nothing if you had not now a present Christ to stay your hopes upon. It would be only a matter of time with you—you would before long sink into the corruption of an open apostasy. Like a man shut up in a dungeon and deprived of food who drags out for a few days, a most painful existence and, at the last, expires and becomes carrion, so must it be with you. Unless Jesus Christ is your daily meat, you would go back to the carnal elements of the world and become corrupt and depraved as others are! Christ is the only true sustenance of

the quickened soul. But, mark you, let a man eat what meat he may, it does not always so sustain him but that he is not sometimes weak and stretched upon the bed of languishing. It cannot so sustain him but that before long he must be carried to his grave. But if your souls learn to feed on Jesus, they shall enjoy the blessed immunity promised to the inhabitants of Zion—they shall not say, "I am sick"—they shall never die! They shall feed on this immortal bread such as angels eat. You shall be carried up to the seats of the immortals to dwell forever with the Christ upon whom you have fed, coming to Him first to appease your hunger—and believing on Him continuously to sustain your life!

Meat not only provides substance, but it *assists growth*. The child cannot develop into an adult if he is denied his daily food. He must certainly die in infancy or in childhood if he is without the nutriment which is requisite to the building up of his bodily frame. Now, brothers and sisters, we are babes in grace, many of us. We have been brought to Jesus' feet, and as such, we are of those who make up His kingdom, but we need to grow into spiritual manhood. We are not content with little faith, dim hope and a spark of love. We need to attain unto perfection in spiritual things—I mean to be perfectly developed men and women strong in the fullness of spiritual energy—and this can only be by Christ. Only can you grow as you increase in the knowledge of Him and in subjection to the influences of His indwelling Spirit. As food makes our bodies grow, so Christ is food to our souls—He is "meat indeed"—for He makes us grow after a divine sort. Let a man feed upon what meat he may, he shall not come unto absolute perfection. But let him feed on Jesus and he shall! Through the grace of God in Christ Jesus we shall yet come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ. Up there they are all men in Christ. Before the throne of God they are all perfect and without fault—and this because they have fed upon this sacred meat which makes them grow until they come unto the perfect image of Him they feed upon!

Meat does not only sustain and cause growth, *but it makes up for the daily waste of the body*. Some people forget that every exertion of the body wears it away as truly as the machine spends its fuel and wastes itself. As even an engine of iron needs repair, so does this body of ours, and the meat we feed upon goes to repair the daily waste to which bone, and muscle, and nerve are all subjected. Beloved, Jesus Christ, in this sense, is meat. "He restores my soul." He makes up for the waste of temptation, for the wear and tear of care, for the fret of trouble, for the fume and flurry of manifold anxieties—for everything that would waste a man away. My soul once again renews her strength like the eagle when she sips from the brook that flows from the foot of the cross. Oh, believer, you will soon degenerate—this world of sin will soon make you backslide and lose every good thing you have unless you go continually to Christ and feed on Him! But feeding on Him, the world shall not hurt you, temptations shall not wound you, your trials shall not overwhelm you, for you shall find His flesh to be meat indeed! The best meat that man's body can receive will not always repair the waste. After a certain period of life, the body must decay, and the most nutritious diet cannot prevent the hair, the teeth, the eyes, the legs, the arms—the entire

man—from discovering that the hour of prime has passed and that the time of decay has arrived! Bend must the man and lean upon his staff, and eat or drink what he will, according to the strictest diet and regimen of the physician, yet still the time of waste has come. They who look out of the windows shall be darkened. The teeth shall fail because they are few, and the pillars of the house shall tremble. But, beloved, His flesh is "meat indeed," because they that feed upon Him shall still bring forth fruit in old age! They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright. Their last days shall be their best days and, instead of declining, they shall gather strength with the multiplying years till the very moment when heart and flesh shall fail, and then shall be the instant when the strength of their souls and their portion forever shall be most fully revealed to them!

Moreover, *meat is a great remover of pain and disease*. Without meat, or without food of some kind, a man's inward constitution becomes full of gnawing and anguish. Bitter are the grips of hunger. Perhaps no pain can be more severe, when a man is long exposed to it, than hunger, with the exception of thirst. No doubt, lack is the root of multitudes of the diseases of the poor. Generous diet often does more for the sick than the best medical prescriptions. It is certainly so with believers in Christ. His flesh is meat indeed in this respect. The pains of conviction, the throbs of a guilty conscience—all are stopped when a man gets Christ! If a man is spiritually sick with worldliness, with doubt, with pride, with envy—with anything that is the common sickness of the child of God—let him get but a hearty feast upon the flesh of Jesus, and the disease will fly away! Christ puts such vigor into the spiritual system of His own people when they feed on Him, that it drives out diseases as strong men cast them off by the very force of constitution! Blessed and happy is he who eats this flesh, for it is in this sense, meat indeed!

Once more, meat is used constantly by us *for the development of strength*. The man ill-fed cannot lift the weights that another can who has a more generous diet upon his table. Lowness of food brings littleness of strength. Now Jesus Christ is the only food that can make His people strong for service. Feed on Him and you shall run and not be weary! You shall walk and not faint. It is meat indeed because it gives us strength that is all but boundless. It clothes a mortal man with the might of God. It makes the feeblest Christian in the Church, when he has fed upon Christ, to be as a giant to suffer or to do!

I cannot enlarge upon all these points, though there is enough in any one of them for a sermon, but, dear child of God, seek after Christ and be not satisfied until daily you are fed and nourished upon Him.

The word, "*indeed,*" gives the sentence an air of strong protest. We must take this into consideration. Why does He say that His flesh is meat indeed? *It is in opposition to mere animal and corporeal food* which is meat, but not meat indeed. You think that bread is solid. So it is, speaking one way—but what does it support? It supports the body, and the body, you say, is substantial. So indeed it is to the eye and to the touch—but what is the body? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness

thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withers and the flower thereof fades away; surely the people are grass. This body is so little a while, here, and so soon dissolved, that I may safely call it but a shadow! And the food that feeds the shadow is but a shade. And what is the soul within us? Why, that, you say, is unreal. Truly so, sirs, to smell, to sight, to touch—but not to real thought! The real thing about a man is his inward self, which you cannot see—his secret, impalpable, unseen, immortal self that never dies! Time's tooth does not touch it, nor does the scythe of death cut it down. The soul is the real thing—not the body—and, sirs, the food which feeds the soul is the real food, after all, and though the men of the world turn on their heels and say, "Ah, no, the bread and cheese that we put into our mouths—*that* is the real thing—give us plenty of that!" Sirs, 'tis the shadow, but the truths of God you give your souls to feed upon—that it is which in God's sight, in the sight of wise men and in your sight, if you have any spiritual discernment—is meat indeed!

It is meat indeed *in contrast with the typical meats of the Old Testament*. There was the paschal supper—surely that was a glorious feast when, by it, the people went their way out of Egypt rejoicing. Yes, but 'twas only a deliverance from a common temporal slavery. They that eat the paschal lamb are delivered from the bondage of death and hell, for His flesh is meat indeed! In the wilderness they ate the manna. Yes, but every day it seemed to tell them its own unsubstantial character, from the fact that if they kept it till the next morning it bred worms and stank. But our Lord Jesus Christ is food that never corrupts! Feed on Him, lay Him up in your hearts and you shall find no corruption there, nor shall you die. In the old tabernacle and the temple there were the loaves of showbread and these were meat for the priest. Ah, but the showbread was nothing but a type—and to the priest, however devoutly he might receive it, the showbread, in itself, was no food for his real self, but only for his corporeal frame. And I may say the same of the bread which we have upon the table here, tonight! There is nothing in it—it is a mere emblem and a sign. But Christ's flesh is meat indeed! When I have sometimes seen this text put over the table commonly used for what is called the "sacrament," I have trembled lest people should be led into the grievous and unnatural error of transubstantiation. When our Lord said, "My flesh is meat indeed," He could not mean that bread on the table, for the Lord's Supper was not then instituted! In this particular text, at any rate, there can be no allusion of any kind to what is called, "the Mass," by some, or by others called, "the sacrament," because these things were not brought forward by our Lord until within a few hours of His death—and He is now speaking months before that time! Beloved, the bread is bread, and nothing but bread, and so far as it points you, like a signpost, to the real flesh of Christ, so far so good. If you stop there, I can only say of it that bread is meat, but the flesh of Christ is meat *indeed*.

When our Lord says, "My flesh is meat *indeed*," He clearly distinguishes it from *every other kind of soul food*. There are many sorts of soul food. Some men feed their souls on their own works. "Oh," they say, "we have prayed. We have fasted! We have given to the poor. We

have been upright, we have been righteous"—and their soul feeds on that, though it is all wind! But if they trusted in Christ, it would be meat indeed. Some feed on ceremonies. They have been baptized, christened, confirmed and I know not what besides. Fine confectionery this, but it is all wind! Christ received into the soul and trusted in for salvation, is meat indeed! Some have grown up with false doctrines, or with true ones exaggerated, and these bring them to a very fine development of self-conceit and bigotry—but they make no solid food for the man's mind. But oh, beloved, when a man can say, "My hope is in the crucified alone—I look to Him every day, my meditations are on Him, my reading is much about Him, my prayers are sent to heaven all through Him, my praises are for Him, He is my soul's great joy, comfort, strength, and help"—then he has got the meat indeed! He will be a strong man to overcome his sin! He will be a holy man, a happy man, a heavenly man and, by-and-by, he shall be caught up to dwell where Jesus is, on whom he has fed.

I hope I have made this clear. It is thinking upon Jesus, trusting in Jesus that is the eating Jesus, Himself, being the food. Those who trust in Him and rest in Him have got the best of soul meat. They have got meat indeed!

II. CHRIST'S BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED.

Like drink to the body, the blood of Jesus, that is to say, the merits of His atoning sacrifice *sustains*. The body is not to be built up without some liquid—the system needs it. The soul is not to be sustained without considering and resting on the substitutionary suffering of Jesus. That Jesus died in my place and suffered for my sin is to stimulate my hope, my comfort, my joy—in a word, my whole soul—just as drink invigorates the physical system.

Drink *refreshes* the body. The traveler is faint. It is a hot, burning day. That cool brook—how different the man looks when he bathes his face in it and drinks a sweet, cooling draught. And so the blood of Jesus refreshes the man who trusts in it. If I trust that Jesus was punished for me and I am clear that Jesus died for me, how my soul seems to have got a new life! How it revives! Though he were dead, yet should he live who could believe in this. He who could trust in the precious blood, though despair held him in a fainting fit so that he could not stir hand or foot, yet if this precious doctrine of a Savior dying for him were believed by him, his heart and his spirit must revive at once!

Drink also *cleanses the body*. I do not mean washing, but that the reception of the water into the system flushes all the various departments of the frame and, no doubt, the liquid always has upon the human body a healthy influence. Unless it is taken, however it may be, intemperately. It is, to a great extent, made the life-fluid of the system. Now, whenever you get Jesus Christ into the soul, how it seems to set the veins right even if the blood is wrong! How it flushes out all impurities from the spiritual system—and the more you really come to rest upon a bleeding Christ, the more sure you are to get rid of your sins—I mean your reigning sins, your besetting sins, for we can overcome

them only through the blood of the Lamb. Christ's blood is thus drink indeed!

Drink also *cheers the man*. How many a faint heart has been cheered when the cooling draught has been brought! The fainting one has opened her eyes and smiled. And, oh, how the thoughts of a dying Christ revives the fainting soul and make the spirit sing that once was ready to moan and cry, "I am forgotten! I am forsaken. I am lost!"

Notice the word, "*indeed*," how it comes in again—"My blood is drink indeed," *in opposition to all carnal drink*, for as I said about the food—that it is but a shadow to support a shadow, so it is with the drink—it is but a shade to support a shade. Christ's blood supports the spirit—therefore, it is drink indeed.

How superior *to all typical drinks*! There was the water which flowed from the rock when it was struck. There were the various drinks with the meat offerings, but Jesus Christ is the fullness of which these were but the shadows!

Christ says, "My blood is drink indeed," as though utterly *ignoring all other soul drinks*. Some men drink until they are drenched with earthly pleasure. Others drink until they are inflated with their own self-righteousness. The devil has his cups and he knows how to fill them to the brim and make them sparkle and fascinate the eyes. But let men's souls drink of these draughts till they come to the dregs, they shall never be satisfied! And in the world to come their misery shall be greater if they have had any satisfaction here. But oh, if your soul can get to the precious blood of Christ and rest there, and you can rejoice that Jesus died for you, you may drink but you shall never be inebriated! You may drink, but you shall never know satiety! You may drink and you shall have a satisfaction which nothing can destroy, which time or habit cannot cause to pall on your palate and of which eternity shall be but a blessed prolongation! Drink, thirsty soul, drink at the fountain of the Savior's blood and you shall thirst no more, but cry, "I have enough! I have found in Jesus' atoning blood all that my soul can want!" Put these two things together. It appears, according to the text, that—

III. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS BOTH MEAT AND DRINK TOGETHER,

So I would have you notice *the suitability of Jesus Christ to man's needs*. Man needs meat and drink. Jesus is what man needs! You need pardon—you have it in Christ. You need life—eternal life—you have it in Christ! You need peace, comfort, happiness—you have it all in Christ. No key ever fitted a lock as well as Christ fits a sinner. You are empty—Christ is full! You cannot have a need that He cannot supply. There never was and there never will be, a soul that was past the power of Jesus. Oh, what a suitable Savior He is to me! That I can say, for if Jesus Christ had been sent into this world for me, only, He could not have suited me better than He does! And if He had been sent for you, only, poor trembling sinner, He could not have fitted you better than He will! Why, when I think of Jesus, He seems to be all mine, and I am sure I cannot afford to do without a bit of Him. I need Him altogether and He

just exactly fills my soul up to the brim—and you shall find it true, also! He will be your meat and your drink and if you get Him, you will say—

"All my capacious powers could wish,
In You do richly meet.
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half as sweet."

If Jesus Christ is thus meat and drink together, what *fullness* there is in Him! He is not only one thing, and not only the other, but He is both! A man with meat would die, let him have as much as he pleased of it, if there were nothing to drink. A man with drink would die if there were nothing solid for him to eat. Jesus does not give us part salvation, but He gives us all of it! You shall find in Jesus Christ everything that will be needed between hell and heaven. All the way, from the gates of hell to the pearly gates of paradise, every need of every pilgrim is met in Him. Ten thousand time ten thousand as His people are, yet all of them receive all that they need from Him, for, "It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "All fullness"—mark the word. "Fullness" is a big word but "all fullness" is bigger, and all fullness dwells in Him—that is, it is remaining in Him, always fullness and always remaining all fullness—that is the greatest word of all. He is both meat and drink, He is all that we need!

Consider, too, that if Christ is both meat and drink, *what need we have of Him*—because there is no need in the world, I suppose, that is greater than the need of food—of meat and drink. You hear the cry of, "Fire!" in the street and it startles you. But those who have ever heard the cry of, "Bread!" in a bread riot, say that the cry of, "Fire!" is nothing to it. There is something so sharp, so awful, so determined, so ferocious, so like the yell of wild beasts, about men and women that scream for bread, that it is the most awful thing that is ever heard. And, "Drink!" What a word that must be for a number of poor wretches shut up, as they were, in the black hole of Calcutta, raving through those little windows at the guard outside for drink and stretching out their hands and beseeching them to turn their carbines upon them and shoot them, rather than let them die there a lingering death of suffocation and of thirst! How, when a little water was passed in, they fought and struggled for it, if so be a man might but get a drop, or suck a handkerchief that had been dipped into it, and linger on a little longer. Now, nobody can have a greater need than an actual need of bread and water, but that is what you need, my dear friends. You need Christ! Your soul needs this very bread and water. Think not that you are rich and increased in goods if you have not got Christ, for in truth you are naked, and poor, and miserable! If you do not trust Him, love Him, serve Him, your poor soul has not even a drop to drink! What can it do but die? And oh, what must be its wretchedness when your soul shall ask for a drop of water to cool its tongue, tormented in that flame? While others are feasting, you shall have the gnashing of your hungry teeth to be your endless portion. God grant you may not be so cruel to your souls as to starve them by going without Christ.

Yes, and if Christ is meat and drink, *what need there is of a real reception of Him*. If you get meat and drink, you cannot make any use of them unless you eat and drink them. Take meat to a hungry man—hold it out on your finger and ask him, "Don't you feel better?" "No," he says. "Look at it, man; look at it!" "No, I feel hungrier." "But cut it! Here is the knife." "Oh," he says, "what is the use of that? You mock me! I need to get it between my teeth! I need to get it worked into my system, or else it is of no use to me." Hearer, of what service is it to you that you come and listen Sunday after Sunday, some of you, but never decide to trust Christ, and take Him into your soul? Why, you do but hear me, as it were, pour out the water, and you do not drink! You see it sparkle as I speak of it, but you do not receive it. What is the good of it to you? Oh, you will perish some of you—you will perish with the bread within your reach—with the clean brook of eternal life flowing at your feet! Oh, why this folly? It is not so in other things. Men are not satisfied with seeing gold—they want to take it home and put it in their pockets! And how is it that they are content with hearing about Christ—with talking about Christ—but never asking for real faith, and for vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ? See to this, I pray you—and see to it soon—or death will see to you!

Moreover, beloved, if Jesus Christ be both meat and drink—beloved in the Lord, I speak to you now—*what reason there is for giving thanks*! I said, in the reading, that a man is very unmannerly, very beastlike, who sits down to his meat and his drink without thanks. Well, then my soul, whenever you come to feed on Christ—whenever you think on Him—and that should be always, always give thanks! The true spirit of a Christian is perpetual thankfulness. I like the remark of a dear friend who is present now, who, when the November fogs began, said to me on a Sunday morning, "I tell all my family to be more cheerful than ever, now the dreary weather has come, so as to shake off all these things that are around by keeping up cheerfulness within." Now, you are always feeding on Christ, and so every time you feed, you ought to give thanks! Therefore, as you are always feeding on Christ, "rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." They used to call this supper in the ancient Church, as we sometimes do now, "the Eucharist"—the giving of thanks. Well, let the life of the Christian be a constant Eucharist, and as he feeds on Jesus always, let it always be with this tribute of praise, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift."

Yes, and if Jesus Christ is meat and drink, then *here is a reason why you Christians should be very earnest to tell of Him to others—to hand Him out*. Oh, if we had this house full of bread, tonight, and there were a famine all over London—in the East End, the West End, and the North, and the South—and men were dropping down dead in the streets, and they were crowding outside there, out at the Elephant and Castle and down Newington Causeway, I know what I would say if the bread belonged to me—"brothers and sisters, come and help me out of the windows with it! Let them come in at every door! Let them crowd at every window and let them have something to eat!" And if they were thirsty, and we had the mains laid on here, and there was no water to be had

anywhere else, oh, I am sure there is not a little child here that would not be glad to take his little tin can and hand out a draught of water to the thirsty people! Well, you then, with little abilities, who love Christ—tell about Him to others! He is meat and drink to the famished, thirsty ones! If He were merely a dainty, I could not press it, but as He is a very necessity to the dying sons of men, tell them about Him! And if they despise Him, well, then, you have done your part. But if they perish without your telling them of Christ, their blood may lie at your door! Oh, think, while you are going home tonight, walking down the streets, whether there is any house you pass where there is a man living who can charge you with having neglected him! Do not let it be so any longer, but seek that, as Christ's flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed, you may hand out Jesus Christ to the famishing crowds that they may be satisfied! The Lord bless you richly, for His name's sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:41-66.

Verses 41-44. *The Jews then murmured at Him because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me except He who has sent Me, draw him. And I will raise him up at the last day.* Christ never retracted a truth of God or diminished its force because it was rejected, but He rather seemed to say, "You refused this truth. I knew you would. You need not murmur: you are none of Mine. If you had been, the Father would have drawn you. You will not come. So you are set against the truth of God that you cannot see it. So blind are your eyes that you do not behold it. No man can come to Me, except the Father, who has sent Me, draws him."

45. *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* Beware, dear friends, of any learning of Christ except by divine teaching, for what we learn merely from the lips of our fellow men will never be vitally learned or really understood. We must be all taught of God—and so we shall be if, indeed, we are among these whom the Father draws towards Christ. All His teachings draw that way, and when they are taught into the inner man—not so much to the mind as to the soul and heart—then do we know the truth, indeed!

46, 47. *Not that any man has seen the Father save he which is of God, he has seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life.* One of the richest passages surely of all holy Scripture! It is all marrow and fatness, but here you seem to have the quintessence! We have eternal life if we are believers—not *shall* have it, but have it now! We have a life which is eternal. It is idle to talk of our losing it, because it would not be eternal if we did! We have a life within us which can by no possibility ever die, but must live on forever. "He that

believes on Me, though he has many tremblings—though he may be the subject of many infirmities—yet he that believes on Me has everlasting life." O my soul, exult in that glorious truth of God! You have everlasting life as surely as you have faith in Christ!

48. *I am that bread of life.* The food on which that everlasting life lives—living bread for living souls. O brothers and sisters, the dead letter is of no use to us! All the truth in the world, unless it be quickening, cannot feed our quickened natures. It is incarnate truth, even Christ, that we must feed upon! "I am that bread of life."

49, 50 *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.* For that manna of theirs was corruptible. We read that it bred worms and stank, and though it was an angels' food for a time, yet it was but temporary. It only fed a temporary life and, like that life, it passed away. But Jesus Christ is incorruptible, and they that live on Him live on incorruptible food which nourishes the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever!

51, 52. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, argued among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* They misunderstood the Master. They tarried in the letter, and did not reach to the spirit—the meaning—and that letter killed them, for "the letter kills: the spirit gives life." The inward meaning is that on which the soul feeds. And so the unhappy humanist believes that he can literally eat the flesh of Christ, which, if it were true, were monstrous and could be of no service to him! Of what value is one flesh more than another flesh, if it is to be considered carnally? He loses the inner meaning. Blessed are they who are drawn of the Father and taught of the Lord—who spy out what is, after all, so little concealed beneath the thin veil of the metaphor.

53. *Then Jesus said unto them.* What? Do you think He explained it? No, He did not explain to these Jews. They were given up to judicial blindness. They had so long refused to see, that now they must not see, for on them was come the curse that, seeing they should not see, and hearing they should not perceive. Oh, how terrible this is when this falls on a man! And I think I know some upon whom it must have fallen. They have indulged the philosophical vein, always spiritualizing and cutting out the soul of truth, and they are given up to spiritualizing as many of the great German philosophers evidently have been, who cannot now receive a plain statement, however simple are the words, but from their natural habit of continually twisting and tearing to pieces, they do so with everything! And a man may be an unbeliever so long that it will never be given to him to be a believer again! God grant we may never make scales for our own eyes, and so plug up the soul's mental vision with the miry clay of sin, that henceforth, even though the eternal Christ flashes the divine truth into our eyes, we shall only be dazzled by it into a greater darkness! So it was with these men. Jesus did not explain to them. He just repeated the truth more emphatically and made it more

offensive to them than before. May a preacher sometimes be offensive in his preaching? He must be! He must sometimes feel that such a truth will only move men's wrath if he preaches it. Nevertheless, we are not to put the truth of God to the verdict of a jury—neither is truth to be submitted to what is called, the "inner consciousness" of a set of sinners whose consciousness is all defiled! As well make a company of highwaymen a jury about theft as make unconverted men to be a jury about what is the truth of God! It cannot be. Christ does not condescend to that. He tells them the truth more fully and more offensively than before.

53. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood.* Which He had not said before, and was more startling still!

53-57. *You have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me.* You see here three living persons—the living Father, the living Son and the living believer—and truly, these three live one life which comes from the Father by the Son into us, and we are made partakers of the divine nature, according to the apostle's wondrous language, "having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." This is a great mystery which only he understands who feels it within himself.

58-60. *This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying: who can understand it?* It was not merely the blinded Jews, but even His disciples who did not understand. Now, brothers and sisters, the test of a true disciple of Christ is that he is willing to believe what he does not understand! If you will only follow Christ's words as far as you can comprehend them, the spirit of discipleship is not in you. You are the disciple of your own understanding! Christ is not Master, but your judgment is. But he that submits himself to the words of Christ, often finds it profitable not to understand. Say you so? How is that? It is profitable to feel that we have come to the end of our own understanding. I have no doubt that a wise father's talk is good to his children, even though the child does not as yet understand him. He will lay it up in his memory. He will understand, one of these days, but the child—the true child's heart—says, "I believe you, Father, though you do puzzle me. You have given me a paradox which I cannot grasp, but I believe you: you are true." We say that of Christ and may we have even more of that spirit of a little child, without which we cannot receive the kingdom of God! The other spirit is very rife in the world—the spirit that makes man, virtually, his own teacher. And, truly, I wonder not at it because there was originally so much of submission of the judgment to the dictum of the Catholic Church, or the dictum of the

Pope, which is degrading! But to submit to Jesus and to His teaching—that is ennobling! May we have the same sacredly blind faith with regard to Christ which some have had to human authority, believing everything He speaks! But some of these disciples did not.

61-62. *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?* What will you say then?

63. *It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* "You are not to take them as if they were flesh, and understand them carnally. They do but embody My words—do but embody a living soul of meaning, which it will be for you to receive if you are, indeed, quickened. And then it will quicken you, and you will understand Me, and live in Me."

64. *But there are some of you that believe not.* And if they do not believe, then they miss the whole soul of the thing!

64, 65. *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father.* No, not even though he were an apostle—though he came so near to Christ as to pray to Him and hear His secret and most private communications, and to see His singular and special miracles—yet he would not understand, except the Father gave it as a special act of grace.

66. *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.* Did He need them? I think not. He desired not to have around Him a mass of chaff, but the pure winnowed corn. Consequently He used His own word as the winnowing fan. And I believe, brothers and sisters, that wherever Christ is faithfully preached, preaching is the best form of Church discipline. Somehow or other, carnal minds get weary of it, and they go away—and those that have not a longing and a love for the truth of God drop off of themselves—so they walk no more with Him.

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DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON THE EARTH
NO. 3425

A SERMON
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"As the days of heaven upon the earth."
Deuteronomy 11:21.

AS this text was originally written, it referred only to the length of life and the length of endurance which God promised to His obedient Israel. If they walked in His statutes, the kingdom was to abide from generation to generation, without end, "as the days of heaven upon earth." But it seems to me that such a phrase as this ought to mean something more, if it did not, and might be used to express—and must be used to express many of those happy seasons which we have enjoyed when the Lord has manifested Himself to us—and which have been to us "as the days of heaven upon the earth." But is not the expression exaggeration? Is it not too strong? Brothers and sisters, I think not. There were days of heaven upon earth once. Every day upon earth was a day of heaven before our first parent stretched out his hand and broke his Lord's command. When he walked through the garden of Eden, by the side of the rippling Hiddekel, or the streaming Euphrates, which rolled over sands of gold. As he reclined under the shadow of the trees from the heat of the sun, and plucked the generous fruit, God was with him as his companion and manifested Himself to His favorite creature. Those were, indeed, days of heaven upon earth! There was no strife, no sin, no sorrow—everything was happy! It seemed as if this world was but one chamber of God's great house, one of the many mansions in our Father's house, the vestibule of glory, the portal of the skies—the ground floor, if I may say so, of the Master's palace which reached high up beyond the clouds! There *were* days of heaven upon earth—and we know from the sweetest prophecies, as sure as they are sweet, that there *will* be days of heaven upon earth again, and that for a continuance! He who went up to heaven from Olivet will so come, in like manner, as we have seen Him go up into heaven! And when He comes, then will He reign in the midst of His people. And we are in the habit of speaking of that glorious reign with intense delight. No strife shall vex Messiah's reign! There shall be no sorrow, then. They shall hang the useless helmet in the hall and study war no more—halcyon days! A millennial period! Peace like a river! Righteousness like the waves of the sea, for 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! We are looking for the advent of the Lord, praying for it, desiring to be found in a working and waiting posture whenever He

may come! And when He comes, then, to the letter, there shall be a long-continued series of days of heaven upon the earth! But, dear friends, it is of little service to mourn the past, and though it may be of much benefit to expect the future, yet what shall we say about the present? I think the present is not without some happy seasons which may be likened to the days of the text.

My first business at this time will be to mention *some of the days which are fit to be called days of heaven upon the earth.* Then, secondly, I shall *answer the question—why do we not have more of them?* And then, thirdly, I shall try to *show the best ways of getting more of them.* First, then, though man is born to sorrow, yet—

I. WE HAVE MOST HAPPY AND BLESSED PERIODS—DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH. And the first I will mention is *the day in which we first look to Jesus and lose our sins.* Our revival hymnbook sings—

"Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away."

The long time of conviction, the dolorous winter of sorrow made the day of our release the happier and the brighter, just as the oasis is all the greener in contrast with the dry, sandy region over which the traveler has passed. The first day of our conversion, when we know Christ and have peace through Him, is a peculiarly green and happy spot in our life's pilgrimage. We can never forget it. Some of us had a very distinct time and place of conversion. To us the day when we looked to Jesus is as fresh as though it were newly coined from the mint of time. Other days have lost their peculiar image and superscription. We can scarcely recollect any one of our birthdays, perhaps, unless something very remarkable has happened on them. But that day, if we were to live to be as old as Methuselah, we would still remember and count it to be the true day of our birth, the day when we truly began to live—for all before it was but dead! Dear friends, do you remember the excessive joy of that day? It must have been so with all of you—but with some of us the joy was more than we could bear! We were like Simeon, when he saw the Lord and said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace." We made no stipulations with God. We would have been content to rot in a dungeon, or to lie tossing on the sick bed of a hospital, now that we had found Christ! We needed nothing beyond! We could have dared the very gates of hell in that day to stop our joy! Satan, himself, could not have made us cease from singing, so joyous were we. Probably others noticed it and asked why it was—and they learned that the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. Oh, I wish this evening some of you could find the Savior! Some of you, perhaps, did not come here to find Him, but you want Him. You are feeling your sins, perhaps, pressing heavily upon you. Your guilt is like a burden upon your back—I do hope you will look to the cross of Christ, for if you do, the strings will crack that bind your burden to your back and you shall leap for joy to find that you are free! There is life for a look at the crucified One! And with that life there comes such a flood of joy that I would not wonder if you were almost ready,

when you get home, to begin singing in the house even though there might be some there who could not sympathize with your joy! It is one of the days of heaven upon earth when a soul casts its anchor upon Christ and says, "I am at rest, at rest forever!"

It must not be thought, however, that this is the only season, for often—very often—*days of calm and peace* are, to the Christian, like days of heaven upon earth! Have you not often felt a stillness in your souls—cares gone, doubts fled, troubles forgotten—all so peaceful within that you did not seem to have a wish, nor a need and, happy in the Savior's love, you did not care for all the world beside? You have got up in the morning and you have felt so happy—there was no excitement, no exuberance of feeling—but still, such a peaceful happiness that you would not have changed your state with the King upon his throne! You had to go to business and there was a good deal to try you, but you were not vexed. You seemed to put it all aside and to go through the day talking with Christ, your hands busy below, but your heart occupied above—your treasure being in heaven and your heart being there, too—and that continued all day! And, perhaps, at night, at the family altar, they noticed how sweetly you prayed, and, if they did not, you remember what calm there was upon you when you went upstairs and cast yourself upon the bed and slept. And if you awoke during the night, you found that you were still with God! With some of us there have been many such periods—and they have lasted sometimes by the week together! But far oftener they have come and gone very soon, and to many they have been like angels' visits—few and far between—yet have we had enough of them to make us have a foretaste of that happier shore where all is forever peace, where the dove builds her nest and is never disturbed, where not a wave of trouble ever rolls across a sea of everlasting rest, where the angels continually sing the praises of God and there are no groans to mar the melody of their seraphic songs! Yes, those days of quiet peacefulness were as days of heaven upon earth!

And we have got beyond that. Many Christians can remember *days of praise*. Have you not had days in which your souls seemed taken up with singing God's praises? I do not mean that you went into the street or in public, but your soul kept singing—you had got the prayer answered—

"Oh, may my soul in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound!"

You wanted to tell everybody about what your God had done for you! And when you had an opportunity, you told of the goodness of the Lord and bade people to, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." You went to see the sick, and if they murmured, you put aside their murmuring, for you, yourself, felt so happy that you could scarcely sympathize with a murmuring spirit! And when you went up to the assembly of God's house and they sang some of their joyous songs, when, like a peal of thunder, their notes of praise went up and made the walls ring again, oh, how blessed were you! Why, I say it without exaggeration, I have sometimes, in this house, when we have been singing some of God's praises, felt as

though it could not be much better to be in heaven than it was to be in the midst of God's people singing with all their hearts His praises! We have sometimes run up the gamut until we reached the top of the scale and seemed to have almost got to the top of Jacob's ladder—and almost ready to step into heaven! Blessed days of praise! We can never forget you, for you have been "as the days of heaven upon the earth." Days of finding Christ, days of peace, days of praise are "as the days of heaven upon the earth."

Among the choicest seasons in a Christian's life, however, are those in which he finds himself *honored of God in the conversion of souls*. Those are days of heaven upon earth! I would like to know, but I suppose it is impossible to find out—I would like to know how many of us here, who are Christians, are also spiritual parents. I am afraid if there was a count, there would not be found many diligent ones among us—and that is not to our credit. Every Christian should make it to be one of the grand aims of his life, if not the grandest, to bring others to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ! Now, as some of you may never have tried this, I would like to encourage you by offering you the sweet reward which God gives to those who labor for Him. Ah, my dear friend, the city missionary, you need not tell me of all your toils among the poor, the ragged and the filthy—true every word—but there is one thing I would like you to tell me. When you have met with a poor sinner who has been plucked by you from the depths of degradation and you have seen the tears of gratitude glistening in the eyes of a convert, have not you felt that it has made up for it all? You are no true missionary if you cannot say that! And do not tell me, my dear brother minister, of all the toils of preaching to a people who seem weary of hearing—and of endeavoring to convince those of the truth of God who do not care to listen to it—we know all about that! But let me ask you, when you have heard that a penitent has come to Christ and it has been said, "Behold he prays!" have not you felt that you have been rewarded for ten times more toil and trouble than you have ever put forth? If one could be cut in pieces and every piece could be hanged or flayed alive, it were worthwhile to suffer all that for the bringing of one soul to Christ—because if Jesus Christ thought it worth His while to suffer unutterable pains to redeem a soul—it would be worth the while of any one of Christ's people to suffer the same—if that were the way to bring sinners to Him! Let me tell you that there is no joy like it! When you can hear a penitent say, "Blessed be God, I was once far from Him by wicked works, but I listened to the truth of God as you proclaimed it. I heard your prayer in the class and it touched my heart—it broke me down and afterwards it led me out of darkness into Christ's marvelous light—and blessed be God, I am saved!" Oh, there is no joy like it, and he that has many souls thus given to him for his hire must enjoy many of the days of heaven upon earth!

Again, I believe there is many a family where this same joy has been felt—not by those who were the immediate instruments of conversion, but by those who have long prayed for the conversion of such. Your good

mother, now, John, if you were to go home tonight a saved soul, would be made unspeakably happy! The dear old soul has been praying for you these many years. She wept over you when you were in your cradle. She has often prayed for you when you have been cursing and swearing—and has she, sometimes, fears that she will go to her grave and never see her child brought in? But if she were to hear that you were saved, there would be a day of heaven upon earth in that family! How many households are there where the conversion of the husband has turned a little hell into a little heaven? You know how children are afraid of the father—how they run upstairs to get to bed because the father comes home the worse for drink—and how the poor mother suffers. There may be a little furniture, but she knows at any moment it may go off to the pawnbrokers to be converted into money to get more of the accursed liquor! And she lives in perpetual bondage and fear! But one night he comes home very thoughtful—where has he been? Oh, he has been to such-and-such a place of worship! Do you know the woman cannot sleep that night for hope? She is in hopes that there may be a change come over him—and when she sees him washing himself the next morning, and she hears that he is going back to the same place—how her heart beats with joy and hope and how heartily does she pray that her husband may become a changed character! And when he comes home and sits down, and the tears begin to flow, and he says, "Wife, we never prayed together. You know that I could never bear the thoughts of your praying. But it is all changed, now—get the Bible and let us see if we cannot pray together tonight." That is one of the days of heaven upon earth! There is joy to the mother who finds her son saved, joy to the wife who sees her husband converted—and it is equal joy to the husband when he gets his wife converted! There are some husbands who have sore trouble with ungodly wives. And they have prayed often and I hope they will not grow cast-down and leave off praying. The Lord who blessed them can bless their wives! Wait, never give in, never give up praying, as long as they have breath in their bodies, as long as they are on praying ground, pray for them and they may be converted! Then there will be joy, unspeakable joy and full of glory even on earth, when such an one is brought to know the Lord! These are, indeed, days of heaven upon earth!

I think the Church has sometimes had them. Some of you do not know much about it—you do not work for Christ, you do not pray for souls—you do not feel for souls. But I could pick out in this assembly, if it were right, some who know a great deal about it because the Lord has given them a yearning heart and a tender soul so that they weep for others' sorrows and repent of others' sins. These are the persons that know, in deed and in truth, that there are days of heaven upon earth! They travail and, therefore, they know the joy of her who forgets her travail because a man-child is born into the world!

But I must hasten on. There are other days. Dear friends, a communion with loving, *Christian brother and sisters* often brings days of

heaven upon earth. I know some churches where there seem to be as many sects in the church as there are male members—where there is no love, no unity, no affection, no contention for the faith—but much contention for power and position! Now they never have days of heaven upon earth. But where Christians love each other, there is the dew of heaven! Some Christians greatly envy you, your privileges, and in belonging to a united church. Scores of times, when I have received members who have been united before with churches split up and divided, they have said—

"Here would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come!
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

And I know there are many of you who have found a settled rest here and you have found, in communion with God's people that you are made to lie down in green pastures and go beside the still waters. Lonely Christians lose much comfort and I think those Christians who are always going abroad for company lose more. But those who have a select few whom they love, and with whom they associate, and with whom they can enjoy holy communion, will find many such days. I must confess that I have often been loath to go to bed when I have had a few beloved friends to talk about better things—and I am afraid if we had had our way and had not had to go to work the next morning, we would have let the clock get into the small hours, for so sweet was the company and the talk, we did not like to part! When Jesus Christ is the theme, there is no fear of weariness! And when those who know Him speak about Him, there is such freshness in their speech that one likes to let them go on without stopping them at all. Christian fellowship, how sweet! And if you get into a Christian family and live in it, how happy and pleasant it is! Some families have a morose father who seems to think there is no one in the world to be cared for except himself—and he domineers and is a tyrant. Others have a touchy, crotchety, quick-tempered mother and very little can go right with them long together. Others have a negligent woman, perhaps untidy, who does not attend to the house, but is a gossip. Now, to live in such houses as those is a misery, but if you get into some houses such as I have known, where the father endeavors, while he rules the house, to do it with love, where the mother is the very pattern of her sex, where the children are obedient and yet happy and free—where the servants feel an interest in the master's affairs, because the master feels an interest in theirs—it is like a little heaven upon earth! It is a blessed thing to drop into such a house, for you feel there, indeed, they have days of heaven upon earth! When you young people marry, I hope you will set up just such houses and that it will be your desire to make your homes such that people may like to live in them. I would have your houses like that of Sir Thomas Abney, where Dr. Watts went to stay a few days—and stayed 26 years! It was too good a house to leave! Let your houses be such that when good men come, they will feel, "Here is

the place where we can find rest." May you have many days of heaven upon earth in such a way!

Now, to pass on, surely the highest of all will be found in a *close communion with Christ*. There is a nearness of approach to Christ of which to speak in the carnal ear would be to cast pearls before swine. There is a secret and mysterious conversation carried on between earth and heaven of which Solomon sang in mystic numbers in the Canticles—and which saints have enjoyed, but which no tongue can adequately express—a peace which is not only like heaven, but *is h*eaven! It is a piece of heaven cast down to us here! It is not a grape from some wilderness vine, but a cluster from the vine of Eshcol and Eshcol was in Canaan, itself. The Lord gives earnests of His love, pledges of joys to come, so that even here we have, in communion with Christ, days of heaven upon earth! But I must not prolong the catalog, for time fails me. I think I have said enough to make some feel that the Christian's life is a happy one—let me add my testimony that it is! Let me add, not mine, but the testimony even of many a Negro slave in the days of slavery, who could say that, notwithstanding all suffering and all penury and every ill, a Christian's life was a happy one, after all. Now, the second point was to be an enquiry, if there are so many days of heaven upon earth—

II. WHY DO WE NOT HAVE MORE OF THEM?

I think there are many reasons. *Some people think it wicked to be happy*. You smile, but I know some Christians who even seem to think that it is a sign of growth in grace when you grow to be blessedly miserable! They imagine that for anything like joy to be in a Christian is incompatible with sincerity. We have not so learned Christ! We know that through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom of God, but we have learned that as tribulation abounds, so consolation abounds through Jesus Christ. Let your face lack no oil and your head no ointment—go your way and live happily and joyfully—for if God has accepted you, there is no flesh living that has such a right to be joyous! Accepted in the beloved! Cleansed from sin! Clothed with the righteousness of Christ! Safe for heaven! Why should you not be happy? Go to the weeping willows, take down your harps and begin to strike them to melodious tunes. You ought to be happy, you people of the living God! Let the righteous be glad. Yes, let them shout for joy! Some Christians, perhaps, do not think it is wrong to be happy, but they will not be. Almost as a matter of principle, they will not be happy. You cannot please them. They are thorough Englishmen—they exercise the blessed prerogative of grumbling. No matter what it is, they can always see something or other to find fault with in it. If they have much, it might be more. If they have little, they are harshly treated. The blessings of the upper springs cannot content them unless the nether springs flow in as freely. And the mercies that come from heaven will not please them unless they can have their share of the mercies of earth. Oh, dear friends, pray the Lord to give you a new heart and a right spirit! I cannot make out what such a body as

you will do in heaven. Ask your Master to take away your grumpy spirit so that you may be able to see reasons for joy, for there are many of them! Charnock says, "He who observes providence will never be without providence to observe," and we can say, he who is willing to be made happy may never be without something to make him happy, if he chooses to look for it.

There are some of us who do not have as many days of heaven upon earth because *we could hardly bear them*. Joy has sometimes danger with it. There are, among the flowers, poisonous asps. The Christian has need, when his cup is full, to carry it with a steady hand. Too much spiritual joy might even be too much for the physical frame, like the old Scotch divine who called out, "Hold, Lord! Hold, Lord! It is enough! Remember I am but an earthen vessel. Give me no more joy, lest I die of excess of it!" Yes, there might be spiritual maladies, if not bodily ones—we might grow proud, self-conceited and lifted up. If we have much sail, we need much ballast and, perhaps, the furnace is as good a place for us as any place on earth until we get to heaven. If we had so many of these days of heaven upon earth, we might never long to go to heaven at all, we might say, "This is a place happy enough for us!" But the Lord will not let us do so. He will make the wilderness to be a wilderness, still, that we may be willing to go on to Canaan. He would not have the sailor so content with the vessel as not to desire the port—and so He sends us rough days and stiff breezes that we may be disturbed and long for our desired haven. There is one thing more—if we had so many of these days and no troubles, *we would not be like Christ*—we would lack one point of conformity to Him, for He was "a man of sorrows." We are to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings—and if our path were always smooth and our sky always bright—we might not know as well as we now know what the sufferings of Jesus Christ meant. We might be losers in heaven if we were not sufferers here, for I suppose it will be a part of the joy in heaven to remember the sorrow through which we came, to recollect the difficulties which we overcame and if we have not sorrows or difficulties, we shall not have so sweet a song. Rest is all the sweeter to the laboring man, and so shall the rest of heaven be all the better because of the days of grief and sorrow which we had on earth. But now, lastly—

III. WHAT CAN WE DO TO GET MORE OF THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH?

Well, we cannot build a city with streets of gold. We cannot find chrysolites and pearls with which to build a Jerusalem the golden! We must take the place as we find it. And this world of ours, though a very fair earth, is not all we should like it to be—but we cannot alter it. It is very much like a convict settlement, a prison house to Christians. This is not our rest and, as we look abroad upon it, we feel it is not a proper place for the spirit to dwell in. It needs a better land in which to develop itself. But how, then, are we to get heaven upon earth? I think there are three things we can do. The first is, we can get it, if we cannot alter the

place, *by being more like the spirits in heaven*. They are happy in heaven, not only because it is heaven, but because they are heavenly! They could not be otherwise than happy. If those blessed spirits were on earth, so perfectly pure as they are, they would be perfectly happy. It is not, I say, so much the place that makes their heaven, as their state of mind. They are completely conformed to the will of God. They delight themselves intensely in the Most High. They have been freed from their earthly grossness and they are now like the pure gold that has passed through the furnace. Let us pray for holiness and we shall get happiness! Let us ask to be heavenly-minded and we shall get heaven! There is no fear about our joy if we can get holiness. Very much in proportion as we shall become fit for heaven shall we have days of heaven upon earth!

And then a second thing we can do. If we cannot get the place, *we can get the objective that makes the place such a place as it is*—that is to say, if we cannot get heaven, we can get days of heaven upon earth by getting Christ, for it is Christ who makes heaven, as the sun makes the day! Christ is the flower in that garden that makes all the rest sweet! Christ is heaven's crown and glory, it's brightest jewel and diadem—and he that gets his heart set upon Christ gets the better part of heaven! At any rate, he can do without the angels and without the harps of gold for a time. When he gets Christ in his heart, the hope of glory—when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit—and he can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His," he has got the major part of heaven and may have days of heaven upon earth!

There is a third thing that we can do to get heaven, and that is to follow the occupation of those who are in heaven. A man's joy or sorrow comes very much from what he has to do. In heaven they are always serving and praising. If we get the same work to do, if we enter into the same happy choir and sing praises to our heavenly King, and try to serve Him without weariness, why, then, we shall get, again, the better part of heaven by getting the occupation of it! Holy men with Christ in their hearts, and with Christ's work in their hands, spend many days of heaven upon earth! We did not find Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Wesley very often troubled with doubts and fears—and I believe the reason was because their tenor of life was on high, their communion with Jesus was very close and, above all, because they were so hard at work for their Master that they had not time to sit down and begin raking in the mire of doubts and fears! May we be just such men as they were—and we shall have days of heaven upon earth!

Now, alas, alas, alas, there are many to whom I am now speaking who will have no days of heaven upon earth, but they will have their poor unsatisfactory days to drag their weary length along and then, at last, will come the days of death. Ah, then, there are some that have had days of hell upon earth—some who have made the nurse declare that they would never nurse such a man, again, for all the world—some who have made their very parents start from their bedside to hear their cries as

they lay there suffering from the rod of Almighty wrath! Take care, take care that such is not your end! And if you would escape from it, remember the door of heaven is Christ! The door is wide open! Only come to it, trust Christ, and you shall have days of heaven upon earth, and afterwards heaven, itself, shall be your portion! God grant that it shall be so for His name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-23.

Verses 1, 2. *Now these are the commandments, the statues, and the judgments which the LORD, your God, commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it. That you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged.* Obedience to God should arise from the fear of Him, or from a holy awe of God felt in the heart—for all true religion must be heart work. It is not the bare action, alone, at which God looks, but at the motive—at the spirit which dictates it, hence it is always put, "That you might fear the Lord, your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments." Neither are we to be content with keeping commands ourselves. It is the duty of parents to seek the good of their children—to seek that the son and the son's son should walk in the ways of God all their lives. May God grant us never to be partakers of the spirit of those who think that they have no need to look after the religion of their children—who seem as if they left it to a blind fate. May we care for them with this care that our son and our son's son should walk before the Lord all the days of their life!

3. *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you and that you may increase mightily, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey.* It seems, according to the old covenant, that temporal prosperity was appended as a blessing to the keeping of God's commandments. It has been sometimes said that while prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant, adversity is the blessing of the new. There is some truth in that statement, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and yet is it true that the best thing for a man is that he should walk in the commands of God. There is a sense in which we do make the best of both worlds when we seek the love of God. When we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, other things are added to us so that it is not without meaning to us that the Lord here promises temporal blessings to His people.

4. *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.* This is the great doctrine that we learn, both from the Old and the New Testament—there is one Lord. And this great truth of God has been burnt into the Jews by their long chastisement and, whatever other mistakes they make, you never find them making a mistake about this! The Lord your God is one

Lord. May we always be kept from all idolatry—from all worship of anything except the living God. The sacred unity of the divine trinity may we evermore hold fast.

5. *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.* It is not a little love that God deserves, nor is it a little love that He will accept. He blesses us with all His heart and all His might—and after that fashion are we to love Him.

6, 7. *And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.* The Word of God is not for some particular place called a church or a meeting house. It is for all places, all times and all occupations. I wish that we had more of this talking over of God's Word when we sit by the way, or when we walk.

8. *And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* With you in all your actions—with you in all your thoughts—conspicuously with you—not out of ostentation, but through your obedience to become apparent unto all men.

9-12 *And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates. And it shall be, when the LORD your God shall have brought you into the land which He swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities which you built not. And the houses full of all good things which you filled not, and wells dug which you dug not, vineyards and olive trees which you planted not, when you shall have eaten and are full, then beware lest you forget the LORD, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* Pride is the peculiar sin of prosperity—and pride stands side by side with forgetfulness of God. Instead of remembering from where our mercies came, we begin to thank ourselves for these blessings—and God is forgotten. I remember one of whom it was said that he was a self-made man and he adored his creator. And I may say that there are a great many persons who do just that! They believe that they have made themselves and so they worship themselves! Be it ours to remember that it is God who gives us strength to get wealth or to get position and, therefore, unto Him be all the honor of it, and never let Him be forgotten.

13-15. *You shall fear the LORD your God, and serve Him, and shall swear by His name. You shall not go after other gods or the gods of the people which are round about you: (For the LORD your God is a jealous God among you).* He will have the heart all to Himself. Two gods He cannot endure. Of false gods, there may be many—of the true God there can be but One—and He is a jealous God.

15-19. *Lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and destroy you from off the face of the earth. You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do that which is*

right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken. Now, this covenant of works they break, as we also have long ago broken ours. Blessed be God, our salvation now hangs on another covenant which cannot fail nor break down—the covenant of grace! Yet, still, now that we have become the Lord's children, we are put under the discipline of the Lord's house, and these words might not set forth what is the discipline of the Lord's house towards His own children, namely, that He does bless us when we walk in His ways, and that He will walk contrary to us if we walk contrary to Him. He keeps a rod in His house, and in very love He uses that upon His best beloved ones. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities." He will not kill His children, nor treat them as a judge treats a criminal, for they are not under the law, but under grace. But He will chasten them and treat them as a father chastens his child—out of love. Oh, that we might have grace to walk before Him with a holy, childlike fear, so that we may always walk in the light of His countenance!

20-23. *And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statues, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the LORD showed signs and wonders great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household before our eyes. And He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers.* And cannot we tell our children what God has done for us—how He brought us out of our spiritual captivity, and how in His almighty love He has brought us into His Church and will surely bring us into the glory above? May God grant us Grace to speak about these things without diffidence, but with great confidence to tell our children of what He has done.

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A SORE GRIEVANCE
NO. 3426

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They have forgotten their resting place."
Jeremiah 50:6.

THE people of Israel had been so hunted about that they forgot the place where once they rested. The same remark may be made of some congregations. There are Christian people who have the great misfortune of an unchristly pastor. The preaching is eloquent—they are constantly exhorted to do one thing and another. It may be the preaching is intellectual—they are encouraged to speculate upon this and that doctrine, or it may happen that the preaching is rhetorical, the people are covered with flowers—the preacher seems to be constantly scattering from himself a display of fireworks, an explosion of dazzling words! But there is no manifestation of Christ—no opening up of the completeness of the atoning sacrifice—no uplifting of Jesus in His love to His people, in His union with them, in the covenant which He has made on their behalf. Oftentimes have we met with good people who fretted because the ministry failed to supply for their souls. They could have done without the eloquence. They would have been happy without the new theories, however intellectual. They could have survived if there had been less exhortation—what they wanted was a little food to strengthen them, a little repose to invigorate them, a little faith to encourage them in resting upon the finished work of Jesus Christ! Oh, what an account will *they* have to give who, instead of being shepherds of God's sending to feed His flock with discretion and make them lie down in green pastures, come to them as legal taskmasters wielding the rod, but never using the pastoral staff to guide the flocks by still waters! However, I fear there are some who, though no less worried, nevertheless forget their resting place. Let us talk familiarly with one another on this theme.

What is our resting place, beloved? We have only one answer, I am sure—"We who have believed have entered into rest," but our rest is in Jesus Christ, Himself. We believed on Him, He took away our burden and we found rest. We bowed our neck to His yoke, became His disciples and we found yet fuller rest unto our souls. Not a particle of rest do we get from ourselves, neither does the world contribute to it, for, "in the world you shall have tribulation." All our rest is found in Him, for He is our peace, who has said, "It is finished," and in that finished work we confidently repose. It is possible for us to forget, however, to enjoy the rest which faith has made it our privilege to possess. And if we do, it is not only a loss to our comfort, but it is a very serious loss to us in all respects. If sheep, under the charge of any, should lose their rest, besides the cruelty to the creatures and the suffering it would involve

them, it would be a serious loss to their owner. A sheep does, after it has been fed, lie down—it must naturally chew the cud. The food it has gathered, it must digest in peace, or else it cannot grow fat. It cannot, in fact, be in health at all. Fancy a field of sheep in which some worrying dog constantly amused himself by hunting them from end to end! They would become lean and valueless. They would ultimately die. We must have rest! It is important, therefore, not partly and in measure, but to the uttermost degree, that when Christ has become our rest, we should continue to enjoy Him and to rest in Him! The sense of such need urges me, at this time, to endeavor to lead you, as God shall help me, to Christ Jesus our rest, by reminding you of some who forget their resting place. If it should happen to come home to your own souls, may you have grace to escape from the calamity which the text describes!

Three things—here is the first—*a sin of which to be convinced;* secondly, *the cause of it to be sought out;* and thirdly, *the cure of it to be brought about*. "They have forgotten their resting place."

I. THIS IS TO BE ACCOUNTED A SIN FOR MANY REASONS.

Let us recollect how dearly *our resting place was purchased for us*. To give your soul rest, my brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ gave up His rest and more—His heaven, His throne, His honor, His life. No rest could there ever have been for you, a wandering sheep, if the Shepherd had not given up Himself as a ransom for the flock. Did it cost Him Gethsemane's bloody sweat? Did it cost Him Calvary's wounds and death? And did you receive it and yet forget it? Have not you often thought that whatever else might have passed away from your mind, never could the thought of that dying love depart? Yet it has faded on the tablet of your heat, for you have forgotten the priceless gift which that dying love has procured for you! Oh, chide yourself, that Immanuel's purchase should be lightly esteemed, that He, your rest, should ever slip away from your thoughts!

Remember, too, *how graciously that rest was given to you*. My own remembrances may help yours. I remember well—and did I live to twice the age of Methuselah—I could never forget the time of my wearisome bondage under the law and under the slavery of sin! Oh, what I would have given, then, to have had rest, to have had my sins pardoned. I dare to say, I think a thousand deaths would have been cheaply endured by me if I might have escaped the wrath to come! My burdened soul chose strangling rather than life because my life had become weariness and even like unto wormwood and gall had the cup of life been embittered. But as in a moment, rest came to my soul by a glance at that crucified Savior! An act of simple faith exercised upon Christ's atonement brought me perfect rest! And shall I forget my resting place? I am sure if some prophetic spirit of the future could have whispered in my ear at the time of my conversion, "You will forget your resting place," I would quickly have answered, with Hazael, to the prophet, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" And I might have said, "Is your servant a devil that he should ever think of doing such a thing?" "Love so amazing, so divine"—shall this be cast behind my back? A gift so precious, brought to me when I deserved it not and just when I most required it—shall it ever be lightly esteemed or carelessly neglected? Oh, memory, let fall what

you may, but retain as with an iron grasp, the recollection of that blessed day in which my soul found her resting place!

Beloved, there are other reasons to make this forgetfulness of ours greatly sinful. *Remember how sweetly we have enjoyed that rest since then*! It was not one day a honeymoon and then ever afterwards Christ and our souls, strangers—oh, no, I speak to some of you who have had many high days and holidays since the time of your conversion! You have feasted upon dying love! That banqueting house of Solomon's Song is a place well known to you—the banner of love that waved over the spouse of old—its silken folds have also waved over you! 'Twas but the other night when some of us were together in prayer and communion with Christ, and we could not help singing—

"My willing soul would stay,
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss."

Could we have such enjoyments and yet forget them? Such rest in the resting place and yet make light of it? Such peace of God that passes all understanding, and still be listless about it? Wretch that I am to wander thus in search of vain delights, to leave the flowing fountain for the broken cisterns, which, if they had been whole, had been but stagnant reservoirs, unworthy to be compared to the clear living stream that bursts from the fountain of fellowship with Christ! Let every sweet season of past spiritual enjoyment gently rebuke you, beloved, if you do at all forget your resting place!

Further, does it not seem strange and marvelous that any of us should forget our resting place when *we so greatly need it*? Oh, I think I speak for the most of you when I say it is a weary world after all the mercy that God has made to pass before us—it is a weary, weary world! Solomon, with all his wealth, with all the accessories of pleasure, with all the tastes to enjoy them, deliberately said, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." And I am sure it is easy amidst pains and toils, blunders and disappointments, for many of us to utter the same lament. When afflicted in body, distressed with severe labor, or reduced to poverty, we might as well try to find rest on the sea, or on a bed of thorns, or on a bed of flames, as find rest in the things of this world! What weariness of the flesh, what vexation of spirit we endure! Oh, then, why is it we forget our resting place? Men, jaded and faint with the drudgery of labor are glad to throw themselves upon the bed and fall asleep, and you that have much toil and travail under the sun, will you forget that couch that Christ has brought you, upon which your spirits may take delicious repose? With such need for rest, and such a rest so sweetly proven to be restful in the past, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, and 'tis amazing that we should ever forget our resting place!

Since *our resting place is so suitable to us*, it becomes the more strange that we should forget it. Suitable for a sinner is a finished salvation. Suitable for a warrior is the great shield that covers his head in the day of battle. Suitable for a fugitive is that castle and high tower of our defense which is found in Christ, the Lord's anointed! "The coney goes to

her place in the rocks and the stork has her nest among the fir trees." Oh, you children of God, you have a resting place suitable to your nature—how is it you can forget it? Touch upon the things of nature, how they chide you! Bring to your remembrance the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, the dumb driven cattle accustomed to the yoke, and let them chide you, for they forget not their resting place! Carried away to the city the other day, the dove was taken from its cage, and they let it loose, fastening to it a message. It mounted aloft, it whirled round a while that it might see where it was. It was far, far away from the dovecot—it was found hundreds of miles away, but where did it fly? Swift as an arrow from the bow, it sought its resting place with infallibility of affection! It found its nearest way to the cot where it had been reared and brought its message safely there. Will you let the pigeon outstrip you in affection for your resting place? Look at the swift-winged dove and be ashamed! And even the dog, which you despise, taken away from its master, carried many miles away, in darkness, too, so that it might not know its way, has been known to swim rivers, cross by-ways it could not have known, and there it is found barking for admission at its master's door—oh, so happy when it heard its master's voice again! It could not rest elsewhere. Oh, my heart, are you more doggish than a dog? Do you forget your Lord when dogs remember well their masters? Let us learn even from these creatures, I say, and henceforth let us not forget our resting place. As all ingratitude is base, this sin cannot be light or venial. Now, let us ask—

II. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE FORGETFULNESS which we sometimes have of Jesus Christ—our heart's dear rest?

How frequently it arises from *neglect of thought*, a culpable remissness! So busy, up in the morning and at it—the whirl, the noise and clatter of business in the ears—always in the ears, every nerve on the strain, right on till one falls asleep through sheer exhaustion! Oh, our times are hard for deep piety! They are hard and trying times for souls that would walk near to Christ. I know more grace can match the evil of the times, but still, our Puritan forefathers with their quiet lives, calm and undistracted, with the time they could have for studying the Word of God, and for private prayer—no wonder they outstripped us! I am afraid some Christians neglect the reading of the Word of God—almost as a rule forget it! You don't get your daily text. You don't get your meditation. Ah, souls, if a thing never comes across the mind, it is not remarkable that you should forget it! If any of you are going on a journey, you don't forget your wives! No, they come often across your thoughts. You may forget some stranger whom you saw but once—you may never think of him again. Were the mind more occupied with Christ, there would be less likelihood of our forgetting Him! You know, when the photographer takes a picture, if he does it rapidly, it may be that, by-and-by, it will fade. If they want to take a picture that shall be definite, fixed and permanent, they let the sensitive plate continue long exposed to the view, that there may be a good, thoroughly well-fixed impression. I would that my soul had many opportunities of being like a sensitive plate fixed right in front of Jesus to take His portrait thoroughly—to have it so upon my soul that

it could never fade away! Oh, to have much more communion with Christ, to contemplate Him with a steady gaze and undistracted attention is the way to overcome our present forgetfulness! This is a flimsy age—a superficial age. It has its waves of religious excitement, but they are all on the surface. We have not many of those great ground-swell waves where the ocean of manhood seems to heave up from the very bottom. These are the waves that work wonders for men and glorify God. May we have many such in our own souls!

Another reason why we forget our Savior is *our tendency to self-sufficiency*. A poor man who has nothing of his own and who lives day-by-day a pensioner upon some rich man's bounty, cannot forget the man who helps him! But if he should forget him this morning, he will be sure to remember him tomorrow morning when he needs bread! And he who receives his money weekly, might forget his friend on the Tuesday, but he will remember him again on the Saturday, when he must go to him again! If we were always sensible as we should be of our absolute dependence on Christ for everything, and going to Him for all, there would be no fear of our memories failing us! But we very soon set up a little independency of our own—poor worms as we are—as a brother said in prayer the other night, "Dust heaps!" That is all we are, the very best of us—poor "dust heaps." We imagine we are kingdoms and we talk such great things, and think such big things about our experience and our wisdom! Oh, away with it all! We might well not see the sun when we eclipse him with our self-sufficiency! You poor beggarly worm, naked, poor, and miserable, I counsel you to buy of Christ, gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich! And white raiment that you may be clothed! And go to Him again, leaving your self-sufficiency behind you!

With others it is worldliness that keeps them from remembering their dear Savior. They forget their resting place because they are so worldly, grasping after so much. Enough is not enough to them—they must have more. The early rising and the sitting up late are right enough for industry, but wrong enough for avarice—these are the things that keep the soul from Christ—the getting money rightly if you can, but, anyway, the getting of money. A man cannot live for money and yet abide in Christ! When the heart gets the world into it, it eats as does a canker. If you will have the world, you shall have it—but you shall not have Christ! Oh, can you make an exchange of Christ for such poor stuff, for such heavy clay? Keep the entire world outside your heart! If you keep all the sea outside the ship, it cannot sink. Is the world inside your heart—a little water there will prove a leak that will sink your vessel—beware of worldliness! Those of you can be worldly that are poor, as well as those that are rich. You may have cares that worry and devour—and keep you from your Savior. Strive against these! Be not cankered with this canker! Love not the world, or you cannot walk with Jesus! Lay your cares on Him who cares for you—and you will come back to your resting place!

I fear that some Christians forget their resting place *through idolatry*. "Idolatry?" you ask, "We are not idolaters! We are not, even as the Romanists are, who will worship their crucifixes or their relics." No

idolatry? Was not that idolatry this afternoon with that boy of yours? Ah, what a boy! Your heart all but adores him and if he were taken from you, you would feel you could not forgive God! No idolatry? The other day, when you looked upon your fair estate and all the comforts of life with which God had surrounded you, did not you feel your heart go after these things? No idolatry? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," was once an exhortation of John, and it is also my exhortation to you this evening. We so soon make idols. I am afraid if an idol breaking were to take place tonight, many of you would go home broken-hearted! Or if your idols are at home, you would go home to see them broken, and yourself be ready to despair. There is much idolatry—and if you love son or daughter more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him! If you love husband or wife more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him. Oh, be it so, that they take low seats and Christ sits on the throne! Go down, beloved, go down! I love you there as I may and should, but come up, my Savior; take the highest place, for there You must sit King of kings and Lord of lords!

Once more, I think some genuine Christians forget their resting place for a while *through despondency of spirit*. It is sometimes hard to remember our sweet rest in Jesus when we get oppressed. I can speak very feelingly here. There are some of us that carry about with us a constitution which elevates us, at times, up to the very heavens of delight—and sinks us down at other periods very, very low. Those who have high tides must expect to have very dry ebbs. If you mount high, you sometimes will fall low and then, when the liver won't act, when the spirits won't move, when the whole heart hangs its harp upon the willows, it is difficult, then, to come and rest in Jesus. And some feel grinding trouble, or a perpetual affliction of body, till at last they get into a chronic state of sadness. Dear brother, dear sister, before you get there, make a rally, if you can, to get away from it! It is to be escaped from. After all, Christ died for sinners such as you are. Hang on Him! Cling to Him! Come and wash again in the fountain which is filled with His blood! He loves you! He gives Himself for you! He can never forget you, or cast you away! Come and rejoice in Him, yet again, and lift up your heart once more by simple, confident faith in Him, for, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Don't let Satan triumph! Don't let the world laugh because a Christian is in despair! "Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Be gone, you fears! Let the winds take them away. "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. His mercy is not clean gone forever. He will be mindful of His covenant. He will not cast away His people whom He did foreknow."

These are the things that will sometimes bring us into the dilemma of forgetting our resting place. And now to close—

III. WHAT IS THE CURE FOR IT ALL?

I do not know what Charles the First meant when he gave his watch to Bishop Judson and said, "Remember." I do not care what he meant. But let the same be my word to you tonight, "Remember! Remember!" That is

the cure for this distemper of the mind, this dereliction of the heart. "Remember what?" you ask. *Remember first the past—*

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

Remember the days of old, the everlasting covenant. Remember the sealing of the covenant with blood upon the accursed tree. Remember the day of your sin, and the day of salvation—your sore bondage and your great deliverance when He brought you out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm—remember this and you will no more forget your resting place!

Remember again the future. You ask, "Can we remember that which has not happened yet?" Let your faith substantiate the promise and see it as though fulfilled, and remember it tonight. You will, before long, be where Jesus is. Your soul, white-robed, shall appear before Him, and your poor body—vile body as it is—shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and you shall shine with the mighty host who day without night magnify the name of Him that is, and was, and is to come! Remember this, and you shall not forget your resting place. "All this comes to you through Him. He has procured it for you and is preparing it for you at this hour."

Remember, also, something about the present. What is there that you have, tonight, of all your possessions that can afford you rest? Have the roots of your spirit begun to twist about the earth? Pray to have them unbound, for, otherwise a painful time will come to you. What have you that you could rest upon in the time of death? A Roman Catholic once said that the doctrine of justification by faith was a blessed *supper* doctrine—would do to end the day with! But he thought it was a bad *breakfast* doctrine to begin the day with. At least there is truth in the first observation—it is a blessed supper doctrine and Christ makes a blessed supper for us in life's end. There is no supper in life's end—no supper that the soul can eat—but Jesus Christ, who shall give her satisfaction and contentment as she goes forth on her long journey! Well, as you have nothing that can satisfy you in dying, why do you try to satisfy yourself with it now? Have you been making an idol? Have you? Let it go! Forget not your resting place, I pray you. Look at your friend's house and read, "mortal" written there! Look in your child's face and know that before long your last act of kindness for that child will be to find a narrow home in the silent grave. What? Are you immortal and seeking to live upon mortal food? You, eternal as God's life, and yet seeking to satisfy yourself with the worm's meat that springs out of earth, and goes back again to it! Shame on you! When Christ gives you rest, and is All-in-All to you, turn not away from the everything to try and fill yourself with the nothing!

Lastly remember, and this last remembrance will be a blessed cure—*remember Christ Himself*. For this purpose come to His table. Though you have, for a while, forgotten your resting place, He says, "This do you in remembrance of Me." Come and remember Him again—

"Gethsemane can I forget?
Or there Your conflict see?
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee?
When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice,
I must, I must remember Thee."

So may it be with you now!

There may be, however, in this congregation—no, I know there are some who have never yet enjoyed rest. They are going about to find it. Dear hearer, there is only one resting place—don't look for another! Your works will never provide you rest. Sacraments can never rest you. Tears and groans, and prayers can never rest you. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." "Believe in Him and live!" Trust in Him and you shall find rest unto your soul forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 3:6-25; 4:1-29.

Let us read part of the 3rd chapter of Jeremiah where God brings a solemn accusation against the two nations of Israel and Judah because they forsook the living God and went after idols—neglected His pure and holy worship—and followed after the abominable rites of the heathen.

Verse 6, 7. *The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot. Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me.* Depth of mercy that God should bid such a polluted one return to Him! "Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me."

7, 8. *But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.* Some cannot be kept back from sin by the punishment of others, but they run into the fire in which others have been burnt, and so they aggravate their sin.

9. *And it came to past through the lightness of her whoredom that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with wood.* That is to say, she gave her heart to false gods and worshiped stones and wood. And how it must anger the living God to see men turn away from Him to worship blocks of wood and stone, instead of Him, and especially a people who have been instructed concerning the living God, and so commit the grossest act of disloyalty to Him, and are rebellious to the last degree.

10, 11. *And for this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah.* The one sinned openly and persevered in it. The other pretended

to repent and did not, and that pretended repentance was more hateful in the sight of God than even the daring and open sin of Israel. What next?

12. *Go and proclaim these words towards the north and say, Return, you 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.* The offense was foul. It is such a one as stabs at the heart of man's honor. It is an offense which a man will scarcely ever forgive. But God bids His wandering Israel come back! And He proclaims mercy—free mercy—even to such gross transgressors!

13. *Only acknowledge your iniquity.* It is all He asks you to do. Confess that you have done wrong. "Only acknowledge your iniquity."

13. *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.* It was under the trees that they set up their altars to worship there false gods, so that they turned the graves, which should be full of beauty and sweet with song, into the places of idolatry, whereby God was provoked. But He says, "Only confess it. Come and lament it. Acknowledge that you have been guilty, and I will put away the sin."

14-16. *Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD: for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you pastors according to My heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. 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 anymore.* Evangelical repentance, when it brings pardon with it, usually puts a slight upon mere legal ceremonies. We need not the symbol when we get the substance! We need no ark of the covenant nor holy place at Jerusalem when once the Lord appears in plenteous grace to put away our sin!

17, 18. *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 anymore after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel.* Nothing unites people like the grace of God. Two men that have been pardoned by the same Savior ought to love one another, and they will!

18, 19. *And they shall come together out of the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said*—After all this mercy, He seems to come to a pause, "But I said"—

19. *How shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant and a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?* Is it possible? Can it be done? These harlot nations that have defiled and polluted themselves with unutterable filthiness—can they be put among the children—the children of God?

19-22. *And I said, You shall call Me, my Father, and shall not turn away from Me. 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 places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* Do you hear it? Do you hear God's promise? Do you hear His command? "Return, you backsliding children. I will heal your backslidings." Now for the answer. God grant that it may well up in your hearts.

22, 23. *Behold, we come unto You, for You are the LORD our God. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains.* We leave all false confidences. We forsake our earthly joys.

23, 24. *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.* They have not profited by worshiping idols. They have suffered through it.

25. *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.* There you see the repentance which the Lord commanded at His people's hands, and wherever there is such a repentance as that, there are sure to be acceptance and salvation! God grant us that repentance and save us for His mercy's sake!

JEREMIAH 4:1-29.

Verses 1, 2. *If you will return, O Israel, says the LORD, return unto Me, and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then shall you not be moved. And you shall swear, The LORD lives, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness. And the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory.* So he sets before them life and death. First, He begins with these words of encouragement. He begs them to come, for God is willing to receive them, notwithstanding all.

3, 4. *For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.* They had the outward religion, but the Lord's servant bids them know that they must have *heart* religion. The heart must be purged—the inward must be cleansed. This they had no mind to. They would multiply their sacrifices and their outward performances, but as to cleanliness of heart, this they cared not for.

5-7. *Declare you in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem and say, Blow you the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves and let us go into the fortified cities. Set up the standard towards Zion, retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make your*

land desolate; and your cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant. This was a terrible prophecy. The Chaldeans, who had broken to pieces so many other kingdoms and powers, were on their way! The enraged lion had leaped from his thicket and was about to tear, and rend, and do universal havoc! And if they did not turn to God, their whole land would be laid waste. One would think that such a heavy blow would have awakened them to a sense of their danger and their sin, but, alas, it was not so!

8, 9. *For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. And it shall come to pass at that day, says the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.* Universal fear would take hold upon them. If they would not rightly fear the Lord and turn to Him, the time would come when, without exception, the greatest and the wisest of them should be taken with a sudden panic!

10. *Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, You shall have peace; whereas the sword reaches unto the soul.* God promised them peace, but it was upon a condition which they did not fulfill. There was peace while they gave up their sin, but, "There is no peace with God unto the wicked." And so they missed it.

11, 12. *At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of My people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto Me: now also will I give sentence against them.* What an awful line that is. "Now also will I give sentence against them." They had been on their trial. They are found guilty. They will not repent. "Now will I proceed to pronounce their doom and give sentence against them."

13. *Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! For we are spoiled.* They began to cry out when they began to smart. And the prophet comes in, again.

14. *O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.* There is always that silver bell of mercy ringing out the note of invitation! "O Jerusalem, your sorrows, your destruction may yet be averted if you will turn from your darkness! Wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved."

14-18. *How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan, and publishes affliction from Mount Ephraim. Make you mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem that watchers come from a far country and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about because she has been rebellious against Me, says the LORD. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you. This is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart.* When "great judgments are abroad," it is always on account of great sin. It was so in the case of Israel. "Your doings have procured these things unto you."

Oh, when the ungodly man begins to reap the result of his life—when, in his own body and in his own home, he begins to see what sin will often bring the drunkard, let him hear these words—"This is your wickedness. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you."

Now follows the lament of Jeremiah—one of the most amazing pieces of sorrowful writing that will ever be read in your hearing!

19-21. *O my soul, my soul! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace because you have heard, O, my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war! Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet?* The dreadful blast of war, the blood-red flag of murder flying through the land while the Chaldeans slew right and left, young and old—we need to put ourselves into Jeremiah's position to be able to realize the horror of this case.

22, 23. *For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void: and the heavens, and they had no light.* As if they had gone back to chaos—to the primeval darkness—to the first disorder before God began to create.

24-29. *I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by His fierce anger. For thus has the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken it, I have purposed it and I will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up upon the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.* Now all this did happen. It all came to pass. Palestine, the glorious garden of God, was made as dreary as a wilderness! It is not much better now. It has scarcely recovered. God will re-gather them to the land one day, but oh, what a sight it was when God at last had ended His patience—poured out the vials of His wrath upon His once favored land!

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"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."
Matthew 21:9.

ONE feels very thankful that we have a few Hebrew words in common use in our Christian assemblies—a kind of link between Israel after the flesh and Israel after the spirit. "Hallelujah," they sang of old, and we sing, "Hallelujah," too. "Abba Father," they said. We also say, "Abba Father." And this word, "Hosanna," is another of the few that remain to us of which we understand the meaning, though we use them still in a translated form—Hosanna—"save Lord," "bless Lord." "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." I did not mention in the reading of the Psalm—(the 118th Psalm)—that both the 25th and 26th verses of that Psalm begin with the word, Hosanna. One is translated, "Save Lord," and the other is, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." I shall take this common exclamation, then, constantly used among the Jews, and we shall see as to its use among ourselves. And our first point will be to—

I. CONSIDER OCCASIONS WHEN THIS EXCLAMATION, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," HAS BEEN, OR WILL BE, SUITABLE.

And, first, in the olden times, the Israelites were accustomed to use this cry, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord," *when their heroes returned victorious from the battlefield*. When they went up to the temple to give thanks publicly to God for victories over their enemies, they were met by the people, with this exclamation of joy, "Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name." Very unlike the cries of other nations! Some nations only extolled the heroes, but the people of God see the hand of God, and they mark that the hero only comes in the name of the Lord. And while they give him blessings and wish him every good thing for what he has done, yet the praise is ascribed to the Master in whose name he comes—even Jehovah. While the Philistines would be extolling their god and Moab and Ammon would be lifting up the song to the idols they worshiped, Israel took care, in the song of triumph with which they saluted the returning victors, to extol and magnify the glory of the Lord—the Lord God of Israel—"Blessed is he that comes in the name of

Jehovah." So, my dear friends, whenever we thank men for kindnesses which they render to us—(and it is our duty to be grateful to them)—yet let us thank yet more the Lord our God! Thank God and thank the secondary means, but do not ascribe the honor to the instrument, alone, lest you set up an idol in the presence of God! Always take care to see that God, whom you worship, makes all things work through your friends for your help and your deliverance. So to each one who shall bring you good—whether spiritual or temporal good—"Blessed is he that comes to me with this mercy. I recognize him as coming in Jehovah's name."

This exclamation might again have been *most commonly used of the coming of our Lord*. The Word became incarnate and stooped from the throne of heaven to the manger of Bethlehem's stable. I know not that these words precisely were used, but surely in this spirit the angels sang their midnight carol when the Savior descended—"Glory to God in the highest. On earth peace, goodwill towards men." What is the spirit of all that song but this word, "Hosanna"? What is the essence of it all, but this sentence, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"? The shepherds could not have used a more significant and suitable expression—and the Easterners, as they gathered round that little cradle and offered their gold, their myrrh, and their incense, together with their grateful homage might have looked at Mary and Joseph, and the child, and said of Him, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." And had but the nations known it, had but Israel known it, had but the kings of the earth recognized it, one universal shout might have gone up to heaven—"At last the promised One is come! The seed of the woman is born! The Messiah has appeared! The Prince of Peace has come with innumerable blessings! Blessed is He that comes in Jehovah's name!" And I think the very sea and land, even the heavens and the heaven of heavens, might have caught up the spirit of that hour, and the sea, with its waves, might have roared out, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." And you forests—every tree within you—might have burst forth in the same note till all the nations would have become one mouth for song, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

And this expression was used, according to my text, *further on in our Savior's life.* When He rode in triumph upon a colt, the foal of an ass, up to the temple, when He went to take possession of His Father's house, and drive out the buyers and sellers, who had made it into a den of thieves—then in that day, when He was proclaimed King of the Jews, and the crowd of men mounted the trees and broke down the palm branches, juvenile voices all along the road shouted, "Hosanna." This was the hour of our Savior's gladness, and Jerusalem for once seemed as if she would shake off her solid coolness and would acknowledge Him whom God had sent! It were well for her if it had been so, but the truth of God was hidden from her eyes and she became desolate, because more heartily

and truthfully she had not said, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

And shall I be thought to be fanciful if I suppose that this exclamation would have been most appropriate among the bands of angels and choirs of the blood-washed, *when our Savior, having finished His lifework, ascended to His throne?* When they brought His chariot from on high to bear Him to His last place of rest, when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and the pearly gates were set open that He might enter, did not all those bright celestial spirits throng the streets of gold and cry "Hosanna: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"? I can scarcely think they could refrain from the expressions of their delight when they saw Him come with His garments dyed red, fresh from the slaughter of all His foes, triumphant over all that came against Him, the great conqueror, the hero who had routed, once and for all, all Israel's enemies and put them all beneath His feet! Surely they must have said, "Hosanna," yet again and again, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"!

And surely, to close the list of occasions, I may mention *when He who went up from Olivet shall come a second time,* in like manner as He went up into heaven, that is to say, in very person as He mounted to the skies, He will be saluted, will He not—by all His waiting people, with this grand exclamation, "Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"? The coming of the Son of God is no joy to the ungodly world—the day of the Lord to them will be darkness, and not light—the earth will burn as an oven! "The day comes that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, and yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." To the righteous the coming of Christ is their grandest expectation—it is the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, the day for which the whole creation groans and travails, for it will be the day of our resurrection, when our souls that may have been a long while divorced from our bodies shall be re-married, and the body shall be raised again like unto His glorious body! "For we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come," and that same Spirit and bride shall say, "Welcome, welcome, King of kings!" when He shall come. Those who have watched most, and longed most, and hungered and thirsted most after that glorious advent shall be they who most joyfully shall go forth to meet King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousal, and this shall be the note of their triumphant greeting, "Hosanna: Blessed is He that comes in Jehovah's name." Thus I have very briefly run through the occasions when this exclamation would seem to be exceedingly suitable. Now let us for a while consider—

II. THE SUITABILITY OF THIS CRY FOR CONSTANT USE—not now and then, but always! And it may be viewed in two lights. First, *as an*

exultation. "Blessed is He that comes." He is blessed. It is a blessed thing that He has come. It may be viewed, in the next place, *as a prayer*, let Him be blessed, let Him prosper and so on. First, then, *as an exultation, a note of triumph*, He is blessed that He has come in the name of the Lord, and ought we not to be always saying this, "Blessed is He that He should condescend to tabernacle among men! Blessed is He that it should be true that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that we might behold His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? He is blessed, for He came to earth fully qualified for all His work, endowed with all the wisdom, the knowledge, the unction, the anointing from on high that He could wish. He was blessed in His coming, blessed while He carried on the work. Though His the pain and sorrow, yet it was all blessing to us, from the first act He did as a man until He said, "It is finished." When I think of Him coming down as a man, coming down as a servant, coming to take upon Himself to die for our sins, I can indeed say, "Blessed is He that comes to all this in the name of the Lord"—comes as our brother, comes as our priest, comes as our substitute, comes as our scapegoat, comes as our great deliverer and propitiatory sacrifice that we might be cleansed from sin! He is blessed—all blessings are in Him, all blessings come through Him, all blessings belong to Him! God has given all blessings to Him because of this. He is blessed. And, brothers and sisters, if He is blessed in the work and the carrying of it on, is He not, and shall He not be blessed in our esteem, now that He has mounted to the skies and taken the precious blood within the veil and sprinkled it there—and stands there now pleading as a prevalent High Priest for us? Blessed is He that came in Jehovah's name—the great ambassador of peace between offended Deity and revolted man. He is our peace and let His name forever be blessed! He is our prince—let us adore Him! He is all our salvation, all our desire! We ask nothing more than to be like He and be with Him. Blessings in Him! He is blessed! God has blessed Him! Forever and forever shall all generations call Him blessed! It is an exultation, then. We shout to His triumph, "Blessed is He that comes!"

But *it is a prayer*. My dear friends, we desire to do all we can for the Lord Jesus Christ, but how very limited are our capacities! If we were to give Him all we have, and give our bodies to be burned, it would be very little for us to give to such a Savior. But what a mercy it is that there is no limit to what we may wish. We can bless Him with our wishes, if we cannot with our acts. I was about to say we may bless Him infinitely with our desires. At any rate, there is no limit to our capacity to desire. And those desires may take the very acceptable and prevalent form of prayer. What I cannot *do* for Christ, I can *pray God to be done*. What if I cannot preach His gospel in every land, yet where I can, I will preach it and pray God to raise up many to proclaim it. And if I cannot crown His head with many crowns, yet would I lay at His feet such as I have, and then my

desires would crown Him over, and over, and over again, and my prayers would clamber up to His lofty throne and put fresh coronets upon His dear head, blessing Him that He does not deny me a share of wishing what I cannot do, and of praying for what I cannot give! In this sense, brothers and sisters, we can, to a very great extent, bless Him who comes in the name of the Lord—bless Him with our wishes, our desires, our earnestness and especially with our prayers.

Now, what is the blessing, then, which we would seek for our Lord, Jesus Christ? What are the prayers that we would offer for Him? It is written, "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually." What shall we ask for Him?

We will ask, first, that He that comes in the name of the Lord *may be blessed in His Church*. Oh, that He would bless the Church just now. I am afraid we have fallen upon lean times just now. It may be that God is about to chastise His Church, because when we had a revival we had not grace enough to keep it. Almost universally there is a cloud hanging over Israel—lethargy coming in place of earnestness. God knows we were never very earnest—I mean the Church of God at large was not very earnest—but yet that earnestness which did arise seems now to be vanishing. I pray God it may not vanish, but, on the contrary, may all the zeal which has been in our days be far exceeded—all the agony for souls, all the labor to proclaim the grace of God to them, all the earnest desires and prayers of God's people—may all these be renewed with tenfold vigor, and in this way may we have to cry, "The Lord has visited His Church, and let His name be blessed." We do tonight, I trust, put up the prayer, each one of us who belongs to this Church and people, "Lord prosper Your Word, be pleased to give power to your minister and increased grace to your servants, holiness of life, separation from the world, power in prayer—give them communion with Yourself! Grant that there may be peace within the borders of your Church, and that the citizens of Zion may be filled with the finest of the wheat." In this respect we will bless Christ by desiring a blessing on His Church and seeking to promote its prosperity.

Next to this, I say, "Lord save"—"Lord bless"—Him that comes, (putting it as a prayer *for the scattering of the Church's enemies and His own enemies*). Christ still has many enemies in the world. The Pope, the Antichrist of Rome, with all his doctors and counselors, assemble at this very hour—the incarnate Antichrist—at this present moment! And here, in this England of ours, there are priests busy up and down, in every court and lane, in every corner of the land, and our clergy of the Established Church, many of them double-dyed Papists, doing the work of Rome and eating the bread of a Protestant Church at the same time! And then there is infidelity, seeking all it can to make its converts, with a zeal which were commendable if it were used for a right purpose. They

compass sea and land to make proselytes, and shame the coldness of many professed followers of Christ. The enemies of Christ are very many. The Church is very feeble, yes, she is like a reed shaken by the wind. Without her Lord, she is less than nothing—like chaff in the whirlwind! But, oh, let us pray that He may be blessed who comes in the name of the Lord by the scattering of all His enemies, by the putting down of spiritual wickedness in high places, and giving the victory to the truth and to the gospel—that which saves—putting to flight that which destroys before that which purifies—scattering that which defiles before that which glorifies God, annihilating that which blasphemes His holy name! May Christ be blessed as a conqueror over His foes!

We may, further, very earnestly pray that the Lord may be blessed *in the conversion of souls*. Oh, would to God He were blessed in that respect in this congregation more and more! Preaching becomes very dead work when there are no converts. Sowing is very well and one likes it at the sowing season, but if a man had to sow all the year round and never saw the golden sheaves, he might well grow weary. Though, indeed, in sowing for God we ought not to be weary, yet the tendency is to be so. How few conversions there are anywhere just now! The Church does not increase at all in the same rate as the population does. Every year I believe that the sin of London is gaining upon the gospel, and all the efforts that are made have no effect upon the masses. We scarcely hold our ground! Certainly we make very little if any, advance. Of course, we congratulate ourselves that there are so many churches built. Does anybody go to them? We sometimes think there are so many chapels. Yes, but how many are there that are half empty, or even less occupied than that? And what if they are full, yet in how many places is the gospel preached very uncertainly and no certain sound is given from the trumpet? It is Christ that is preached in a measure, but preached in a fog—certainly not in the way that is so plain that wayfaring men need not err therein, but in a way that is so perplexing and involved in hard words and gaudy obscurities of rhetoric, that oftentimes many know not their right hand from their left, and look on, marveling at the orator who speaks so grandly, but what he says, or whereof he affirmed, they utterly know not! How many there are that have the key of knowledge, but open not the door! They seem rather to show how delightfully they can lock it and how skillfully they can shut out the multitude! We need to see conversions! May God send them everywhere throughout this land by the tens of thousands! And in other lands, would God there were conversions by the millions! The world teems with population, but Jesus Christ has as yet few who find Him. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are that go in at the gate or tread that road. O Lord, how long, how long, how long? Arise and convert sinners to Yourself!

The same thought comes to us only a little enlarged. Our desire in prayer for Christ is that *He may the blessed in the sense of being glorious*

to the ends of the earth. We have no doubts about the issue of the struggle in which we are engaged—against the powers of darkness. It may be a thousand years before Christianity is prevalent. It may be ten thousand years! It may be fifty thousand years, it may be a hundred thousand years! We, none of us, know. To God it will be quick, very quickly—and in but a short time—behold Christ comes quickly! But that, "quickly," may not mean what we think it does, and they who sit down and say it will be the next twenty, or fifty, or 100 years know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm! We who are working now are very like, as I believe, those coral insects that are about to build a reef. They begin at the bottom of the sea. They lay, first of all, the foundations, broad and strong. It will be a long, long, long, long while before that reef will come to the top of the sea, before it will be seen, before earth and weeds will be attracted to it. It will be still longer before there begins to grow upon it certain tiny plants and mosses—still longer before the coconut begins to spring, and before men and animals shall be found there. Now, those first insects that lay the foundation die. They have gone, and the next, and the next, and the next and the reef is still unseen. That is very like what we are. All we can do is to keep on working, working with all our might. Our prayer ought not to be that we should see the whole of our success. I like Moses' prayer—"Let Your work appear unto Your servants! And Your glory unto their children." Hence no matter how things are—it may have been that we have hardly stood our ground, and we can hardly say the Lord's cause has prospered—still, we have only seen the beginning! And we may rest assured that when the latter verses of this grand poem shall come, though the book may have opened somewhat dolorously and gloomily, the end will be, "Sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea." In any great cause that is undertaken in any country, it is not one generation that succeeds. Many generations have to take part in it. There is a period of contempt for even common political principles—a period of neglect—afterwards a period of contempt—then, perhaps, a period of absolute persecution, and then, perhaps, when we least expect it, there comes the moment of victory. And so it will be with the great cause of Christ! Only let this be our prayer, that the Lord would cut short His work in righteousness. That He would be pleased to soon come forth with His sword girt upon His thigh and take to Himself His great power and reign! Before another year comes, if the Lord wills, the nations may all give up their idols and turn to Christ! God can do as He pleases. Time is nothing to Him. With men, steel and iron must be worked gradually, but in the world of spirits, God has but to strike a spark and the fire will run along the ground and illumine the earth with its sacred conflagration! He can affect all minds at once, and turn the heart of the child to the Father, and the hearts of all men to the great Prince of Peace, if so He wills it!

And, perhaps, He means to do that—to save the whole battle for one grand last charge when the King, Himself, shall lead the van, and then the conquering banner shall be seen, and the Lord God omnipotent shall reign! Be it as He wills, we will always say under every discouragement, at all times when we see not our sign, "Blessed be You, Jesus! You shall get the crown and be conqueror yet! May Your kingdom come, and Your will be done as in heaven, so on earth!"

Now, lastly, there are times, dear friends, when this exclamation may be used *about ourselves personally*. I will only hint at these times. The first is *at our conversion*. When we had been in sorrow and trouble, under sin—when the law had made sin revive and we died, when every hope was hurled in despair—you remember how you and I welcomed Christ. I remember the very Sabbath morning and the spot of ground. Some of you may not so distinctly remember—that does not matter—but some of you can. Oh, how blessed was he who came to us in the name of the Lord! Sin was forgiven. Doubts fled, despair vanished, joy and peace flowed in our souls, leapt within us, and we were so happy—we scarcely knew how to express our joy and our love! Oh, dear Savior, on that first day of our spiritual birth, and afterwards while we were yet in the love of our espousals, we could do no other than say, "Blessed is He, the dear precious and exalted Savior, who has come to me in the Lord's name and saved my soul!" Since that day we have, every now and then, had repetitions of our conversion—*renewals of the presence of God*. You had got very dull and worldly, and your soul was cleaving to the dust, but, perhaps, it was under a sermon or in private prayer. Or it may have been in the middle of your business the Lord returned to you—He became the health of your countenance and restored your soul! Oh, I know how you sang, when your communion with Christ began to be as sweet as it was before, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" The Lord send such seasons to any of you who are backsliding! May He come to you, now, and knock at the door of your heart! Oh, open to Him and bid Him come in, for there is no power on earth that can revive a decaying heart like the coming of Christ afresh by renewed communion! So too, dear friends, you and I have said this when we have had some very *happy seasons in the house of the Lord;* have you not sometimes, in this very place, when our voice has gone up in song (the thousands praising God)—when we have been all moved by gracious words of Scripture, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind—have you not been inclined to burst out with the note, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"? Why, the very preacher has been beloved to you for his Master's sake! But the preacher's Master—oh, what love you felt in your heart for Him—what joy at the sound of His name! What delight when it has been like ointment poured forth, and the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you! Do you not remember when you went up with the multitude

that kept holy day, when you went up to the altar of God with exceeding joy, with the voice of thanksgiving? Ah, then it was—

"Blessings forever on the Lamb,
Who bore the cross for wretched men."

And once again, to conclude, *whenever God visits His Church with a revival*, then the cry goes up, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"—a revival of religion, I mean, of this kind—when a deep religious concern is upon all, when Christians become more earnest and more prayerful, when they become more attentive to the unconverted and more anxious to see them saved. And when the unconverted, themselves, take a deeper interest in the Word—when they begin to feel their sin, when they cry out for mercy, when they ask the way to Zion! We have had the Lord with us now these 17 years with no bursts of excitement, but with one continual stream of blessing—and I am so anxious that we should not lose it. I could wish that we might see some token of even a larger measure of His presence than we have had yet. I would ask some of you that have power in prayer to join with me every morning and every night in a prayer that He would come to us afresh. We are not discouraged—very far from it. We have never been without many inquirers and many being added to the Church, but still, there are unconverted ones in the congregation. We have found at the Tabernacle what we had at Park Street, that we have many more members than seats. I remember one man coming one night to have a seat who was very honest and wanted to see me, first, before he took a sitting. "Sir," he said, "somebody told me that I should be expected to be converted if I took a seat, and I cannot guarantee that." I said, "My dear friend, somebody has told you the right thing, but he has not put it exactly right. If you take a seat, we expect that you *will* be converted. It is not that you are expected to convert yourself, but we expect that if you hear the Word, God will bless you, because," I said, "I hardly know any who have sat there but have been converted." I was very glad to find there was all current among the seat-holders that God would bless them! I believe He will. But still, I wish we had more members. We have 4,200, I think, but we can hold more than that. I would like to see six thousand! What a joy it would be! So many that I would be half inclined to say I must go and fish in another pool—they are all caught here! Would not it be a mercy if there were no more fish in the sea to be caught, but all were converted—everyone that comes into this Tabernacle? His power is infinite! There is no limit to that, except that our unbelief in the economy of grace is sometimes allowed to limit it. What is said converted to God! If you could go out and do good to others, and bring others in, and other churches could be formed, what a blessing might come of it! And why not? "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Oh, that this might be taken away from us! May we believe, and we shall see! May we trust and pray, and we shall joyfully behold it!

Oh, that some poor sinner would come to Jesus Christ tonight! He would, indeed, have to say, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." One prayer will bring you to Him, if it is sincere. Simply to trust Him—that is the thing! To rely upon Him—that is all! He died for the guilty. His blood was shed for the foul. Come and trust Him and yield to Him! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 118.

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD: for He is good: because His mercy endures forever.* Here is a standing reason for thanksgiving. Although we may not always be healthy, nor always prosperous, yet God is always good and, therefore, there is always a sufficient argument for giving thanks unto Jehovah, That He is a good God essentially—that He cannot be otherwise than good—should be a fountain out of which the richest praises should perpetually flow.

2, 3. *Let Israel now say that His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Aaron now say that His mercy endures forever.* These were especially set apart for God's service and, therefore, where much in given, much is expected. The house of Aaron, therefore, must have a special note of thanksgiving, and though we who preach the gospel claim no sort of priesthood, yet if any ought to lead the strain of thankfulness, it should be those who minister continually for God.

4. *Let them now that fear the LORD say that His mercy endures forever.* Let them all say it—let them all say it now—let every one of us say it for himself, "His mercy endures forever."

5. *I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me and set me in a large place.* I think many of us could make just such a record as that and not once, but many times in our lives we could say, "I called upon the Lord in distress." We have had many trials, but we have a mercy-seat always to fly to and a God always ready to hear the cries of His distressed ones.

6. *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do to me?* The past always gives us assurance for the future, for we are dealing with the same unchangeable God and, therefore, we may expect to have the same dealings from Him.

7, 8. *The LORD takes my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon those who hate me. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.* There is one text which I have never seen put up anywhere. You have illuminated texts in your houses and schoolrooms, and so on, but I think I have never seen this, "Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." Or this other one, "Cease you, from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" And I am sure there is no teaching of Scripture more

necessary than that, whether it refers to great men or to little men, whether it refers to men of eminence, or to those of your own family circle. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

9. *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* It is nobler, it is more agreeable to sound reason, it will lead to better results. God better deserves our confidence than the princes of the earth do—even the best of them.

10. *All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.* This may apply to David, but it applied better to Christ, around whom Jews and Gentiles came, but He won the victory over them.

11, 12. *They compassed me about: yes, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as fire of thorns; for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.* The thorn makes a good blaze and crackles and splutters, but it is soon out. "For in the name of the Lord will I destroy them." In this way we may meet our spiritual foes, temptations, trials, the world, sin, death, hell—the name of Jehovah shall be our strength. "*In hoc signo vincit*," said one of old—"By this sign you conquer," and so by this sign we also overcome through the blood of the Lamb!

13. *You have thrust sore at me that I might fall; but the Lord helped me.* This will rebut all the attacks of our fiercest foes—"But the Lord helped me."

14, 15. *The LORD is my strength and song, and has become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.* Where God's people dwell, there is the voice of joy. "Their family prayer sanctifies the house with its joyous notes." Even then there is trouble and sorrow in the house, yet resignation still makes joy and rejoicing there. And if rejoicing for a moment should go, yet salvation never does. "This day is salvation come to your house. If you are now a converted man, it will never go away. It is an abiding thing—it is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

16, 17. *The right hand of the LORD is exalted, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the LORD.* Some have thought this Psalm was composed by Hezekiah after his sickness, and after the destruction of Sennacherib's host. It may be so. It has been used by many besides Hezekiah, who have not forgotten that these are the words of Wickliffe, used when monks came round his dying bed with prayers, Paternosters and crucifixes and urged him to repent, and he said, "I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord." And so, indeed, he did!

18. *The LORD has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death.* Many of His best children can say this, for, "whom the Lord loves He chastens." "The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not

given me over unto death." You that have recovered from sickness, here is a song for you who above all were not given over to your sins and to the just punishment of them! Here is music for you, "He has not given me over to the second death which He might have done."

19, 20. *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them and I will praise the LORD. This gate of the LORD into which the righteous shall enter.* I suppose he who uttered these words has passed through the beautiful gates of the temple.

21. *I will praise You: for You have heard me, and have become my salvation.* Future, past, present—all full of blessing!

22-24. *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD has made: we will rejoice and be glad in it.* Though this is applicable to the Sabbath, yet it is also applicable to any day and to every day which God especially makes glorious by delivering many.

25-27. *Save now, I beseech You, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech You, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, who has showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* It is the king returning from victory and recovered from sickness. He brings his sacrifice with thanksgiving, as every child of God should, and there it is, ready bound to the altar horns.

28, 29. *You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the LORD: for He is good; for His mercy endures forever.*

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."
Psalm 25:14.

THIS text is a great deep, but at the outset we must say that we have neither the time nor the skill at this time to attempt to fathom it. Our business just now is not so much to dive into its profound mystery, as to skim over its sparkling surface, to touch it with our wing as the swallow sometimes does the brook, leaving its soundings still unexplored. The current of thought here is too deep and too broad for the short meditation of a weekday evening. But where the very surface is rich, as it were, with "dust of gold," we cannot fail, if God the Holy Spirit blesses us, to be enriched by even the superficial reflections we may gather up from it.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Mark the word used—"the LORD"—Jehovah in the original—the I AM THAT I AM. The very name is associated in the thought of every right-minded person with awe. Is it not the name of the one only living and true God, and none who take it in vain shall be held guiltless? The gods of the heathen are no gods, but our God made the heavens! It is by Him that the heavens were stretched out as a curtain and as a tent to dwell in. He is the preserver of all things. In Him "we live, and move, and have our being." As we find Him manifested, both in the book of nature and in the Book of Revelation, He is a God "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." The LORD is a good God, and we cannot think of Him without awe. If you have ever heard His voice in pealing thunder or the rolling avalanche, or if you have seen the flashes of His spear in the lightning of the tempest, or if you have marked His going upon the mighty waves at the tempestuous sea, you must have felt within yourselves that He is high and mighty—in truth, a terrible God! Yet it seems from our text that there are some persons in the world in whom all emotions of dread in connection with God are suppressed by feelings of quite another kind. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, they have evidently passed through the clouds and have come to the other side of the darkness, for "the secret of the LORD is with them." Before Him goes the pestilence. And hot burning coals are cast forth at His feet, but these persons must evidently have been preserved from the devouring

pestilence by some mysterious power—and have escaped those burning coals by some gracious deliverance! They have come into familiarity with God! They know His secret and He shows to them what He does not make known to other men—His covenant—the counsel of His will! There are such persons in the world, now, to whom the eternal majesty is so tempered by infinite mercy that they can devoutly sing—

"The God who rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
Who rides upon the stormy skies,
And manages the seas.
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our Love.
He shall send down His heavenly powers,
To carry us above."

Think of "the LORD," then, according to this grand revelation of His name—Jehovah. Oh, that your thoughts of Him might bow you down with the lowly worship of the bright cherubim, and make you veil your faces as they do! Oh, that you might be led to feel how great God is and how little you are! Oh, that grace would be now given you to draw near to God and that the passage on which we have alighted might become a place of communion with Him!

Observe, then, first of all, *a glorious privilege which may be possessed;* secondly, *a favored class of people who do possess it;* and thirdly, *a choice and peculiar manifestation which God makes to them*.

I. THERE IS A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE WHICH MAY BE POSSESSED.

The word, "secret," here might, with greater propriety, be translated, "friendship." "The friendship of the LORD is with them that fear Him," but it also signifies in its root, that conversation which familiar friends hold with each other. Conversation in its most cherished exercise, that homely conversation which springs from mutual confidence and is, on the part of one man, the unbosoming of himself to another, is thus implied. If I may open it up in a phrase, it means, "The amity of true friendship." Such is the favor vouchsafed to those who fear God. But taking the word as it stands, (for I dare say the translators weighed all these variations well before they chose the one before us), we will endeavor to give amplitude to the sense, while we keep to the word, "secret."

Beyond a doubt, then, *those who fear God have the secret of His presence revealed to them.* If a man rambles amidst the wonders of nature with an atheistic heart, he may look up to the snowy peaks and down again upon the sweet grassy slopes. He may listen to the music of the waterfall. He may stand and admire the eagle as it soars aloft, or watch the wild goat as it leaps from crag to crag—and all these things may be to him but so much animated nature—matter in so many various shapes and nothing more! I suppose it is possible for men to be familiar with all that is beautiful and sublime in the world of nature, that "living

visible garment of God," and yet never catch the secret of His presence, the traces of His handiwork, or the whisper of His voice. How different it is with the man who fears God, who has bowed before God's justice and seen it satisfied through the atoning sacrifice of Calvary! Such a man, as he looks upon the things that are made, those silent witnesses of the eternal power and Godhead, says, "My Father made them all!"

"Not hear God?" he says, "I as distinctly heard God speak in the thunderclap as I have heard my own father's voice!" Not see God? Why, the veil seems thin that hides His glorious features while the works shine transparent that unveil His wondrous attributes! So that to the Christian it becomes a moral phenomenon that there should be people in the world who can survey the gorgeous plan, the unfailing order and the ample furniture, as it were, of this earth, with its wonderful adaptation of the means to the end, and then peer upwards to the heavens so grandly garnished, and contemplate the celestial bodies, ever restless, ever orderly in their motions, yet fail to apprehend the greatness, the wisdom, the goodness of the creator! To us He is apparent everywhere—

"These are Your works, Father of good, Almighty!
Yours this universal frame!"

He knows, he feels that fallen as he is, he can, while walking through this world, commune with God as Adam did before paradise was lost to him. The secret of God's presence is with them that fear Him. We have heard of some who have said that they have never had any consciousness of the existence of spirit. Very likely; very likely. I do not suppose, either, that pigs or asses, or any dumb driven cattle ever had any spiritual apprehensions! But some of us have a very clear consciousness thereof and, as honest men giving testimony, we claim to be believed. No, what is more, we are certain that we have not only a consciousness of the existence of spirit, but of a great and all-pervading Spirit we have a like clear knowledge! We cannot be mistaken about it! We are as sure that there is a God as we are that there is a world. No, sometimes more persuaded of the one than of the other! It is a part of our real consciousness. We have come to feel it, not merely in our imaginative moods, but when all our faculties were in full play—the secret of the existence of the pervading presence of God is with us if we fear Him! No, it is not only in the open fields, amidst the enchanting scenery of the world, but much more in shady nooks and secluded places that we have found that presence!

Some months ago, I sat by the side of a woman who had not left her bed for several years. It was in a sloping room at the top of a cottage. The only walls were just the plastering that roofed it in. The room was hung round with texts of Scripture, which she had painted as she had been lying there. She was always full of pain—restless nights and weary days were her constant lot. When I sat down to talk to her, she said, "You cannot tell how the presence of God has made this room seem to me, Sir!

It has been such a palace that I have not envied kings upon their thrones when I have enjoyed the visits of Christ here. Though I have not known a wakeful hour free from pain for years, I assure you this chamber has been a very heaven to me." She was not an excitable, hysterical, silly, weak-minded woman. Far from that, she was as simple and sincere a creature as you might have found in fifty miles' walk. The daughter of an honest, smock-frocked laborer, and his quiet, godly wife. There was this poor woman declaring that God was ever in her room. As I talked with her, I began to feel that her witness was true, and to think that I had not felt more conscious of the presence of the Almighty among the baseless, boundless mountains, or upon the watery plain of the vast ocean, where mighty waves in ceaseless concert roll, or even in the midst of the vast congregation, when on the Sabbath our solemn hymns, the outflow of feeling hearts, have swelled to heaven with music such as pleases well the ear of God! Thus I did then perceive the mysterious secret of His presence when I lingered by the lowly couch of His suffering saint! Why, had some skeptic called in there and merely suggested that "there is no God," we would have laughed him to scorn, or else, perhaps, our pity for this ignorance might have turned our laughter into tears. Truly the secret of God's presence everywhere is with them who fear Him. They trust Him, they love Him, they lean upon Him and they get to feel that He is—and they have communion with Him as a man communes with his friend!

And this secret of God's presence *leads to the discerning of His hand*. To the man who looks no higher than second causes, things that baffle his shallow wits like a continued drought in spring, or heavy rain in harvest, seem alike dreadful and bewildering. Though he cannot understand, perhaps, the laws of fluidity, he is likely enough to murmur at the dispensations that frustrate his conjectures. But the Christian says, "I believe that God ordains every drop of rain, or withholds every genial shower when He binds up the bottles of heaven. I can find philosophy in faith." And here he is right. It has well been said, "There is more wisdom in a whispered prayer than in the ancient lore of all the schools." And wonderful it is how this simple, silent trust gives the Christian calmness and composure; at sea, when the tempest rages and the billows roar, the man who knows of nothing but the devouring element beneath and around him, full of alarm, may sigh to the winds. But the Christian who firmly believes that God holds the sea in the hollow of His hands and, that "all must come, and last, and end, as shall please his heavenly friend," waits the leisure of the righteous God, commits his way unto Him, assured that He has control over the storm and fulfils His great decrees unmoved by threatening clouds or scolding winds. Faith feeds his fortitude! Listening with the ears of faith, he constantly hears the footfalls of Jehovah. In the loneliness of his sorrow, he catches a sweet whisper, saying to him, "It is I, be not afraid." The

divine presence and the divine hand, mysteriously hidden though they are, from all mortal eyes, are discerned by such as live in fellowship with God, for "the secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him."

Hence it is that *the child of God carries on a secret conversation with heaven*. See him on his knees—he talks with God, he pours out his heart before the Lord. And in return—whether the world chooses to believe it, or not, it is a matter of fact with us—in return the great invisible Spirit pours into the praying heart a stream of sacred comfort, keeps it in its time of trouble and gives it to rejoice in its moments of sadness. Oh, some of you are living witnesses that God talks with men! Had you never talked with Him, you would not be qualified to speak upon this question, but knowing that He hears you, and being conscious that He also answers you and speaks to you, you can declare and rejoice in the declaration that the secret of the Lord in this respect is with you. Why, the Christian makes communications to God of such a sort as he would not venture to make to his fellow men. I consider the confession of sins to a priest most degrading to that priest. To make his ear the common sewer of all the filth of a parish is horrible—and for any man to tell his sin at all to another is depraving to his own mind. But to tell it to God is a different matter, to lay bare his bosom, to let its inmost secrets be exposed to the great searcher of hearts, to pour out what one cannot say in words, nor even perhaps convey with signs before the great eye which still sees, the great searcher who discerns it all—oh, this is blessed! Every child of God can say, when he is in a right state, that there is no reserve or disguise in the dealings of his soul with God! Is there a care which I dare not cast on Him? Is there a sin which I would not humbly and tearfully confess before Him? Is there a need for which I would not seek relief from Him? Is there a dilemma in which I would not consult Him? Is there anything so confidential that I may not divulge to man, but which I may not breathe out to my God? Oh, when we are in spiritual health, we do verily pour our hearts before the Lord to the very dregs! We wear our heart upon our sleeve as we draw near to the Most High. I tell Him all my woes and weaknesses, all my sorrows and sins, likewise, so my secret is with Him. Then the Lord is pleased in return to manifest Himself unto His people. He shows to His trustful saints what He never shows to faithless sinners. When the sinner reads the Bible, he sees only the letter—that is all he can see—but the Christian sees the spirit of the Word! He perceives that "within this awful volume lies the mystery of mysteries"—and he is one of those—

"Happiest of the human race,
To whom their God has given grace,
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch to force the way."

Thus he enters into the secret chamber of revelation, while the unconverted, the unregenerate, the unsanctified, stand in the outside

court and find no entrance within the veil. The heart of God is poured out into the Christian's heart, so far as the infinite can disclose itself to the finite. And as we tell the Lord what we are, He is pleased to tell us what He is. Surely, dear friends, as these intercommunications go on, *it would be hard to say how richly the inmost secrets of God may become known to His privileged people*. Shall I be understood if I say that man may know a great deal more than he thinks he knows? He may know more of God than he knows he knows, for it is one thing to know, and another thing to know that we know! Do you notice how John says, "That we may know that we know Him"?—as if we might know Him and yet be hardly able to recognize how much we know Him. Now, many a time you have known the secret decrees of God, though you have not known that you knew them. "Oh," you say, "how is that?" Well, God decreed, purposed and determined to save such-and-such a soul. You felt an irresistible impulse to go and pray for that soul as you had never prayed before. You mentioned that particular person by name before God and then you went out and exercised all the spiritual grace you had in order to bring that soul to the knowledge of the truth of God—and God blessed your endeavor and that soul was saved. Now, how was this? Why, the secret purpose of God had been made to act mysteriously upon you! You became God's instrument—His conscious instrument in the fulfillment of it—and thus you were made privy to the decree, though scarcely aware that you were so!

I think there is such a harmony between the feeling of Christians and the purposes of God that you and I can never tell where these two unite, or where they separate. It often seems as if the Lord said to His people, "Now, I have ordained such-and-such things—in the volume of My book they are written—and you shall desire and purpose just such things in your heart! And so the things that are in your heart shall carry out the things that are in My book—I will not let you know it so as to go and tell it to others, but I will make you so know it that you will go and act upon it! I will let the secret of the Lord be with you." We know not how often God gives His people premonitions of what He is about to do, nor how frequently! Unknown to ourselves, we take a course of action which is precisely the right course, without our knowing why we took it—only that we are led and guided by the Holy Spirit into such a track. I believe that this is especially the case with the ministry of the Word. I have sometimes been very sharply taxed about this matter. I was, a few days ago, upbraided by a good soul for exposing all her faults from the pulpit! I have been, not merely now and then, but very often thought by some people to be so dreadfully personal that they did not know how they could bear it—and yet I never saw those people, except from the pulpit, and did not know anything at all about them! The Word of God is quick and powerful, and "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." When, therefore, we ask God to direct us in speaking His Word, it

is no marvel that the effect is searching! Ah, and did we always, with all our hearts, give ourselves up to the motions of His Holy Spirit, we would be led and guided in a mysterious manner which we, ourselves, would scarcely understand—but it would make full proof of the fact that the "secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him."

I will venture to say that *the Christian gets to know more of God, of the real essence of God, by divine grace than all the philosophies in the world could ever have taught him.* I read of God that He is a loving Father, that He is gracious towards the children of men. Now, if I fear Him with a filial reverence, He disposes me, by His grace, to love the souls of men—He makes me tender and compassionate. Thus I get to apprehend, by a devout sympathy, something of what His love, and tenderness, and compassion must be. To meditate upon the attributes of God is one means of seeking knowledge, but to be conformed to His image is quite another way of understanding Him. Not till God makes you like Himself can you know what He is! In proportion, then, as we grow in grace, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit more abundantly, we shall be more and more admitted into the secret of the LORD. The day is coming, beloved, when we shall know more of God by our hearts—to say nothing of our heads, which probably never will be able to find out the Almighty to perfection—we shall know more of God by our hearts than we ever thought it possible to know, because our hearts shall be filled with Him! Everything obnoxious to Him shall be chased out and we shall be like His only-begotten Son, dwelling in His light and basking in His love forever! "The secret of the LORD," as to His very character, "is with them that fear Him." As they thus go from strength to strength, their heart pulsates with a love like the divine love. Their souls yearn towards sinners with a benevolence like the divine benevolence. They begin to make sacrifices comparable, in kind, though not in degree, to the great sacrifice of God when He spared not His only-begotten Son. Their hearts move. Their spirits yearn. They cry over souls, as God is said to cry over them. "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together." Whenever God would picture Himself to us, He uses words suitable to our nature. But oh, how passing wonderful shall it be when God shall be seen in us, and we shall see God in ourselves—and so shall see God! That blessed promise, "The pure in heart shall see God," is but another rendering of our text—"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." I wish it were in my power to explore this testimony of the Lord more fully and expound it more clearly, but for the present I must leave these few simple thoughts with you and pass on to observe that we have—

II. A REFERENCE TO A FAVORED CLASS OF INDIVIDUALS.

A peculiar privilege is conferred on a peculiar people, for it seems that the secret of the Lord is with some men, but not with others. Who are they who possess this sacred gift? A great outcry has been raised in this country of late about class and class interests. In our manufacturing districts, particularly, the rights of the upper class, who find the capital, and the claims of the working class, who bring their skill and labor into the market, are paraded before us in hot debates which often lead to an angry lock-out on the part of the employers, or a sullen strike on the part of the employed. Such feuds seldom bring much credit to either party. A great deal may be said concerning some of each to their praise, and not a little concerning some of both to their censure. So long as the struggle lasts, it must cause much heart-burning. I would the day were come when all this class talk was over, that we felt and acknowledged the common ties and mutual obligations by which all men depend upon all men—each class being dependent for its welfare and prosperity upon each other class, even as—"God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth." Still, there always will be a favored class. God has so ordained it. But let me say they will neither be accepted because they are rich, nor rejected because they are poor. The favored class before the Lord *has nothing to do with any position in society!—*

"None are excluded then, but those,
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude."

Neither has this secret of the Lord anything to do with education. It is not with every Oxford graduate—it is only with a very few of them! The secret of the Lord is not with every Cambridge M.A. nor with every man who has taken his degree at any university. You may read the Scriptures in the original languages; with Hebrew and Greek you may be familiar. Excellent and profitable studies they are, but you cannot discover the secret of the Lord by mere classical attainments. No mathematical researches or astronomical observation can discover it to you. In vain does one mount to heaven and thread the spheres! Alike in vain does another walk the earth and beg the old rocks to tell him what happened before Adam held the lease of its broad acres, or tilled its soil! No, it is beyond the province of human learning, as it is foreign to the privilege of creature rank. Some people think that the secret of the Lord is lodged in mystic rites and draped in gorgeous ceremonies. There is among us a sect of ritualists who professes to have acquired it. They pretend to derive it from some man in lawn sleeves who put his hand on their heads! And if they cannot exactly communicate it, themselves, yet they can communicate a great deal, for they affirm that every little child sprinkled by them becomes, without more ado, a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven! With their guild I

have no fellowship—of their weird arts I know little. Still, they say it is so—and it is all right with the little ones, no doubt, if they die in infancy, for are they not buried in consecrated clay? Listen to these gentlemen, these "successors of the apostles," these men who have "gifts" which empower them to declare and pronounce absolution and remission of sins! Do you hear the gospel from them? Well you may from some of them, but then they tell you that they do not believe in the literal construction of the words they are paid to repeat, so they deliberately utter a lie! Or listen to others of them. Do they give you the gospel? No, they display themselves in petticoats, embroidered vestments, and such apparel as it were unlawful to appear in, save only when they are acting in their ecclesiastical theaters! You get no gospel truth from them; nothing but priestcraft from beginning to end! Were they honest, they would go at once to Babylon, to Rome, to the mother of abominations, and consort with their own kindred! Thus we say the rite of ordination confers no privileges, and restrains no abuses! It does not teach a man the secret of the Lord, for the best ordained priest in England may still be as ignorant of God, our enemies, themselves, being judges, as if he had never been ordained at all.

To whom, then, is it given to know the secret of the Lord, but to those who fear Him and hallow His name? To be conscious that I have sinned, to be humbled before God on account of it, to behold Jesus Christ as the way of atonement, to accept Christ as my Savior, to come to God, blessing Him that I am saved through His dear Son—to feel a love to God because of His grace to me, to yield up myself to His service, by His Holy Spirit to be led to live to His glory—this it is to fear Him and thus it is that His secret is with me! "Why," says one, "then the secret of the Lord may be with any poor servant girl!" Bless the Lord it may! "Oh, then," says another, "the secret of the Lord may be with any humble workman, even though he is an illiterate and uneducated man!" Yes, certainly it may! "Then," says yet another, "what becomes of the priesthood?" Why, I answer, we are all made priests! If we fear the Lord, we are admitted and initiated into the secret mysteries of religion—we become instructed in the way of the Lord, the Holy Spirit having promised that He will teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance, whatever Christ has told us. Though we cannot claim rank, nor wealth, nor diploma, we can yet humbly say, "The secret of the Lord is with us, for He has taught us, by His grace, how to live upon Him, how to trust Him, how to serve Him." "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him."

Do you answer to this description, my dear hearers? Do you walk in the fear of the Lord? Says one, "I am a member of a Dissenting church." I do not inquire about that, for it has nothing to do with the secret. Do you fear God, I ask you? "Well," says another, "I have always done my duty ever since I can remember, from my youth up." That is your duty toward

man, and it is well that you should never neglect it. But do you fear the Lord? Is the Lord the subject of your thoughts, the object of your love? And do you, therefore, revere and worship Him? If so, the promise is yours and the privilege shall not be withheld from you. "I want to know," says one, "which is right among all the contending sects." Well, go to the Bible—search the Scriptures—yet not as one who is proud of his own wits, but rather as one who fears the Lord greatly and inquires at His holy oracle prayerfully. Then, although you may not find every knotty point solved, or every quibble settled, you shall surely find this saying good, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." Come to the Lord for instruction and there is nothing in His Word which He will keep back from you any more than from others, for "the secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." And come to the Lord for guidance and you shall not be left in doubt what fellowship of believers to join, for, "it shall come to pass that in what tribe the stranger sojourns, there shall you give him his inheritance, says the Lord God." The last thing we have to notice is—

III. THE CHOICE AND PECULIAR MANIFESTATIONS WHICH GOD MAKES TO HIS PEOPLE.

He will show them His covenant. What a soft, sweet, encouraging assurance this covenant gives us! To see God in covenant is to find grace in His eyes. To serve a covenant God is perfect freedom and exquisite delight. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. Luther was known to say, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." The fear with which we think of God is all terror, dread and fright—in which we exceedingly tremble and quake until He unveils Himself in this mellow light of the covenant of peace! For what could the vision do but scare me to destruction? But God, in the covenant of His dear Son, is the hope, the desire, the delight of everyone that is godly—and their fear is not that of horror, but that of homage! How, then, does God teach His people His covenant? Much in every way; He shows them that His covenant is *everlasting;* it was made in Christ before the world began. It abides steadfast and will forever remain unchangeable! It is so sure that every blessing it provides is unconditional and irrevocable, being entailed upon all those who have an interest in its gracious provisions! He teaches them the fullness of this covenant, that it contains all that is necessary for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. He teaches them the freeness of this covenant—that it was made with them in Christ Jesus, not because of their good works, but because of the abounding of His grace towards them. He teaches them that this covenant is not the result of their tears or vows, their penitence or prayer, but that it is the *cause* of all these—ordered in all things and sure, it comprises all that their needs could lack, and all that their hearts could crave—it is all their salvation and all their desire! The Lord then shows His people that this covenant was made on their behalf. Ah, there is the beauty of it!

Each one of the blood-bought trophies of mercy is led to see that the covenant was made with David's Lord for him. So each heir of heaven sets to his seal that God is true and makes David's saying his own—"Though my house is not so with God, yet He has made *with me* an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." He also shows His people that this covenant is made with them by sacrifice through the precious blood of Jesus, wherein God smells a sweet savor of rest. No covenant could be of use to them, except it were a covenant made with blood and based on propitiation. They understand that the old covenant of works failed because the first Adam was not able to carry out his part of it. God spoke to Adam after this manner, "If you will be obedient, you and your children shall be happy." That, "if," proved fatal; Adam could not keep the condition. The second covenant is on another footing; it was made with Christ. "If You will be obedient, You and those in You shall be blessed." Christ was obedient, He kept the law. He suffered to the death His Father's will—and we come, without an, "if," or a, "but," to inherit the blessing which Christ has merited for us! Now it is no more, "If you do this, I will do that." It is, "You *shall* do this and I *will* do that." "A new heart *will* I give you; and a right spirit *will* I put within you; you shall repent of sin, you shall follow in My ways; you shall love Me; you shall serve Me; you shall persevere in holiness; and I will bless you." There is not an, "if," nor a, "but," nor a, "perhaps" to foul the stream of God's loving kindness! The covenant was made with every elect soul in Christ beyond the hazard of a doubt, and beyond the chance of a forfeiture!

Oh, soul, has God ever shown you this covenant? Do I hear anyone murmur that it is a horrible doctrine? Then I am quite certain he has never been shown it. Or do I hear another affirm that were he to believe it, he would live in sin? I think very likely he would. I do not doubt it. To sin is your propensity, whatever you believe! But mind this, I do not exhort you to believe in that which has never been revealed to you, and has nothing to do with you. But yet another voice greets my ear—it is that of a penitent who says—"I come to Christ just as I am. I welcome the promise! I thank God there is now nothing left for me to do in order to make the promise sure, or to make the covenant fast! I am a poor, lost, undone soul and throw myself at the foot of the bloody cross. I look up to the Savior and say, "Jesus, I trust You to save me. I altogether trust You. I believe You have saved me—saved me in such a way that I can never be lost, for the covenant that was made with me never can be broken and I shall never be cast away."

Surely, then, dear friend, you have no wish to tamper with the lusts of the flesh, or to wallow in uncleanness! The doctrine does not instigate you to live in sin! You would be a monster, indeed, if it did! No, you will say, "If God has made a covenant with me, saved me from the curse, and endowed me with blessing—out of gratitude to Him, what is there I can

render to Him for all His benefits? Nothing shall be too hard, nothing too heavy—

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

Let slaves go and work under the rod of the taskmaster if they will! Let the sons of the bondwoman pour contempt on the inheritance of the seed of promise if they like, but a seed shall serve Him, and it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation! The child of God has been shown the covenant—therefore he knows he shall never be cast out of the family, for the love of the Father towards him will never change. He cannot love us more—He will not love us less. Such love in Him begets more love in us. What manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

I can only pray that some hearts may be led to look to Jesus, that they may discover the choice secret. Christ is not only a party to the covenant and the representative of the covenant, but He is the very impersonation of the covenant itself! "I will give *Him*," says the Lord, "To be a covenant for the people." Oh, if you have looked to Christ, you need not despair! He is holy! He is true! He has the key of David which can unlock the secret treasury in which are stored all covenant blessings. Fear Him! It is the beginning of wisdom. Trust Him! It is the first breath of faith! Desire Him as newborn babies crave milk. Oh, that the fear of the Lord may haunt you through the watches of the night, and abide with you all the day long. So may the Lord bless you now and forever. Amen.

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

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ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED
NO. 3429

A SERMON
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"Accepted in the Beloved."
Ephesians 1:6.

I SHALL not attempt to do more than simply bring out the truth of God and leave it with you. Fine words and gaudy sentences, with such a text as this, would be a vain attempt to "paint the lily and gild refined gold." Let this bell ring and there is a depth of silver sweetness in it which will make the sanctified ear and heart glad with the fullness of joy. "Accepted in the Beloved."

"The Beloved." We all know to whom this refers. Our Lord is the Beloved of God. God is love, and Christ is God. He is One with the eternal Father and we can never tell—it were impossible for us to guess—what love there is between the Father and the Son, in their essential Deity. Jesus is the beloved of angels. It is their joy to sing praise unto "Him who was, and is, and is to come." He is the Beloved of the entire white-robed band who have washed those robes in His blood and who sing, "Unto Him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be glory." He is the Beloved of His saints, who are still wayfaring and warfaring here below. To Him their highest affections gather. He is dearer to them than all besides, "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." "The Beloved." Not only beloved, but, "*the Beloved*." This is a name for all the saints—"beloved"—for as John the Divine often writes in his epistles, "beloved, now are we the sons of God." All the family are beloved, but Christ, the Elder Brother, is "*the* Beloved." He is especially beloved, the choicest, the chief, who in this has the preeminence. How many times did God testify concerning Him that He was "*the* Beloved," when He said, "This is my Beloved Son." These waters of baptism remind us of the scene on Jordan's banks, when the Holy Spirit bore witness that He was the Beloved Son of God. In later life, even in the depths of His humiliation, the Father testified that this was the Beloved Son. To us, the saints, He is our Beloved Spouse. We sing of Him, as the song has it, even "the Song of Songs which is Solomon's," "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." We delight to think of Him under that title, under which the Church of God of old addressed Him. He is Beloved in all His offices to us, Beloved in all His characters, Beloved in the manger, Beloved in the shame and spitting, Beloved on the cross, Beloved on the throne! We cannot think of Him without our heart beginning to beat high and fast—

"He has engrossed my warmest love,
No earthly charms my soul can move,
I have a mansion in His heart,
Nor death nor hell can make us part."

Of all the titles that are given to Christ, there may be some that excel in splendor and others in sublimity, but surely this is among the chief for sweetness and expressiveness! It has the finger which touches our heart strings. "The Beloved."

But now to the text. And the first thing I think I see in the text is that "the Beloved" is *accepted of God*. The second thing I see is that the saints are "*in the Beloved*." And the third thing, that the saints are "*accepted in the Beloved*." It is clear in the text that "the Beloved" is—

I. ACCEPTED OF GOD.

It will delight you if you try in meditation to get a hold of this thought, of how infinitely acceptable Christ must be to God the Father. All other forms of acceptance must have their limit and boundary—but the acceptability of the Son of God to the First Person of the blessed Trinity must be altogether beyond either bottom or shore!

"The Beloved" must be acceptable to God *in His own person*. Is He not God, Himself, and how should it be that one Person in the Indivisible Unity should be otherwise than acceptable to the other? He is also man, but He is man born after a wondrous birth. "The Son of the Highest." The Holy Spirit overshadowed the virgin mother. In His Godhead and in His manhood, united as Mediator, He stands supreme in His Person. As Saul was head and shoulders above all the rest of the men of Israel, so has the Lord "anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows." Who can be likened to Him in Person? Beauty, where can you draw, if your fancy shall take all its range, anything that shall be comparable to Him? Designer of all things, the Most High God, "Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." What acceptance must there be in such a one as He is to the Most High God! You know that sometimes, in the sending of ambassadors, it is well to calculate whether the person chosen to be an ambassador will be adoptable to the foreign court. Now if he is a man of mean origin, a man ill-esteemed at home, it will be an insult to send him as an ambassador to another country. But if he is a man eminent and distinguished, admirable and admired, a man of high standing with his own Court, then he is the very person to represent the sovereignty of his country at another Court. See, then, what kind of representative we have to send up to the Father's Courts in heaven—one who, while He is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," is, nevertheless, "God over all, blessed forever." My soul, what better ambassador could you have? To whom could you entrust your concerns one half as well as to one so inconceivably excellent, so superlatively blessed? He is, then, acceptable in His Person!

And then, secondly, to God He is equally acceptable *in His character*. God is perfectly pure. He cannot bear the slightest trace of sin—and

Jesus is "holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners." God cannot look upon sin, as it is abhorrent to His nature, but He can look upon Christ, for "in Him was no sin." "The prince of this world comes," says He, "but has nothing on Me." "God is love," and to be acceptable with God in character, one must be full of love. Now Jesus is such! Was there ever one who had such pity on the ignorant and such "compassion on those that are out of the way"? Was there ever such a tender heart elsewhere as that which glowed in the Master's bosom and gleamed from His loving eyes? He was a mass of love! He was love performing and love suffering. Love made Him live as He did and love made Him die as He did! And love still pervades His nature—now that He lives on high, still loving the sons of men. Since God is love, then, and Christ is full of love, His character is suitable to God. You shall not find anything in Christ Jesus that does not conform with the God-like and the divine. See Him where you will, He is humble, meek and lowly—but He is still august and sublime. Even when He puts on the garb of the peasant, "woven from the top throughout," that garment shrouds the Deity and befits Him better than the purple robe befits Caesar on the throne! If He distributes alms, or says, "I thirst." If He is tempest-tossed on the sea of Galilee, if He rebukes the waves, if He feels Himself willing to die where man's suffering and weakness is most apparent, yet there is it most consistent with the character of God, for the Centurion, who stood beholding, said, "Certainly this was the Son of God." There is something harmonious in the nature of Christ to the character of God; and therefore, His character is always acceptable to the Most High.

Then, my brothers and sisters, God loves that which is incorruptible. Now our Savior was often tried, but He was never corrupted! He was tempted and bribed with the offer of a kingdom and, again, threatened with all the wrath of men—but He never started aside for a single moment from the straight line of integrity! His whole life was so pure, that although God "charges His angels with folly, and the heavens are not pure in His sight," yet in Jesus He sees no folly and no imperfection! He, even suffering as Savior, is pure, infinitely pure and incorruptible in the sight of God! So, beloved, the *character* of Christ is altogether acceptable to God, as well as His *Person*.

We may go a step further and say that the motive of Christ, as well as His outward character, must have been infinitely acceptable to God. The motive of Jesus Christ, in coming here below, was altogether unselfish. "Though He *was* rich," and had nothing to gain, "yet for our sakes He became poor, that we" (not Himself) "through His poverty might be made rich." It can truly be said of Him, "He saved others. Himself He could not save." "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." He emptied Himself out for us, and all out of pure love to those who had no love to Him—out of disinterested affection to those whose best return is but a feeble thanks, for what can

such poor worms as we ever render at our very best for "love so amazing, so divine"? Well does Dr. Watts say in one of our best hymns—

"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
But Your compassion is divine."

O Savior! You could have no motive to move You but that which is pure, and high, and lofty! Cleansed from everything like self, Jesus came that He might honor the justice of God. He would have man saved, but in such a way as not to derogate from the justice of the Most High. He would have no spots upon God's law, no slur upon the divine character and, there, as He kneels amidst the olives of Gethsemane, or there, as He staggers beneath the Cross, or there, as He gives His hands to the nails and His feet to the cruel iron, He is vindicating the eternal justice and severity of God by His labors, by His griefs and by His sacrifice of Himself to death! He must, then, moved by a motive so high as this, have been infinitely acceptable to heaven!

He was, then, acceptable in His person, acceptable in His character and acceptable in His inner motive from which that outward character sprang! And He was also acceptable *in all His work which He did on earth*. Cast your eyes along that work for a minute. In the first part of His life that work was active. In the second part and also in the first, there was a passive work being carried on. There was an active work of obedience to the Father's will. And what obedience it was! Never for a moment asking to be excused from a command, or to have a release from the sacred sacrifice—it was always work with all His heart, till He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up."—

"Such was Your truth and such Your zeal,
Such deference for Your Father's will.
Such love and meetness so divine,
I would transcribe and make them mine."

The whole life of Christ is the paragon of perfection, the mirror in which every virtue is reflected! He could not be otherwise than acceptable to God in the active righteousness of His life. And when we come to His passive righteousness, what shall I say of that? Track Him, my brothers and sisters, to the garden and hear Him say, "Not as I will, but as You will." Watch Him before Pilate, when He obeys God by keeping silent, and "like a sheep before her shearers, He opened not His mouth." Follow Him then, and behold Him on the tree and note how careful He is that the Scriptures may be fulfilled—how still, with whole-hearted consecration, He never starts back for a moment from the paying of the great ransom price which was to deliver His people from eternal bondage! There cannot be any doubt in your minds, but that the blessed advocate and surety of our souls must be accepted before the Lord—in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of an acceptance that we can scarcely understand when we see Him giving up all the floods of His life, pouring them out like water before the Lord! In person, in character, in motive, in work, Jesus Christ is infinitely accepted!

Now that He was so accepted is not only clearly to be seen by these reflections, but the fact is proved by this, that the Father raised Him

from the dead! He saw no corruption, but He must have remained in the tomb, or the work had not been finished. He was "justified in the Spirit by the resurrection from the dead." His acceptance of God was proved when God brought Him from the dead! So, too, His ascending. His ascending up on high and leading captivity captive proves that He was accepted! His admission into heaven proves that He was accepted! His sitting at the right hand of the Father proves that He has finished the work! And His present reigning over all the world in His mediatorial government is the reward of His sufferings—and His Second Advent, for which we look with devout anticipation—is to be a yet fuller declaration that He is "the Beloved" of God, and infinitely acceptable in the Father's sight!

Thus much, a few stirrings, as it were, of the surface of this great sea touching, as a swallow does, the waves. I have given you but these few hints. Think them over. And now, and very briefly—

II. ALL BELIEVERS ARE IN CHRIST "ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

They are "in the Beloved," then, or in Christ. How are believers in Christ? They are in Christ *as their representative*. Just as the whole human race was in the loins of Adam, so the whole elect people were in the loins of Christ. It is said by the apostle, "Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him." So were all of us in the loins of Jesus Christ—always there in Him, for is it not written, "He shall see His seed"? And we are His seed! We spring in our new life from Him. He is the corn of wheat which was cast into the ground to die, that it might not abide alone, and now it brings forth much fruit. We are in Christ as the branch is in the vine, as the stone is in the building. We are in Christ as the members are in the head. He represents us. When we talk of counting heads, we mean counting the whole body, so Christ, the head, represents all the members and He stands for us. We were in Christ, beloved, according to the words of the Holy Spirit—we were in Christ in our election, "according as He has chosen us in Him." There is a personal election of every child of God, but that personal election is connected with Christ—

"Christ is My first elect, He said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our head."

We were in Christ in the suretyship engagements of the eternal covenant. What Christ spoke before the world was, He spoke as for us. His prescient eye foresaw our existence, foreknew our ruin. He espoused us unto Himself, then, and stood in the Council Chambers of Eternity, the surety and sponsor of His people's souls!

We are in Christ, according to Scripture, *by judicial dealing.* That is to say, God deals with Christ as if He were dealing with us. "Awake, O sword"—against whom? Against the sinning sheep? No, "against the shepherd, against the man who is My fellow, says the Lord." "For the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way, and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." In

Him in the choice, in Him in the covenant, and then in Him in God's dealings with Christ as a judge!

So now, further, blessed be His name, we are in Him *by a vital union*. There is a living unity between Christ and His people, as between the husband and the wife, as between the branch and the stem. We are one with Him by vital union. Have you realized this, believer? Do you seek to live as one that is one with Jesus? Do you try to act as one that has learned his unity to the heavenly One, to the Second Adam? It is so. If you have believed, you are one with Him!

And we are one with Him *by a fixed decree of God that never shall be broken*. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Who shall tear one limb from the sacred body of Jesus? Who shall cut away one truly quickened branch from that celestial vine? He preserves those who are in Him! He covers us with His feathers and under His wings do we trust—His truth is our shield and buckler! You may divide and you must divide the dearest bonds of earth, but you shall never cut the knot that was tied in old eternity, which bound Christ to His people. "I in them, and they in Me, that they may be perfect in one." There shall never come a time when He will be ashamed to call them brethren, and never to one of them whom the Father has given Him shall there come a time when they shall refuse to call Him Master and Lord. We are "in" Him, then!

Now this is a great mystery. The apostle always speaks of it as such. But it is one of the most blessed mysteries in the whole compass of revelation. Dear friend, never forget that God does not deal with you as an individual—*He deals with you as in Christ*. If you stood as an individual, you would perish, for you will be sure to fall. You are so weak and frail and apt to sin, that with the best resolutions and intentions, you would be sure to turn aside and, therefore, the blessed Father has put you in a safer place—He has put you in Christ! And now your interests are Christ's interests. As I have often told you, you cannot drown a man's foot unless you can drown his head—and if our head is in heaven, we are safe. And He, our Head, is there! When your vessel tosses in the storm, you may hear a voice that says, "Fear not, the boat is safe; you carry Jesus and all His fortune." Christ is one with His people—they must sink or swim together. Has He not, Himself, said it, "Because I live, you shall live also"? The saint, then, is "in" Him. Now we come to the full text, and that is, that—

III. THE SAINTS ARE "ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

Their *persons* are accepted. You know there are some persons that are not acceptable to you. You would sooner live in heaven with them, forever, than you would like to live a quarter of an hour with them on earth! There are some people of that kind to whom we take a very natural objection. And I suppose it is not possible, although we would treat them always with kindness and so on, that we would ever desire them as companions. They are not acceptable to us. And now it does seem amazing that we, who have not any personal recommendation, but very

much in us that might render us obnoxious to God, are nevertheless acceptable in our persons, through Jesus Christ Our Lord! Yes, you with no talents, you with no wealth, no position, no great friends—you who can do so little when you do your best—you, though the garment you wear is not of the finest, but of the very lowliest material, are acceptable to God! God looks not according to the outward appearance, but He looks to the heart. And whenever He sees a simple trust in Jesus, which is a token of our being in Jesus, our person is acceptable to Him because, you see, He does not look at us as we are, but He looks at us through Christ! He looks through the wounds of Jesus upon us poor sinners, as a verse of one of our hymns runs—

"He in them the sinner sees,
Looks through Jesus' wounds on me."

If one of you were away now in India, and after you had been living there for years, you saw a person very poor and ragged, who nevertheless said, "I used to be a servant to your mother," why, it would bring such recollections of that country homestead and of the dear old times when you were one of the happy family, that I am sure your heart would be touched and though there might be no reason whatever in the person why you should relieve him, yet because of his connection with that dear name of mother, perhaps in heaven, you would put your hand into your purse at once! Now God sees such a connection between us and Christ that He esteems us for Christ's sake! "My Son loved that man," He says. "My Son died for that woman. My Son on the tree laid down His life for that poor, humble, penitent one. I love him for My Son's sake." Now will you try and get a hold, if you can, by faith, that sweet thought, that your person—you, you yourself, are accepted before God in the Beloved this night—and although you cannot accept yourself, but find much to complain of, yet, still, if you are in Jesus, you are—

"So near, so very near to God,
You cannot nearer be!
For in the Person of His Son,
You are as near as He.
So dear, so very dear to God,
You cannot dearer be—
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love to thee!"

"Such is His love to *me*," you may say.

Now, because the person is accepted, the next thing is *our prayers and praises* are "accepted in the Beloved." We sometimes kneel down to pray, but we cannot pray. Those that use a book and bring God dead prayers can always be alike, but that which comes from the heart varies—and there are times with living prayers when the most you can do is to groan. A sigh, a sob, is the most you can get out. But a mother would sooner hear her own child sob than another child sing. There is music about that dear child's voice that moves her heart and touches her spirit. And so the inward meanings of a broken heart are music in the ears of the Infinite Jehovah, and He accepts the sincere prayers of His people, let

them be as broken as they may! And as for our praise, well, we do not always sing our praises—we feel them, we talk them, and when we do sing them, our voices are not, perhaps, as sweet as we would desire. Never mind. Our Lord does not judge our hymns by the same tests as gentlemen of musical tastes would do! He hears the ring of the heart and if that is right, there may be a false note or two, perhaps, in the voice, but if the right note is in the heart, the praises are accepted, and the prayers are, "accepted in the Beloved," for our prayers do not come up before God as they are. It is with us, as it is with some poor men. They want to get up a petition. They come, perhaps, to us. They want us to petition to some great man for some help. "Well, write our your petition." They bring it. "Oh," we say, "it will never do to send that—here is this word spelt wrong, that sentence is ungrammatical. You have not addressed him at all in the right style. Come, I will take it, and I will make a fair copy of it for you, and send that with my name appended. It may have some weight." So does Christ do with us. He takes our poor blotted and blurred prayers and He just re-writes them, and then He presents them to His Father's throne. He takes the incense we bring and puts it into His own golden censor. He puts in the coals of fire and then, as He swings that censer to and fro in His own priesthood before the throne of God, your prayers and mine, your praises and mine, smoke like sweet perfume before the presence of the Most High, "accepted in the Beloved."

And, brothers and sisters, just *so is it with all the work we do for Christ and all the gifts we bring*. It happens on Sunday, perhaps, sometimes when the bread is bought and the supply got in for the family, that you have very little to give. "Well, here is a penny for the orphanage." You must give God something, you think. You would give Him more if you could. You only wish you had tens of thousands of pounds you could give. Well, it is very little, and nobody knows who gives it, still, it is "accepted in the Beloved." If it is given for His sake, I tell you that every penny is "accepted in the Beloved." Does not the Lord say so? The two mites that make a farthing, which were the widow's living, were so accepted that He could not help speaking about them—and publishing to all the world in this Book, the Bible, to be handed down throughout all time—as long as there shall be a Bible in the Christian Church! The other night you talked with a little child, or you gave away a tract. You tried to do something—to lead someone to Christ. Well, that was all "accepted in the Beloved." You did it with a single eye to God's glory. You thought you did it very badly and that there was much imperfection mingled with it—but Christ washed it all—and when it was all fair and clean, He presented it and it was accepted!

And here is a mercy (I will add only one other word to this line of thought)—*the whole life of the Christian*, so far as it is the outgrowth of the life within, is "*accepted in the Beloved*." That morning you awoke, when the heart rose up in prayer for keeping during the day; that bended knee at the bedside, when the soul commits itself to the Father of Spirits;

that family gathering, when the prayer is offered that the household may be kept during the day; that blessing at the eating of bread; that thankful heart to God, when the morning's meal is finished; those brief sudden prayers during the business of the day; that word put in for Christ when the conversation ran the other way; that thankful return home at night; that evening prayer; that lifting up of the soul to God in thankfulness to carry you through another day—all that, the humblest part of it, was all "accepted in the Beloved." Brothers and sisters, it is very, very delightful to think that if I preach a sermon for Christ it is accepted, but I want you to think that if you housewives are about the house, doing your business there for your husband and children, you are as much accepted there as I am when I am preaching! That prayer-meeting was very acceptable. Yes, and I know how acceptable it was when you sat up that night with a sick man. It was done for Jesus' sake. The man who addresses thousands is accepted, but he that sits down and talks, even to a little child, is just as much accepted, and accepted in the same way, too, for it is only "in the Beloved" that either the big or the little can be at all! The bullock was offered and God accepted it; the kid was offered and God accepted that. And the reason was because they were both put upon the same altar, and both burnt with the same fire. Christ is the altar, and Christ the fire—and so our sacrifices are "accepted in the Beloved."

I think these words were the favorite words of that dear man of God, Mr. Harrington Evans, "Accepted in the Beloved." He used to often repeat them in his sermons and, if I remember rightly, when he was dying and his deacons needed a message to be given to the church, to let them know what was the state of mind of their pastor at the time of death, he said, "Go and tell them I am accepted in the Beloved." Oh, dear hearer can you say this? There is more eloquence in these words than in all the eloquence of Demosthenes, or in all the glowing periods of Caesar! To say, "I am accepted in the Beloved," is better than to be able to say, "I am the owner of the Indies, or the possessor of the world." "Accepted in the Beloved." Remember, there is many a religious person who is not "accepted in the Beloved," for the moralists, the religionists that like not Christ, are not accepted! They pray, and they read the Scriptures, and they attend their place of worship. They are baptized—they come to the altar—but it is all nothing if they do not come to Christ! All these things are nothing to any of them if they are not in Christ. We hold that we should baptize none but those who profess their belief in Christ. And it seems to us that apart from a saving faith in Christ, it is a mere mockery—and if given to children, or even to an unconverted person—it is more likely to make them think there is efficacy in the sacrament than to do them any kind of good. Thus we would have you touch nothing at the Lord's Table until you have first come to Jesus. Then the baptism—and then the Lord's table will be profitable helps to you in remembering Christ, and you will be accepted in them, "in the Beloved." But you must get "in" Him first, for baptism is nothing, and the Lord's Supper nothing,

without Christ! First, you must get the substance, and then the shadow will follow. And these things are only shadows—they only set forth the substance! And if any come to the shadow, tonight, who have not got the substance, they have no business to come and on their heads will be the guilt. We must first be in Him. Whether you are an open sinner or outwardly moral, remember you are not accepted, otherwise, for it is not your conduct, not your outward life that will do apart from Christ. It is union to Christ—and faith brings us that! A simple trust in Jesus, and we are "in" Jesus and "accepted in" Jesus! But without that, we are "without Christ, without hope, and alien from the commonwealth of Israel."

The Lord bless this simple meditation to His people, and His shall be the praise forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 1; 2:1.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* He wishes them divine grace, first, and peace afterwards, which is the right and natural order. There is no lasting peace without grace. There is no peace worth having which does not spring from a work of grace in the soul. "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* How dear the Father is when we view Him in association with the Redeemer. Never do the saints seem to delight so much in God as when they behold Him in the person of Jesus Christ. Then is He inexpressibly lovely to us and we preach Him with joy and delight. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. *Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* "Blessed," says he, "be God, who has blessed us." Well may we bless Him with our feeble thanks who has blest us with His mighty mercies! Nothing makes a man bless God like God's blessing him! "He has blessed us," says the apostle, "with all spiritual blessings." The children of God have not only *some* blessings, but all they need! They are all theirs— for all time and for all eternity—but they are all in Christ. There is no blessing out of Christ. All the fullness of blessing dwells in Jesus and in Him only! And if you would be blessed, you must come to Christ for a blessing. He has "blest us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

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.* The first great blessing of the covenant of grace is our election. We were chosen, but chosen in Christ—chosen not because we were holy, but chosen that we should be holy! The great objective of the divine choice is

our holiness. And let no man say that He is chosen of God unless God is working in Him to this divine end, namely, holiness of character!

5. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.* After election comes adoption. Men are not by nature the children of God—they are heirs of wrath. And this is very clear because a man never adopts his own children. But adoption in itself proves that by nature we are not the children of God—He adopts us. "Then are you begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Happy they who know the adoption—who feel in themselves the spirit of children and can cry, "Abba, Father," as they look up to God tonight! This is in Christ Jesus, for nothing comes to us except by Him.

6. *To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.* Christ is so acceptable to God that that acceptance is sufficient to spread over all those who are in Him. And tonight every believer here is accepted before God, but it is through Jesus Christ. Do notice that! Nothing comes but by that silver pipe. "He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

7. *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.* Redemption by Christ, forgiveness by Christ, still everything through the crucified! Those dear wounds of His are the five sacred founts from which a world of blessing flows to bless poor needy sinners. Well may we say, "None but Christ," for, indeed, there is none but Christ who can bless us!

8-10. *Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: even in Him.* All the things that are in Christ are to be gathered together—believing Jews no longer to be divided from believing Gentiles. Today the Church of God is separated—disfigured and weakened by divers sects and parties, but it shall not be always so. There is a gathering under the Christ and He will, in the fullness of time, perfectly accomplish it.

11, 12. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will: That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.* Some people are dreadfully frightened at that word, "predestination." I am always astonished when members of the Church of England are so, for if they will turn to their own Articles, they will find that the high and comfortable doctrine of predestination is taught there. It is to be wisely handled, but it is not to be gagged and sent into a corner, as it is by some. Are there truths in Scripture that are not to be taught? If any say so, then I charge them with being like the Jesuit who hides a part of what he believes! No, the whole of God's truth is to be declared, and whatever we find in this book, that are we to state!

The keeping back of precious truths of God will be required of such as are guilty of it at the last great day.

13-23; Chapter 2:1. *In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. 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: 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, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us 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. And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* So that what He did for Christ, He has done for you! He raised Him and He has raised you. And having begun thus to quicken you, He will go on to lift you up and to exalt you till you sit with Him upon His throne!

The only question, dear friends, is this—Do we belong to those of whom Paul here speaks? We look to the first verse to see who they are and we find he is addressing the faithful in Christ Jesus. That is, those who are believing in Christ Jesus. If we are believing in Him, then all the privileges which are mentioned in this chapter belong to us and we are quickened—and we shall be exalted even as Christ is, at the Father's right hand! So be it, gracious Lord!

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CHIDING AND CHEERING
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"Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" John 14:9.

THIS chapter gives us a very delightful picture of the companionship and kindly conversation which were kept up between our Savior and His 12 disciples when He dwelt with them in this world. Though they looked up to Him as if they felt there was none upon earth beside Him, yet they were as simple and free in speaking to Him as if they merely talked to one another. And did not He behave to them like a true friend, always mindful of their childishness, but gentle, tender, and patient? Warning without wounding, correcting without much censure, and comforting them without concealing the dangers to which they were exposed? Thus we notice how they speak to Him with a natural, easy familiarity. And He talks to them in full sympathy with their weakness, teaching them little by little as they are able to learn. They ask just such questions as a boy might ask of his father. Often they show their ignorance, but never do they seem timid in His presence, or ashamed to let Him see how shallow and hard of understanding they are. Yet He is never petulant with them. Even though He would chide them for their dullness, His rebukes are not harsh. Thus, when Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us," Jesus answers him with a question which quietly rebukes his simplicity: "Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" What lenience, what compassion! "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Oh, how should the children of such a Father cling to His knees, sit at His feet, hang on His lips and pour out their hearts before Him! Such, beloved, was the demeanor that Jesus loved to exhibit towards His disciples! And such was the behavior that He liked to encourage on their part towards Himself. As there were no chills in that friendliness of His, so there could hardly be much shyness or backwardness in those conversations of theirs. I linger on the picture. He, on whose brow majestic sweetness reigns, is all generous, condescending and, I might almost say, He is affable, while they, poor in spirit, weak in faith, grow open and ingenuous, confidential and confiding in His society.

Language fails me to describe to you what I see in the text and its surroundings. Here is the Man, Christ Jesus, divine in His Person, in His character and in His conduct, unveiling the Father to babes in grace who

do not and cannot understand the charm that first drew them and then bound them to Him! But He who once sojourned here below, now sits exalted high at the right hand of God. In bodily presence He is not among us. He is not to be seen by mortal eyes, yet in spirit He abides with us and His presence is known and felt by gracious hearts. Believe me, then, He is the same Jesus! He is by no means changed. The terms on which He would have us live with Him and walk with Him are far above mere service. He calls us "friends." Why, do you think He does that? Is it because we have done so much for Him? No, it is because He has done so much for us, and told us so much, and kept nothing back from us! In truth, He is our friend and counselor, and He would have us come to Him and ask His advice in the most frank and simple manner. When we feel that we lack wisdom, He never upbraids us, but He always gives liberally to those who ask Him. We may play the child with Him—He deigns to be pleased with our childish prattle. Our prayers may be full of inquiries. Our supplications may be laden with difficulties that we cannot unravel. Yet He will condescend to explain them all, and by His Spirit He will continue to teach and lead us further into the truth of God. Oh, how I wish we always cultivated this childlike spirit towards Jesus, for He always has a compassionate spirit towards us!

What dull scholars we all are! "Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me?" These words suggest two clarifications, on each of which I shall have a few remarks to offer. First, *notwithstanding the highest privileges that can be enjoyed in obtaining instruction, we may yet remain ignorant of Jesus Christ;* and secondly, *when we do know Him, the most favored disciples have still much to learn*. So far as our religious training is concerned—

I. THE BEST OF MEN CANNOT IMPART TO US A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

Here were apostles who had been with Jesus, Himself, for three years in His public labors and in His private retirement. They had been, as it were, students in His college: He Himself had been their tutor. They could not have been placed in more advantageous circumstances! No better tutor could have been found. He taught them both by His works and by His words. He was constantly doing miracles and performing wondrous actions, by which He showed His glory and revealed His nature. But there were some of them that, after all this teaching, did not know—did not know what? Why, they did not know *Him*! They did not know the main point of all His teaching. They did not know the teacher, Himself! He had been so long with them, and yet they did not know Him! I am not now, in this first part of our discourse, alluding so much to Philip, whose knowledge was imperfect, his light but a glimmer and his thoughts, therefore, often perplexed, as I am to Judas Iscariot. The career of that unhappy man—his calling, his course, his character, his conduct, his crime and the consequences of his crime—all conspire to

produce a picture on which we gaze with wild amazement! And as we ponder it, we feel a sinking at the inmost heart. It shows us how near a man may be to Christ in the daily walks of life. How much he may see of Christ in His works of mercy toward the children of men, and how often he may hear of Christ the words of counsel and comfort, of wisdom and warning— and yet be totally ignorant of Christ, deriving no virtue from Him, entering into no sympathy with Him—till at length he falls away to perish with an awful, terrible destruction! Or, to make the peril more thoroughly our own, it would appear that we might associate with the followers of Christ in our homes, have constantly before our eyes the charities which are dispensed in the name of Christ, and be privileged to listen to the most enlightened and eloquent preachers of Christ—and yet never discern Him as the Son of God, sent of the Father, the very essence and quintessence of the covenant of grace! His name may be most familiar to our ears, while, alas, our hearts are alien to Him! Had Judas known his Master more truly, could he have dealt Him so treacherously? Had He known Christ to be One with the Father, would he have sold Him for 30 pieces of silver? Had he known Him to be "God over all, blessed forever," would he have betrayed Him to the chief priests? Oh, no! Though he had seen Him tread the sea and heard the voice that called back Lazarus from the tomb, yet Judas saw only the man, the Nazarene, whom he could sell and give over traitorously to His foes! Certainly he did not so know Jesus as to trust Him—he had never yielded up his soul to rely upon the Messiah, the Christ, the appointed, the anointed Savior. Judas was pre-eminently one who, though he had been a long time with Christ, yet knew Him not in the matter of saving faith. And I am sure he did not know Him so as to love Him. If he had loved Him, he would not have deceived Him, or given Him the traitorous kiss. Learn, then, from Judas' example, rather than from Philip's, just now, that you and I may have been hearers of the Word for years and yet may not know Jesus!

Oh, but if we do know Him, let us be very grateful that the Holy Spirit has taught us something of His sacred mission! How much more, if you have been made acquainted with the dignity and excellence of His Person, and confessed Him to be the Son of God! What thanks will you then render unto the Father? Remember what Christ said to Simon Peter when he proved that he knew Him beyond all the rumors that were floating about, beyond all the opinions that were entertained, beyond all the prejudices that were nursed among the rulers or the people of those days. He said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you, but My Father who is in heaven." No minister can make us know Christ! No book, no, not even the Bible, itself, apart from this celestial teaching! So Paul prays "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." This will make Jesus Christ in the Deity of His

Person, in the excellence of His work, in the love of His heart, in the faithfulness of His character, to be truly known by us, so that we shall trust Him implicitly and love Him undividedly! I do beg to press this very earnestly upon many of you here present. The question of our text has a strong admonition, when set in this light, for some of you. Has not Jesus been, as it were, a long time with you, you who are regular attendants at this place of worship? Ah, you have discerned His presence by the words spoken and the signs worked in your midst. When we have preached the gospel earnestly and faithfully, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, as at least we sometimes have preached it, then Jesus has come very near to you—often and often has He pleaded with you—you have felt a presence greater than that of man while His truth has been declared. "Has He been with you so long and yet have you not known Him?" That He has been with you is certain, for His saints bear witness of Him. While you have been sitting on these seats, there have been all around you gracious hearts that have rejoiced because they have seen the Savior! Sorrowing hearts have been relieved of many cares, and weeping eyes whose tears have been wiped away. The presence of Jesus has made the heartstrings of many here to sound like harps of joy! Has He been with you so long, near unto you, seen by your neighbors and yet have you not known Him? Oh, poor souls! Poor Philip! Poor John! Poor Mary who could sit in such an assembly where others saw the Savior, and yet not to have known Him! Moreover, Jesus has been here, for many like you *have* seen Him. Perhaps your own wife has been converted. Your brother has seen the Lord. Your sister has come to know Christ as her Savior. And so long has He been with you that now you could count some dozen or more of your companions that have come to know Jesus, yet you have not known Him! Oh, it is hard to live where divine grace is freely distributed, and yet have none of it yourself! Where there is a general famine, as there lately was in the city of Paris, each man bears the stress with some patience, the more so because others are in a same plight. But oh, to starve in this city, when you see others feasting on plenty! Oh, this is sad, sad work! And some of you are being lost, while others are being saved—the very Sabbaths when others find Jesus, you go away without a thought of Him! The sermon which pierces others' hearts glides past you! The exhortation which points others to Calvary, you hear, but never heed! You are still a stranger to Him, though He has come so very rear you! And has it been so long that He has been with you, and yet, and yet, have you not known Him? Oh, this is grievous!

"So *long,"* the Savior says, have I been with you so long—*so long?* I must linger just one minute on that word. To be an unbeliever a day or even an hour after you have heard the gospel is a very long time. A day! What does it mean? "Only a day," you will sometimes say. At another time you say, "a whole day," with a prolonged emphasis. You know time must often be measured by the condition in which a man is placed. To be

beneath a lion's claw, or with one's arm in a lion's mouth five minutes is a great deal too long! It is a dreadful condition to have life in jeopardy and to be so long in fear. I have heard of one who fell down a deep crevice upon a glacier—between the deep blue ice. If you look down and throw a stone, it is long before you hear the sound, showing that the stone has reached the bottom. A traveler once slid down one by accident, and there he lay, wedged in by the ice. I think it was fully an hour before the ropes were brought. Why, that must have seemed a dreadful while to wait! An hour, you know, in good society, cheerfully spent, seems short, but an hour between the jaws of death, how dreadful! Now, an unbeliever is in as great a danger as that, and even in greater danger! He is under God's anger every minute that he is an unbeliever! It is a long time to be in jeopardy of your soul; a long time to be under the sentence of death; a very long time to be without hope. Ah, but did I speak of *hours?* Did I speak of *months? Years,* rather must I come to, for it has been many years with some of you! You remember your mother's pleadings, the Sunday school teacher's entreaties and now the gray hairs begin to appear here and there upon you, and you are still unsaved! "Have I been with you so long?" Perhaps you don't think it long, but it is long to God! You know if you have a child that has been very, very disobedient, and you say to him, "Now do as I tell you," he waits in stubborn silence. Some minutes afterwards you say, "My child, I must be obeyed. Do it." Still he looks angry and sullen, and bites his lips. It is a long time for you to wait—you feel you must soon chastise him. Oh, what a long time it has been for God to be waiting! There are some men whom you cannot provoke for a minute without rousing their temper and exciting their resentment. Who among us could stand such provocation, say, for an hour? I am afraid the best tempered man here, if incessantly provoked from morning to night for a week, would find that it needed much more grace than he had in stock to keep him from anger; but for 40 years to provoke the Lord to anger? Marvel not that He was grieved, yes, and aggrieved with that generation. "Have I been so long time with you?" Has Christ been so long in your midst? Have His words sounded in your ears? Have you seen His deeds of mercy in blessing others? And yet all this while, with you so long and you do not know Him? You have not desired to trust Him, but you have bid Him go His way to wait your convenience—you intend to send for Him. Take care lest that convenient season comes not until the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and the day of grace is over with you! Oh, may the question ring an alarm in your conscience! I commend it to your earnest attention, all of you who are unsaved!

And now I propose to address a few thoughts to the people of God. Beloved friends, by the teaching of God's Spirit, we do know the Savior! Of a truth we know the Son of Man to be one with the Father. We have been taught to discern in the face of Jesus of Nazareth the express image

of God. We love Him. We reverence Him, we adore Him as our God, the Redeemer of our souls. We have much joy and much peace in believing and worshiping. Now, with all this knowledge, it is very possible—no, I think it is quite certain—that—

II. ALL OF US HAVE A GREAT DEAL MORE TO LEARN.

Here and there, at many a turn, our vision is so clouded, our faith so weak, our memory so treacherous, Jesus might say to each of us, as He said to Philip, "Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me?" *We are slow to acquaint ourselves with our Lord and Master*, though He is with us. This is all the more strange, because, if a man lives with you, you pretty soon think you know him. You who have long held communion and kept company, as it were, with Jesus, ought to have known Him better than you do. Some men you cannot know because they are so changeable. You think you know them today, yet they are very different tomorrow. But "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." I remember some 12 or 15 years ago I was asked—very earnestly asked by a painter to sit for my portrait. I did sit some 10 or 12 times, and at the end of each sitting, when I looked at what he had done, I thought the picture less like me than it had been before! He seemed to be much of the same opinion, though he was an eminent and skilled artist. At last he dashed his brush across the canvas and gave up his task in despair. When I asked him why, he said, "I never see your face twice alike—it is quite impossible for me to paint you." No such complaint can be made of our Lord's character! Or, at least, though a thousand fresh beauties rise to our view as we gaze on His lovely face, and though the majesty and the meekness that blend in Him surpass all power of delineation, yet He is evermore Jesus—the same, ever lovely, ever kind and true, ever gracious—therefore, by resorting to Him and communing with Him, we ought more and more to know Him! Some people, it is true, you cannot know—they are so retiring and reserved. However long you live with them, you cannot make their acquaintance. They practice so much restraint curbing their feelings, hiding their thoughts, and sparing their words that you see not themselves. They show you not what they are, but what they would appear. Whether it is because they are proud, or because they are timid, from self-esteem or from diffidence, they veil the features of their mind, and it is only on some remarkable occasion, through a sudden grief or an unexpected joy, that they look, and act, and speak with perfect freedom and natural simplicity! Not so our Savior—He reveals Himself with open face. He wears His heart upon His sleeve. He is frank and ingenuous with His people. "If it were not so, I would have told you," He said to His disciples, as if He could appeal to them, and their conscience could witness that He had kept back no secrets from them—that between Him and them there was no reticence—that all He had they should have and all He left they should be privy to. How ought we, then, to know Christ, since He is

neither changeable nor reserved? And yet, brothers and sisters, to how limited an extent do we really know Him!

In various particulars *our ignorance, or rather our lack of perception, is palpable*. Some of the true servants of our Lord—perhaps there are such here present—do not know the very alphabet of His teaching! They discern not the great doctrines of the gospel so as to rejoice in them. Does Jesus say, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you"? And again, "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit"? They start back frightened at the doctrine of election, and shudder at the very sound of a predestinating purpose! Or does He say, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish"? They are shocked at the doctrine of final perseverance and bleat out their cries of distress as though they thought that nothing could be more unsafe than security—timorous creatures! I do not think this lack of wisdom is as much their fault as their misfortune. They were taught, when they were young, to be afraid of these doctrines—they then turned a deaf ear to them—and now they have gotten old, they are rather perplexed than comforted by them!

Understand me, my dear brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ loved you, and He tells you the Father Himself loved you before the foundation of the world! He did not begin to love you after you loved Him. Is that a new truth of God to you? That is the doctrine of election! You have been denying it! You thought it was a horrible and dangerous presumption. Have you known Christ so long and not found that out yet? Now, here is another doctrine: Jesus Christ will always love you. Whom once He loves, He never leaves, but loves them to the end. That is the doctrine of final perseverance. You have been afraid of that, have you not? Well, but have you known Christ and not found that out? Do you think He can change? Do you believe that He will make you a member of His body and cut you off? Do you imagine that He will die for you and then let you perish? "If, when you were an enemy, you were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, you shall be saved through His life." My dear brothers and sisters, I will not argue that point with you, but I do believe that if you knew Jesus Christ better, you would think differently, for any man who supposes that Christ did not love His people before the world began, or that He will not love them when the world has ceased to be, may well hear Jesus say, "Have I been so long with you, and yet have you not known Me, My friend Arminius? Have you not found Me out yet, so as to know that I am God, that I change not and, therefore, the sons of Jacob are not consumed?"

But some of His saints *do not know their Lord in the tenderness of His heart*, and the richness of His forgiving mercy! Perhaps there is a believer here who has fallen into some great sin. My brother, my sister, I am grieved enough to hear it, and I trust your grief is more than you can express. If like David, you have gone astray and done evil in the sight of

heaven, then I hope, like David, you will feel broken bones and have David's penitence to go to God again for fresh forgiveness. After making a profession by faith, you have fallen into sin and sunk into despondency. Jesus Christ appears to you and He says, "Soul, have you sinned after coming to Me? Have you sinned and brought My name into dishonor? I am still ready to forgive you. Come and put your trust again in Me, and your transgression shall be blotted out." Doubt whispers, "Lord, I cannot see how You can forgive this." "Why," He would say, "have I been so long with you, and yet you do not know Me? When did I ever refuse to forgive one of My servants? Did not Peter deny Me? Yes, with oaths and cursing? And what did I do to Peter? Did I say, Peter shall never be My servant again? No. I did but look at him and that broke his heart. And afterwards I said to him, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? That is all I said that looked like chastisement, and I forgave him, and made him My disciple." Oh, child of God, stained with sin, if you say, "Christ cannot wash me again," then you have been a long time with Him and you have not known Him! Or, again, into what a morbid state our minds will sometimes sink. The other day I was in this plight, and perhaps you may be in the same, full of wandering thoughts. I could not read a chapter with any sort of understanding. After going through two or three verses, I felt that I might as well have been reading Virgil. I tried to pray. Oh, such prayers!—a few words and then it was as if I was not praying at all! So I thought within myself, "Can the Lord accept me, a poor, weak, worthless soul as I am? I cannot control my thoughts." Then came headache and pain, till I was worse, still, and I began to question how I could be accepted of God in my devotion when it was all dull and languid, without fire or fervor. But afterwards I thought to myself thus—If my dear child had been told to do a thing, and he was sick and ill, and did his best, I know I would not blame him—I would say, "Poor soul, I see he would do it better if he could." And can I imagine that my Lord, when He has known me so long, will judge me by the distraction of my mind or the weakness of my body? Ah, but sometimes I have feared He would! If any of you are harboring such a thought, you may see Him standing by you and hear Him addressing you in these tender accents, "Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me? Do not you know Me well enough to understand that I can interpret your feeblest prayer? Do you think Me a harsh tyrant, or a hard taskmaster? Why, I love you! I pity you from my very soul! Do not misjudge Me—I do not misjudge you, I take the will for the deed. I read your groans and I bottle up your tears."

The question may sometimes be driven home to us in another kind of experience, *When called to suffer in mind, in body, or in estate*, it is easy for those who would comfort us to quote that sweet assuring passage of Scripture, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." But it is not half as easy for those who smart under adversity to encourage themselves in the Lord. When racked with many pains from

which you seek in vain for relief, or when you are very poor and straitened in your circumstances—when your cupboard is bare and you have no work to do—when the children are crying for bread and you have no wages to receive, then have you not felt, amidst your weighty griefs, how black thoughts will haunt your mind, dark surmises will hover about your imagination and, oh, it might happen in some unguarded moment, that rebellious murmurings would come upon your sins? "Can this be right? Can God be kind? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Where now is that all-bountiful providence we were known to look to? Is this in any way consistent with love?" But hush, my soul, nor dare repine! It is the voice of Jesus which says to you, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me? The last time I afflicted you, did not it turn out for your good? You have had sore trials by the way—were they not means of great blessing to you? Don't you know Me yet? Cannot you trust Me?" Here is the bitter medicine—you have taken some before, and your health has been restored. You took a draught the other day when the fever was upon you, and it drove it away. Don't you know enough of the skill of your physician to put yourself in his hands and take whatever he prescribes, cheerfully and without objections? Surely, brothers and sisters, we would not wince so much at our afflictions if we did but know the Master better! From the hand of the Lord we would accept them, and we would bow to the will of the Lord in bearing them.

The same may be said to us *when we are called to some new labor*. Preacher, teacher, visitor—may any of them find their labor of love and irksome toil, when beset with difficulties and consumed with sorrows? The young minister encountering tastes and tempers that vex his soul; the superintendent of a class striving to instruct children who will not listen, much less learn. The visitor who is repulsed by those she courts and upbraided by those she strives to befriend—all of these are apt to complain, "Lord, why have You called me to this particular work? In other departments I might have succeeded—this I cannot do. I have neither the ability nor the strength." Then, again, might Jesus lay His dear pierced hand on your shoulder and say, "Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me? Did I ever send you to a warfare at your own charges? Did I ever give you work to perform and leave you unsupported? Have I not always proved that, as your day, so shall your strength be"? Go in this, your might, for I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not doubt Me, for if you do, you have not known Me."

The scruple that sometimes comes over God's children about *praying for little things* is another instance of their not knowing Christ. "Oh," says one, "if my child were dying, I could pray about that, but when he is only fretful and hard to manage, though it does worry me a good deal, and sorely grieves my spirit, yet I cannot go and lay such a trivial matter before my great Lord!" Then you don't know Him. "Have I been so long with you, and have you not known Me, Philip?" Has not the Lord said

that He counts the hairs of our head, and that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His decree? Your Savior is as great in His attention to tiny needs as in His administration of grand affairs! Take the thorn in your finger to Christ! Take the stone in your shoe to Christ! I mean, Pilgrim, if you get a little care that may fester and breed great pain, take that to Christ! I mean, Pilgrim, if you have a little trial on your way to heaven, take that to Christ, or else you shall do amiss! You know Him not if you cannot trust Him with anything and everything, whatever it may be that relates to your welfare!

Now I shall give you two more instances which show how we may be with Christ and yet may not have known Him as we should. One shall be this. Every now and then I hear Christians saying—(I am glad to hear it)—"I offered prayer on such-and-such an account, and God has graciously heard me." I am pleased to hear them make *the confession of answered prayer* for it tends to cheer and encourage others. But when they go on to exclaim, "Is it not surprising? Does not it seem almost incredible? Is it not marvelous?" I think they betray a weakness! Have I not heard many speak of Mr. Muller's orphan houses at Bristol, and the honor put on him as extraordinary? It seems as though they thought it unbelievable that God would hear that dear man's prayers! "More than two thousand children supported by prayer and faith," they said—"How amazing!" as if our Lord, in this, had exceeded His own promise! Well, but has Christ been so long with us that we think these things strange? Were I to hear it reported that such a man, after having been married 20 years, had taken a present home to his wife, which he had handed to her very kindly and very generously, but which she had accepted with a look of surprise and an exclamation of, "Who would have thought it?" I would say, "Ah, then, they have lived a rather sorry life together, or else, though she might have been delighted, she certainly would not have been astounded at her husband's generosity to her! Or, again, if I heard that a certain individual had paid his debts, and if it was talked of down Cheapside and all over London, I should naturally infer that it was a great wonder he did so, that on his part it was a thing uncommon and on the part of his creditors a thing unexpected! So, too, when I hear it spoken of as passing strange, a prodigy, that God should be gracious to His people, I blush for those who are amazed at what they might have expected! Am I to understand it to be really surprising that the faithful promiser keeps His promise? That our heavenly Father bestows good things on His children? That He who encouraged us to ask and engaged Himself to give, should answer our petitions? I dare not think thus! It seems to me that your sudden surprises tell of evil surmises! I would rather say, with that good old Christian lady who, when she was told of God's hearing prayer, and asked if it was not surprising, replied, "No, it is just like Him! It is His way. He is always doing it!" Ah, truly, when we express surprise at His answering prayer and delivering His servants

according to His promise, He might well say, "What? Have I been with you so long, and have you not known Me?"

With one more instance I conclude. Full many a time I have heard the Master's voice in the inner chambers of my heart, expostulating with me thus—Have I been with you so long, and have you not known Me? And then I have said, Alas, Lord, I have not known You as I should, and I feel that I cannot know You as I would. Come, beloved, let us talk it over together. Sometimes, in deep quietude of spirit, our heart has been giving itself to devotion—it may have been a time of suffering. The world was all shut out, and sweetly did our soul begin to perceive the love and the loveliness of Christ, till the vision of the Savior grew clearer and brighter and more brilliant. We saw His Godhead, admired His condescension that He should stoop to redeem. We saw His manhood, grateful that He would come so near to us as to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We saw Him at Gethsemane—seemed to count the bloody drops as they fell in a sweat from His brow. We saw Him on the cross, marked His hands and feet. Our soul could follow Him up to Heaven, there view Him on the right hand of the throne of God, pleading. We drew near unto Him. He wrapped us in His crimson vest and told us all His name.

Then we felt we knew more in that hour than we had ever known before, so that all we had known seemed nothing! We said to our soul, "Have we been so long time with Him, and yet have we not known Him till this hour, as we know Him now?" Now, between here and heaven, unless we go home very shortly, there will come a good many of these openings of the golden gates—times in which the King will bring us to His banqueting house. Doubtless, each time will He reveal Himself more intimately when we look more fully at Him and discover more of His blessed features and His sacred mind—each time we shall rise up from the sacred festival and say, "Long time as I have been with Him, I have not known Him until now." On every fresh occasion we shall be ready to exclaim, like the Queen of Sheba when she saw the glory of Solomon, "The half has not been told me." And when you get face to face with Him, your admiration will become so intense that though you will have a grateful remembrance of all you did know of Him on earth, you will say, "I was a long time with Him—twenty, thirty, forty years, but I did not then know Him as I know Him now! I had a little fellowship with Him in the valley of tears below, but oh, I did but paint a bleary-eyed picture of the lovely King. Mine was but a poor dreamy, smoky imagination of this bright Sun, this Sun of Righteousness in His glory, my King, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely." I pray, brothers and sisters, that, gathering round His table, you may have just such a season as shall make you ashamed of what you have known before in comparison with what you see now of His beauty! And then may you go on further and further learning of Christ, making discoveries of His glory till you

shall be with Him where He is, to behold that glory, and to be participators in it!

God bless you at this feast of His love. May He be present with us to make glad our hearts! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 19:11-16.

11-13. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He who sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He, Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.* That same logos of whom John wrote in the gospel now stands before him and he beholds Him in His glory. What a delight it must have been to the seer of Patmos to see his Lord and Master once again in different array from that in which he had beheld Him when, in humiliation, He tabernacled here among the sons of men! His name is still the same—the logos—The Word of God.

14-16. *And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And 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: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* And this is the man of Nazareth. This is the crucified, despised, and rejected One. *Servus servorum* once.—Servant of servants but now King of kings and Lord of lords! And what will the end be of the battle that He wages? Will any of His adversaries escape? Will they hold their own? No, they shall utterly be destroyed before Him! All the powers of evil, of false doctrine—everything contrary to His mind—shall be destroyed. And this is set forth in symbolic imagery by the dreadful battle feast which usually succeeds a battle, when the vultures smell the carrion from afar and come to rend the spoil. It shall not be thus with the bodies of men, but thus with evil—thus with the powers of darkness.

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THE KING PASSING OVER KIDRON
NO. 3431

A SERMON
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"The king, himself, also passed over the brook Kidron."
2 Samuel 15:23.

THE brook Kidron was an insignificant, but usually a most foul and filthy ditch outside the walls of Jerusalem. If it were not, as some have called it, the open town sewer, yet there are reasons for believing that at least the filth of the temple ran into it. The filth of the sacrificial places went by an under-channel into this brook and we have one or two instances in Holy Writ where, when houses were purged and cleansed, the filth was thrown into the brook Kidron. The passing, therefore, over that foul and black brook becomes the symbol of a time of deep sorrow and acute distress. The king, himself, then, passed over the brook Kidron. The royal road lies over the place of sorrow. The way, even for kings, is by the brook of grief and shame. Let us think over that thought for a while.

I. THIS WAS TRUE OF KING DAVID.

David was one of the best of kings—certainly in the long list of his successors we meet with none who did such service to his country as did David, the once shepherd boy. It was through him, in his youth, that the country was saved from being enslaved by Philistia, and oftentimes in later years that stout heart and brave arm led in the van against the enemies of the Israel of God. He was the patriot king. If his country became a happy one, it was through his valor that it became so. And yet, good as he was, his subjects disowned and turned against him! And, in fear of them, "the king, himself, also passed over the brook Kidron." It is an ungrateful world we live in. Those who serve it best will find that at times it gives no rewards, or only gives them grudgingly—and afterwards forgets the good the man has done, because for some moment the tide of popular feeling may set against him. "Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." If you live to your fellow men, even with the largest desires within you, yet if you forget to live also to your God, your cup will be full of wormwood, and your teeth will be broken with the gravel of disappointment.

David was also *one of the tenderest of fathers*. He was never exacting with his children. I do not say he was one of the best of fathers, for correction was much neglected in his house. But he was a tender father and he had denied to Absalom nothing. And yet this renegade, this ungrateful, this unnatural son, was the very one from whom the sting must come. Marvel not if they who owe their lives to you should seek

your life! Marvel not if those who once nestled in your bosoms should wound you to the quick with their unkindness. You must not build upon the love of even the dearest you know. Your God is faithful and the well-beloved never changes, but all others can, and may, and sometimes do! 'Twas a dark brook Kidron which David passed over when his favorite son, Absalom, was in hot pursuit of him—the great king, the good monarch, the tender father—was not exempt from this!

Despite the one great stain upon his character in the matter of Bathsheba, David was one of the best and most devout of men. I am sure the older one grows, the more one loves his Psalms, and what a history of the man you have there! It is a mercy for us that he was not a better man than he was, or else he could not have written Psalms suitable to such poor creatures as we are. I think I saw the other day in a window, concerning a certain statesman whom I love to honor, that he would be a better statesman if he were a worse man. I think not so, but still David, if he had been a better man, would have been a worse Psalmist, for even the faults of his character, inasmuch as they bring him down to our poor level, qualify him to write according to the feelings of our hearts and the emotions of our spirits. But he was a grand man, that David. He had the soldier's fault and he fell into the soldier's sin, but he also had the soldier's generous spirit and the soldier's self-sacrificing nobility of heart. He was through and through, a man. In him there was no guile. He hated deception, and he loved his God with all his heart! And yet, for all that, he must pass over the brook Kidron. Hated by his subjects, despised by his darling child, with all the robes of royalty put aside, barefooted and with sackcloth on his head, Jerusalem's best and greatest king makes his way into the wilderness!

I gather from this that there is no extent of sorrow which is not possible to an heir of heaven, and more yet, that there is no degree of shame, of calumny and of reproach, which may not gather around the best of men. The king, himself, also passed over Kidron and you know what happened when he passed over. The faithful soldiers wept as they saw that royal head dishonored, and those bright eyes that had flashed death upon his foes in the day of battle, now red with weeping. But what did Shimei do? He cursed him and threw dust upon him, and said, "Go up, you bloody man!" And what did Ahithophel do? He forsook him—seceded to the winning side and plotted the death of his former friend, even King David, himself, with whom he had so often eaten bread and walked to the house of God in company! And what said they all over the nation concerning David, but that God had forsaken him and, therefore, *they* might forsake and attack him, for the David of former days was not the same David now. His God had left him and the crown was given to his son. Ah, my brothers and sisters, we know not what we may come to! We do not know what depths of grief we may yet have to fathom, nor into what deep mire we may yet sink. There is no saying. The best of men may have the worst of characters! The brightest stars may be swallowed up in a night! The moon, in her brightness, may be hidden by the clouds. And the sun, itself, beneath the wings of tempest, may be concealed.

Shall we, when we see our Christian brothers and sisters assailed, forsake them? Shall we join in the common clamor against them? We shall if we are not good men and true, but if we are such as God would have us be, we shall stand up for God's David as Ittai and his bodyguard did in the day of battle. We shall say, "These are the servants of the Most High God! Persecute them as you may. Cast the dust of slander upon them. Call them fanatics, enthusiasts, disturbers of the peace, and turners of the world upside down—we cast in our lot with them—for better or for worse, we take their Master and themselves, and across their Kidron will we go with them, believing that the day shall come when it shall be thought worth men's while to come back with them after another sort."

For, brothers and sisters, David came again up to Jerusalem. The Lord smote his enemies in their hinder parts, and put them to the rout. He came back, again, with sound of song and rejoicing. And so shall the righteous! So shall the best of men, in the day when God lights their candle and puts every tongue that rises against them in judgment to eternal condemnation! Stand you to the right, stand to the true! Stand faithful! Be willing to suffer. Be willing to be rebuked. Be willing to be slandered. King David went this way before you, and the day shall come when you, like he, shall come up from the slander and the scorn, the better for it all, rejoicing in God, who is the God of your salvation!

Thus much on David. I think there is much of interesting truths of God to be gathered from David's history in passing over Kidron, if we had time to bring it out. But I rather suggest a vein of thought than attempt to enlarge upon it. But now, secondly—

II. A GREATER KING THAN DAVID PASSED OVER THE BROOK KIDRON and if, as David passed, all the people wept, let the people weep tonight as they remember how Zion's greater King passed over that black brook!

There never was such a King as He—so glorious and fair to look upon. His eyes were the suns of heaven, and His presence was the glory thereof. But He came down among His creatures, who were fallen, seeking nothing but their good. He raised their dead. He healed their sick. When they were hungry, He fed them, and when they were fainting, He refreshed them. His words were those of love and His teachings full of wisdom and of grace. But now they seek His blood! Yes, they seek His blood and in the night they are pursuing Him. They will come upon Him. They will haul Him off to the judgment seat—they will put Him to death. Oh, cruel world, not to know its best benefactor! One of our poets has called Christ, "the great philanthropist," and so He was, only the word falls far short of what He really was, for He loved His people with all His heart! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Yes, His own, the Jews, were the fiercest in His destruction!

As the King passed over Kidron on that gloomy night, He had with Him a band of friends, but what was their friendship worth? They were true in heart, but they were weak and feeble. And when the conflict came, they all forsook Him and fled! Peter, where are you? I know you, I

hear you say, "I know not the man," as with oaths and cursing you do deny Him! And John, where are you? Was not that John, the young man upon whom they laid hands, and he fled and left his garments behind him? Where are any of them? "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." In that bitter hour when He passed over Kidron, to make His cup as bitter as it could be, the kiss that betrayed Him came from the lips of Judas, the treasurer of His little band. "Friend!" he said, and betrayed Him with a friendly word upon his traitorous tongue!

To enter into the griefs of our Lord in Gethsemane is not our business, tonight, though we feel as if we must linger among those beds of bitter herbs, and stand and look into Kidron's gloomy stream. But you remember how He suffered even unto death for us, and the agonies by which He purchased our redemption! There is this concerning our Lord, which is not matched by David—He did actually die. He was absolutely slain. The foes who pursued Him overtook Him—they pierced His hands and His feet, they lifted Him up a spectacle of scorn—and there He died. But His cross was His triumph! Calvary was a battlefield on which He won the victory and, like David, He came back again into Jerusalem, rising from the grave, no more to suffer or to die! And He returned again to heaven, from where He came, with sound of clarion and with noise of them that make music and melody for joy of heart—"Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in!"

See then, dear brothers and sisters, in the person of our Lord that this is a prophecy and an assurance that the cause of right and of truth—that those who espouse that cause, and are pure and perfect, themselves, may, nevertheless, be brought very low—even to the dust! They may be slandered, despised and rejected and yes, for all that, their triumph is not in jeopardy and neither their cause nor themselves imperiled! Oh, it makes one strong to feel this! There cannot be anything happen to us so severe as has already happened to our King! There cannot be any slander fiercer than the slander poured on Him. They have called the Master of the house, Beelzebub! What can they now call the men of His household? They must find some lighter name for us! Be encouraged, then, you feeble bands of trembling Christians, encouraged in all your sufferings and griefs for Christ's sake, for as He yet rose from the dead and led captivity captive, even so shall the feeblest of His followers! And so I shall close by just speaking—

III. A WORD OR TWO TO OURSELVES CONCERNING OUR PASSING THE BROOK KIDRON.

Ah, we do not like going over Kidron. When it comes to the pinch, how we struggle against suffering, and especially against dishonor and slander! How many there were who would have gone on pilgrimage, but that Mr. Shame proved too much for them—they could not bear to go over the black brook Kidron, could not endure to be made nothing of for the sake of the Lord of glory—they even turned back!

Now I have these two words to say. First, dear brothers and sisters, with regard to the great cause of God throughout the world, *we must*

expect, in following the truth of God, to meet with many attacks, many hardships and many defeats. I do not think that the Lord's cause was ever meant to be consecutively triumphant, without intervals of defeat. The sea advances to the flood tide, wave by wave—first one wave advances, and then it recedes. Then another comes up and recedes again, and sometimes when the tide is coming to the very highest, there will be one of those waves which seems to go back and leave a wider space bare of seawater than before. And so it is with the cause of Christianity. A great wave rolled up at Pentecost, but it seemed to pause while under Herod's persecution. Then came other waves, until the world beheld, in some degree, the light of Christ in all its corners. But again, there was a pausing for a while in those ages, which we call the Dark Ages. Then came a mighty wave again, which we couple with the name of Luther and of Calvin. Again there seemed to be a drawback, and then again, in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and others, there was another revival! And so it will be, I suppose, right on to the end of the chapter—progress, and then a staying of the work—great success, then temporary defeat. Now are any of you living in districts where, notwithstanding much earnest work, the name of Christ does not seem to win the day? Do not be downcast! Do not be dispirited! Rather go to the throne of grace more earnestly and ask for grace to gird yourselves afresh for the battle. The King passed over Kidron, and so shall His cause in your village, in your street, and the whole cause of God to which you are attached! But the King came back again, and so will He come back to you if you keep up heart and courage, and be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!

I know how it is in some of your hearts. You seemed to be growing in grace so fast. You thought, "I shall soon reach a high standard of grace!" But now you are discovering your corruption. You are perplexed and cast down because you do not grow as you once did. You are not so happy as you once were. Well, it may be you are passing over your Kidron, but do not be afraid! The King who has come to dwell in your hearts, though He is driven for a little into the wilderness and is hidden in the dark corners of your spirit, will come up again and take the throne, and reign, and drive out His enemy! Hold on, hold on to Christ's cross and crown, for the victory will attend them still! Only be patient, for God is in no hurry. Wait and let Him have His time, and the good work around you, and the work within you will prove to be successful after all! Just at this juncture we, who fight for Christ's crown and seek to set His truth free from the unholy alliance which she has so basely formed, may find, perhaps, that for a while disappointment awaits our banners. But if it does, we shall not for a moment quail in our courage nor stay in pressing the good cause on to the ultimate and the universal victory! Perhaps 'tis well that we do wait a while, for we might achieve but one purpose now—but a little pausing will set us on greater designs and on nobler aims. One church set free in Ireland, if it is not done quickly, another shall be set free and England's church be made to know that she has no right to ride rough-shod over this nation—and liberty and religious equality will be

proclaimed here as well as there—and all the sooner because of the delay! Let the King's cause go over Kidron for a while, and the great ones of the earth set themselves in array against Christ and His crown—but the victory will come, and we can afford to wait and tarry till the predestined hour—for perhaps by waiting the vessel shall come back laden the more richly with treasure, to the water's edge pressed down with costly freight. But back she will come, come certainly and surely, to her Master's honor, and to the comfort of the Church of God in this our realm! Never let us despair for the truth. Do the just thing and never be afraid! Let the earth be removed and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea—if you do the right and stand up for Christ, you need never fear! What if nations crack like potter's vessels and are driven like chaff before the wind by revolution after revolution? The saints of God rejoice that the battle is the Lord's and He will deliver every foe into our hands before long! And if He tarries for a while, we will wait until He comes, for He will surely bring the victory with Him!

Lastly, just this gentle word to any of you who may at this time be greatly suffering. "The King, Himself, also passed over the brook Kidron." Dear brothers and sisters, we, too, must all pass over Kidron, but the Prince's footsteps, the Prince's footsteps, are all along the road—

"He leads us through no darker rooms,
Than He went through before."

Let us have courage, then, and go through, too. You have had a sad bereavement. Yes, I wonder not that your tears fell on that coffin lid—'twas a precious life to lose, but, "Jesus wept," and that handkerchief of yours is perfumed with His sympathy. You had a heavy loss and you dread poverty. Well, it is an evil to be much dreaded, but the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head. Your poverty is gilded with His companionship! He was poorer than you! Oh, but you have lately been slandered. 'Tis the lot of all the righteous—birds always peck the ripest and the richest fruit the most. But they slandered your Lord—they said He was a drunk and a wine-bibber. They are only crowning you with the crown of thorns which once was put on His head—and the thorns are not so sharp for you as for Him—they were blunted by being put on His head. Ah, but you tell me that with all this a dear friend that you loved has turned against you. Remember Judas and do not marvel any more. "Ah," you say, "but even the Church of God thinks evil of me, though I have stood steadfast in the truth." Remember your Lord was an alien to His mother's children, and the church of His day was His direct enemy. Courage, dear brothers and sisters and fellow pilgrims to the skies! We must drink this cup—our heavenly Father has decreed it, but then He has mixed it, too, and He promises us, if we drink it, that we shall, by-and-by, drink of another cup of the new wine in the kingdom of glory! Submit—no, more—acquiesce! No more, rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer with your Lord! Cleave to your King when the many turn aside! Witness that He has the living Word, and no one upon the earth beside, and in the day when the trumpet rings out the victory and the King comes back to His own, you shall come back with Him to the ivory palaces and to the

abodes of the blessed, where you shall be crowned and shall dwell forever!

Dear hearers, are you for Christ or for His enemies? Will you go with a despised Christ tonight? Will you take sides with Christ under the cloud? Will you go with Him barefoot through the mire, or do you like a silver-slipper religion? I pray you trust my Lord and Master! Take up His cross. It will be the best thing you ever did, for it will bring you a glory in which the shame shall be forgotten!

The Lord bless each one of you, and may these few words comfort those who are tremblings for Christ's sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 15:13-23; ISAIAH 61; MARK 14:22-41.

This was one of the greatest trials of David's life.

Verses 13, 14. *And there came a messenger to David, saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart lest he overtake us suddenly, and brings evil upon us, and smites the city with the edge of the sword.* There is much to admire in David's conduct when he fled from Absalom, but yet his courage would seem to have well near forsaken him. In his brighter days before his great sin had weakened him, he would have been master of the situation, but now he trembles in the presence of the great calamity.

15. *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord, the king, shall appoint.* They were attached to him—ready to take his counsel at once. Can we say the same to King Jesus? Will every Christian here now say to his Master, "Behold, Your servants are ready to do whatever my Lord, the King, shall appoint"? There are many that pick and choose of Christ's commands. They do not obey all His will. There are known duties which are neglected—plain precepts which are willfully forgotten. I would to God we could all say from our heart to King Jesus, "Behold, Your servants are ready to do whatever my Lord, the King, shall appoint."

16-18. *And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house. And the king went forth, and all the people after him and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him. And all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men, who came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.* These were his old guard, soldiers who he kept always around his person, deeply attached to him, upon whose loyalty he could rely. But what a come-down from the King of Israel to have an army of only 600 men—to be fleeing before his own rebellious people, led on by his more rebellious son!

19-23. *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Why do you, also, go with us? Return to your place and abide with the king: for you are a stranger,*

and also an exile. Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us? Seeing I go where I may, you return and take back your brethren: mercy and truth be with you. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD lives, and as my lord, the king, lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be whether in death, or life, even there also will your servant be. And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him and all the country wept with a loud voice. And all the people passed over. The king, himself, also passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness. A fit type of that future passage of the Kidron by the great son of David when, on that dark and doleful night, when all the powers of darkness met the Prince—the King, Himself—passed over that black and bitter brook into the garden of Gethsemane. There were faithful ones that went with David—there were some faithful ones with Christ. Happy are they who shall be found to be with their Lord and Master in the day of His sorrow, for they shall be with Him in the day of His joy!

ISAIAH 61.

Verses 1, 2. *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 brokenhearted, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.* How condescending and how kind are the objectives of our Savior's mission—to put an end to sorrow! He searches for the mourners—they are the special objects of His care—and all that He does has this for one of its grand objectives—to comfort all that mourn! Surely if there is any troubled heart here, it may claim an interest in such a divine work as this! Jesus has come to comfort all that mourn. Shall He not comfort you?

3. *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion.* To make an appointment—an ordinance—a decree concerning them. And it will be to this effect—

3. *To give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness: that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified.* So it seems that God finds glory in the helping of His sad, sick, sorrowful creatures! He gets a glory out of making them. He gets higher glory out of making them new! Creation yields the moonlight glory—the new creation is a glory as of the sun shining in its strength! O you mourners, may God grant you grace now to give glory to God by cheerfully accepting those wondrous blessings of grace which Christ has come to bestow!

4. *And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.* When mourning souls find comfort, and captive souls get liberty, they are full of life and full of energy—and they begin to restore what had become wasted and desolate. I guarantee you that there is nothing for a church by way of medicine at all equal to pouring new blood into her by new-saved souls! They come among us with their new

songs, like the sweet birds in summer, and seem to wake the morning with their gladsome music. They come among us like the dewdrops from the womb of the morning, sparkling in beauty, bearing the dew of their youth. May God send to many old churches that have got to be like old wastes, and some communities that have come to be like desolations—may He send to them these builders—these earnest, loving hearts to build them up!

5, 6. *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine dressers. But you shall be named the priests of the LORD.* God's true Israel, His chosen, His elect—they may look upon all other men as their plowmen and their vine dressers. Kings and queens rule the world for you. For you the merchant, with his weights, divides the sea. For you, the plowman plows the soil. As for you, though you have a hand in these things, they are not your main employment. Your occupation is a higher one than theirs—the service of your God! You shall be named the priests of the Lord.

6. *Men shall call you ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.* For all things are of God, and all things are yours through Jesus Christ. In that same day in which the Lord comforts mourners and binds up their broken hearts, He gives them to enter into a sacred priesthood in which they walk among the sons men as God's peculiar people—honored above all the rest of mankind. Oh, the distinctions which distinguishing Grace makes! How it lifts the poor from the dunghill and sits him among princes, even the princes of His people! Christ has done great things, indeed, for us, for though we were as beggars, behold He has made us kings and priests unto God—and we shall reign forever and ever!

7. *For your shame you shall have double: and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.* You may be persecuted. Your name may be cast out as evil, but when the Lord in mercy blesses and visits you, you shall have a wonderful recompense—more than you could have expected. "For your shame you shall have double."

7, 8. *Therefore in their land they shall possess the double. Everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.* There are churches in the world that are not churches of God, and they supply their needs by forged demands from the people. But God hates robbery for a burnt offering. He accepts the willing gifts of His people and, with those who present them, He makes an everlasting covenant.

9. *And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD has blessed.* Oh, to have such distinguishing marks of character about us that all who see us may see that the blessing of God is upon us! And this will be quite consistent with poverty, with sickness, for in the poverty there will be content, and in the sickness and depression of spirit there will yet be such divine upholding that men shall be astonished that their fellow men shall be capable of

such joy under such circumstances! They "shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed."

10. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.* Brothers and sisters, I wish we could all catch hold of the spirit of this verse that each one of us would now say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord."

10. *My soul shall be joyful in my God.* What a precious sentence—"My soul shall be joyful in my God."

10. *For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* On those festive occasions the Orientals are known to use all the wealth they have in decoration. The bridegroom decks himself with a crown—puts on a tiara. He is a king for once. And the bride herself brings out all the many jewels with which Eastern women deck themselves. Now all this, in a high spiritual sense, we find in Christ. He is not merely a covering to us, but ornament and beauty, adornment, exaltation, glory, honor! How beautiful a child of God looks in Christ, I cannot tell you, but I believe that next to His dear Son, the most engaging sight to the divine Father is any one of His dear children whom He sees in Christ. You know we all think our children lovely—but God *knows* His children to be so when He has covered them with the robe of righteousness—and clothed them with the garments of salvation!

11. *For as the earth brings forth her buds and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

MARK 14:22-41.

Verse 22. *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them and said, Take, eat. This is My body.* It was part of a meal. It was no celebration. It was no sacrifice, bloody or unbloody! It was simply a commemorative ceremony of which He would now give them a specimen even before it became commemorative. "As they did eat, Jesus took bread." No seeking for consecrated wafers or some special food, but such bread as they had been eating. "Blessed"—thanking God for it. "And broke it and gave it to them, and said, Take, eat. This is My body."

23, 24. *And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My blood, of the new testament, which is shed for many.* There was no fear of their making the mistake, which has been made by Humanists, of taking these words *literally*, because Jesus Christ was sitting there! They could not imagine that as He took bread, He would say, literally, "This bread is My body." Why, there was His body sitting there before them! Had He two bodies? When He gave them the cup and said, "This is My blood of the new covenant," they never dreamt of such a thing as the wine in the cup was really and literally His blood! His blood was in His veins. They saw Him *living* there, not bleeding! No, it is an extraordinary thing that men who have the life of God in them, and have some spiritual discernment,

have, nevertheless, in some instances, been found driving their faith into the belief of the absurd fable of transubstantiation! Jesus Christ means, "This *represents* My body. This *represents* My blood"—the usual way of uttering such a sense both in the Old and New Testament, even as Christ said, "I am the door." Yet nobody thought that he was a door! "I am the way." Nobody thought He was a roadway! "I am the shepherd," and yet nobody supposed that he carried a crook and that He literally kept sheep! So He says, "This is My body, this is My blood" and they who sat there were in their senses—they were not superstitious. They knew what He meant.

25, 26. *Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.* I cannot resist repeating the remark I have often made about that singing of a hymn. It seems to me such a grand, brave thing for the Savior to sing a hymn after the last meal that he would eat with His disciples before His death—when He knew that He was going forth to all the torture of Pilate's Hall and to death at Calvary! Yet He says, "Let us sing a hymn." He chose a Psalm of David and, I dare say, He, Himself pitched a tune. "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives."

27. *And Jesus said unto them*—As they walked along.

27, 28. *All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.* What sweet comfort was there—as much as to say, "Though you are scattered, I will gather you. Though you forsake Me, I will not forsake you. I will go before you into our old haunts, into that Galilee of the Gentiles where I was known to preach aforetime. I will go before you into Galilee."

29-30. *But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, that this day, even in this night*—The day begins at sunset.

30, 31. *Before the cock crows twice, you shall deny Me thrice. But he spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with You, I will not deny You in any wise. Likewise also said they all.* So Peter was not alone in his intense, though rash expression of attachment. They did mean, all of them, to stand to their Master and to die with Him, as you and I mean to. But do you think that we shall carry it out better than they? Not if our resolve, like theirs, is made in our own strength!

32. *And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane*—The garden on the side of the hill of Olivet.

32. *And He said to His disciples, Sit here while I pray.* Eight of you keep watching at the garden gate to let me know when My betrayer comes.

33. *And He took with Him, Peter and James and John, and began to be sorely amazed, and to be very heavy.* They had not seen Him in that state before. He seemed like one distracted, amazed—like one astonished out of all composure—unable to collect Himself or to contain Himself. And to be very heavy, as if an awful weight pressed on His soul.

34. *And said unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death: tarry you here and watch.* These three were to make His closest bodyguard, to intimate to Him if any came.

35. *And He went forward a little.* A stone's cast, so as to be retired from them.

35, 36. *And fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto You: take away this cup from Me; nevertheless not what I will, but what You will.* That was the point of the prayer—the very pith and marrow of it—not what I will, but what You will.

37. *And He came and found them sleeping.* Three choice guards—His bosom companions.

37. *And said unto Peter, Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour?* Matthew and Luke tell us that He said, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" And Mark tells us here that He especially said that to Peter. Now remember that Mark is the gospel of Peter. No doubt Mark was the great friend of Peter, and writes his gospel from Peter's point of view, so Peter, in the gospel of Mark records the worst things about himself. And only he puts it here that the Master said, "Simon, do you sleep?" Bad enough for the others to be asleep, but, "Simon, do *you* sleep? Could not you watch one hour?"

38. *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.* Oh, that was a kind excuse to make for them—to say something good about them, even though they slept when they ought to have comforted Him! He did see that their spirit was ready, but the flesh was weak.

39, 40. *And again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy), neither knew they what to answer Him.* How could they excuse their conduct? A second time asleep! They were in a muddled state.

41. *And He came the third time, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come. Behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

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"The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this."
Isaiah 9:7.

BEYOND all controversy, this is a most remarkable text. Zeal is an attribute which is attributable to man—we do not often think or speak of the zeal of the Lord of hosts! At first sight, it might seem to be a misplaced word—God's zeal, the divine arm, the fervency of the infinite. Yet, if we think a little as we commune together tonight, I do not doubt but that much of comfort will cluster round the word, "The zeal of the LORD of Hosts." When I turn to Holy Writ, I do not find that, in connection with the creation, the word, zeal, was ever used—and yet it was a glorious work, to make ten thousand, thousand worlds, to fill space with ponderous orbs, before whose dimensions human imagination, itself, is staggered! It was no small work to make this world, with all its varieties of skill and art, adaptation and beauty. The morning stars might well sing together at the sight of it, and burst forth into a new hymn, as the light first shone upon this, our planet. But the Lord seems to have done it much at His ease. In six days He finished it and rested from all His work. No element of hardness, no token of zeal! Indeed, what is there in the mere creative act to awaken those marvelous attributes which dwell in the bosom of the infinite Jehovah? Wisdom? Why, it is but the play of wisdom! Power? It was but a mere freak of power. There is such boundless power in God, that all that He has created is but a drop in the bucket, and as a very little thing, compared with Him! Nor, if I remember rightly, does the idea ever come up in connection with the sustaining of worlds and the guiding of the events of providence. It is true, He calls them all by their names, and by the greatness of His power, not one fails. Arcturus with his sons, Mazzaroth in his season, the Pleiades in their delightful influences—all these are swayed and governed by Him! But we find not that He was awakened up to zeal at all concerning them. And in the wonders of providence which have been worked upon earth, it is remarkable how gently, how easily Jehovah seems to take them! Look at that splendid work at the Red Sea—a work which God, Himself, seems to have selected as a masterpiece of His skill and of His power, for even in heaven they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb—that song, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

But how did He accomplish that stupendous work? "You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in her mighty waters." No enthusiasm, no stirring up of strength—just the tender

breath of His mouth, and it is all done, and the chivalry of Egypt sinks into the middle of the sea! Nor when I hear of angels being formed of the Lord, whenever that event may have taken place; do I hear of anything like the zeal of the Lord in connection therewith. Nor even the creation of Adam, when He took the man and placed him in the garden to till it. I pray I may use no expression which will dishonor the Most High, yet when we speak of Him, we are obliged to use language according to the analogies of human kind. It seems to me that when God created mere materialism, there was nothing to excite the divine mind beyond a mere complacency when He looked upon it and said, "It was very good." And when He created pure spirits that were incapable of singing such as angels, He rejoiced to see their happiness, but inasmuch as they could not have communion with Him, being so good as not to know good or evil, His soul does not seem to have been stirred. But He desired, if I may use such language concerning Him, to have a race of beings surrounding Him who should know both good and evil, who should know evil by having practically fallen into it, having so smarted under it as to know it to be evil in a practical and experimental sense—a race of creatures who should, from henceforth, never choose evil, who should voluntarily choose that which is good forever and forever because they should be so bound to Him, the source of all goodness, by an overwhelming obligation of love, that while they know evil, they shall bewail it—while they understand what it is to sin, they shall never, throughout eternity, either in thought or imagination, defile themselves with sin, but shall remain immaculately perfect through the constraint of a love which He shall reveal toward them, which shall be sufficient to wash their robes and make them white, world without end! It seems to me that He desired to have a race of creatures that should not be like angels or a race of creatures apart from Himself—but a race that should be His sons, that should be mysterious and wonderful—and His plan was this, that Jesus, His only Son, should come into this world and take upon Himself the flesh and nature of fallen creatures, that in that flesh He should die and put away the guilt of all their sin, and that by His flesh, when risen, He should establish a link between them and God, so that there should be nothing between God and man. God blessed first forever, and then Jesus, the man, positively and really a man, clinging by His manhood through His Godhead to those chosen creatures whom He should have purified and made clean, who should forever exist, the children of God, partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. It is not for me—it is not for *anyone* to strike out the divine idea and say this is what God meant and intended, but we have enough of Scripture to let us say that this was a part of His aim, at any rate, that in Jesus Christ there should be a race of creatures distinct from all others, because actually alive with the Deity—creatures who, to use the expression of the serpent, should "be as gods, knowing good and evil," and be as gods always and forever, preferring the good, though they have tasted the evil, and might have chosen it, but were constrained by divine grace to bewail it and, henceforth, to keep close to God, world without end!

Now, brothers and sisters, it was such a plan as this that awoke the zeal of God! This was what could not have been done by mere power, but must bring forth all the attributes of God—the work that had to be achieved here was worthy of a great Creator—it was a work which would reveal the Deity as no other work had ever done and, therefore, if I may use the expression (I have often to excuse myself, not to you, but to Him), He seems to brace Himself up to a display of all the divine energy and almighty omnipotence, to accomplish His purpose, to carry out His plan and make Jesus the King of a chosen company! "The zeal of the LORD of Hosts shall perform this."

I. GOD ENTERS INTO THE PLAN OF GLORIFYING CHRIST AND MAKING TO HIMSELF A PEOPLE WITH GREAT ZEAL.

This can be proved in the following way—we judge of a man's zeal when the purpose has been long in His heart, and He has most industriously followed it through a long period. Now, the plan of grace through Jesus Christ was in the eternal heart before the worlds were made. He had it all in His mind. Hence He speaks of Christ as "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world," and never once has the divine mind turned aside from this purpose. Think, then, what zeal God must have towards the achievement of this design, when through these long ages, as we call them, He has still resolved to push on the work which He determined to do. Think, again, that all the agents of providence that have ever occurred on this globe have had an eye to that purpose—from the little up to the great. When He set the bounds of the people, He set them according to the children of Israel. He had an eye to the people of His love and to the Son of His choice, even when He was mapping out the territories which the different races should inhabit and not a king has fallen from His throne, not an army has devastated a province, no changes of government, no challenges of race have ever taken place apart from the divine intent—that He would set His Son upon His holy hill of Zion, and make Him to be a King over all the nations of the earth. To that purpose God has steadily adhered all this while and, therefore, I honor "the zeal of the LORD of Hosts."

Just think a moment, and I will show you God must be zealous in this matter. Behold, *His Son stoops to become a man*. You see Him lying as a Baby in Bethlehem's manger. You behold Him as a youth obedient to His parents, as a full-grown man, a servant of servants in His toil. Now, when the Lord looks down upon His Son, how He must resolve to glorify Him! Oh, what must be the thought in that fraternal bosom! Does My Son thus stoop? Does He take such a nature into union with Himself? Oh, I will crown His head with many crowns! For all His stooping He shall have a glory. Does He sit there at a harlot's side at the well of Samaria? Does He sit there at the table with publicans and sinners? Does He go down to bear the sorrows of the sins of men? God seems to declare by Himself that He will give Him a name that is above every name—for all His stooping He shall have an exaltation—the name at which every knee shall bow, even the name of Jesus, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father!

Or, look further through your tears and *behold the wondrous sacrifice of Calvary*. Can you behold Jesus, smarting, suffering, bleeding, dying—and can you imagine God looking on, a regular spectator? Oh, no! If we may suppose Him to be capable of passions like ourselves, we shall have to say, as He looked upon His dying Son, He vowed that He would lift His head above the sons of men, and make Him see a numerous seed to recompense His pain. If anything could make a man zealous in his cause, it would be to see it stained with the best blood on earth, to see it stained with his own son's blood! Surely a man would say, I consecrate myself over the blood of my child to live and die, to honor the name that was thus put to shame for my purpose, my design. And God says the same! The zeal of God burned at Calvary!

Think again. *Jesus Christ at this moment is everywhere dishonored.* Millions use Christ's name in superstition, worshiping a crucifix, making a God out of the very images. Multitudes of people practice idolatry; enshrine and adore false deities, and what does God say? Do you think that He looks on like Jove, fabled among the heathen an impassive spectator? Oh, it is not so! He hears the blasphemies of men! He sees their sins and though He keeps His right hand in His bosom and we sometimes say, "Now, where is Your zeal and the soundings of Your heart," it is only because He is divine and can put a divine restraint upon His zeal that He does not rise at once and sweep away the idols and devastate the nations! His long-suffering makes Him wait. His pity bids Him tarry. But the day shall come—and it draws near—when with the hammer, He shall break in pieces, and with the iron rod He shall dash, like a potter's vessel, the usurpers who dare to stand in Christ's way and to take away the kingdom from the rightful heir! Yet the very sins of men are stirring up the Lord and their iniquities, transgressions and blasphemies are almost exciting His holy soul, making a zeal to burn within Him which, one of these days, in the set time, will perform its work!

Only one more proof on this point, and it is this—brothers and sisters, *we become zealous when we hear the cries and tears of the oppressed.* I think I see a senator standing on the floor of the House of Commons, pleading, in years gone by, the cause of Africa's down-trodden sons. I do not wonder at the zeal of Wilberforce, or the marvelous eloquence of Fox. What a cause they had! They could hear the clanging of the fetters of the slaves, the sighs of prisoners; the shrieks of women—and this made them speak, for they burned with an indignation which carried them away! Pity pulled up the sluices of their speech and their souls ran out in mighty torrents of overwhelming eloquence! Now, think. The Lord this day hears the sighs of the oppressed all over the world. He hears the sighs of the sorrowful and, beyond that there comes up the daily cries of His elect, who day and night beseech His throne. Oh, that we were more clamorous! Oh, that we were more intensely importunate! Oh, that we gave Him no rest until He would establish and make Jerusalem a praise on the earth, for, remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "And shall not God avenge His own elect? Though they cry night and day unto Him, I tell you He will avenge them speedily."

You see, then, proofs of God's zeal and the source of it, if we may use such a term. It is His purpose, a purpose to which He has kept so long. His zeal is, moreover, excited by Christ's humiliation, by the blasphemies and sins of men and by the tears of His people. God is not as we are—cold, insensible. He is full of zeal! And in the great good old cause, which shall, at last, win the day, there may be zealous partisans, but none is so zealous as the Lord of hosts! A Master in the midst of Israel! We will now change the strain, and notice the second point. The text says His zeal will perform it. That is to say—

II. HIS ZEAL WILL PERFORM THE SETTING OF CHRIST UPON HIS KINGDOM AND THE ESTABLISHING OF IT FOREVER.

But it will perform everything that has to do with that kingdom. God's zeal will not leave a single jot or tittle of the covenant of His grace unfulfilled. He has lifted His hand. He has sworn by Himself that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul—and the zeal of God will carry this out!

Notice, then, brother and sisters, tonight, first, that *the Lord will secure the salvation of all His chosen*. Nothing else could secure it but God's own zeal. The zeal of all the Church could not secure it. Men might perish, notwithstanding every act, but God knows them who are His, and He will find them! If there are some of them, tonight, plunged into the depths of sin, or others far gone in atheism or unbelief, the zeal of God will find every blood-bought one, and Christ shall have every single soul that the Father gave Him—and that He redeemed with blood from among men. Oh, there is joy in this! But we cannot stay to think of it.

This secures, in the next place, *the spread of the truth of God*. Sometimes we sit down and say, "Truth, though mighty in itself, does not prevail among a godless generation set upon their idols." And oftentimes we mourn and lament because the battle has turned against the Lord. But, brothers and sisters, God's truth is wide enough and safe enough—we need not weep over a few defeats! God has ordained that the laurels of the King are all safe! He has trodden the winepress alone, but the victory is sure to Him! We have but to keep on in the patience and tribulation of the saints till the set time shall come, and every truth that God has declared shall be crowned and honored. Wisdom is justified of all her children, and the infinite wisdom of Jesus shall be justified in all His teaching. But the grand meaning is this—that the day is sure to come when all the nations shall be converted unto God! I am not going into any pre-millennial or post-millennial theories. I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but if there is anything plain in Scripture, it seems to be this—that there is a kingdom of Christ, that there will be a reign of Christ over the people, that the Son of David shall rule the kingdom, from the rivers even to the ends of the earth—they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, the heathen shall come and lick the dust at His feet and He shall be King of kings and Lord of lords! "The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this," says the text. I thank the Master for that word. All the missionary societies in the world will never know how to perform it! If they were strengthened to the uttermost, they would never be able to achieve this work. Not all the ministry will ever be able to perform this. Nor do I see any means adapted to achieve so sublime an

end. Why, the population is increasing upon Christianity. We do not hold our own. Relatively, to the population, I suppose, there are not so many believers in Christ, today, as there were a hundred years ago. We are going backward instead of forward. See, you sons of men, your zeal and your earnestness—no, your *lack* of zeal and your *lack* of earnestness—see what it will come to! Poor, vain instruments, what can we perform? But in the rear there is One who will do it! As in the days of battle, when the front ranks are beaten, and one rank after another is driven back, up comes the old guards—and they never quail and know not how to say retreat—and so they win the day! Now, behold a greater than all the hosts of men, the eternal ages, the Ancient of days, the infinite, Himself, shall bring up His servants in the day of battle! And He shall thunder gloriously! The gospel shall be proclaimed! The kingdom shall be won! Christ shall reign and the "Hallelujah" shall come up unto the Lord omnipotent, who not only gets the kingdom, but gets it by His own power, wins by His own zeal! "The LORD of Hosts, the LORD of Hosts shall perform this." Now, our last word is practical—

III. THE PRACTICAL TEACHING WHICH ARISES OUT OF THIS TRUTH.

The expression of the text is only used four times in Scripture. One of these is a repetition of another. Virtually it is only used three times—in Isaiah 63:15, God is thus addressed, "Where is Your zeal, and the sounding of Your heart, and of Your mercies towards me? Are they restrained?" What a plea in prayer for us tomorrow night! O God convert the sons of men! Put an end to blasphemy and sin. If You do not, we have heard of Your zeal, but where is Your zeal? You can do it—why don't You do it? You can save. The hardest heart will yield to You. The rod of iron and steel shall be broken by the iron of the cross. Oh God, where, where, where is Your zeal? Have You forgotten the great Fall and the kingdom, and the covenant, and Your oath? Have You forgotten Your Son—His griefs, His merits—Your promised recompense to Him? Where is Your zeal? Oh, but this is a battering ram with which to shake the very gates of heaven! Men of prayer and faith, learn how to use this! The next time you are wrestling with the angel, if you would overcome Him, here is the master plea, "Where is Your zeal, and the sounding of your heart?" Let us thus flee to God!

But the text may be used, in the second place, *as a ground of hope*. If you turn to Isaiah 37:32, you will see that there it is used in relation to the salvation of a remnant—the remnant of Judah. When you and I feel ourselves to be like a remnant, cut off, and put away—when we feel ourselves to be unworthy of the divine notice, let us recollect that God is zealous to save His remnant and let us ask Him to save us—and appeal to the very zeal of God to give salvation to us who need it so much!

But not to dwell longer on this part of the subject, I am sure you will perceive that our text, practically, is *a good reason for confidence*. You begin to be dispirited in God's work—it ought not to be so. If any of you are ready to give up your Sunday school work, or whatever it is you are engaged in, oh, say not so! God is so zealous that He will not let the good cause fail. There may be, as there will be in every great battle, a certain sort of temporary defeat which may be but a retiring of the troops, that

they may the more sternly and successfully advance again to the front. So is it with the cross of Christ. There are slight repulses, but everything is working to ultimate victory. Look at the sea as it comes up towards flood and then the waves retire. A child might sit down and weep, and say, "I thought the sea was coming up to here, but look, it has gone back again, and it has not washed my feet." In the long run the sea is still coming up, and it is thus a type of the good cause of Christ! Our lives are but like seconds in the tide of this great time of ours, which is itself but a second in the great duration of eternity! Because the good old cause does not seem to prosper for a single day and the kingdom does not come to Christ in my short life, shall I sit down and weep? No, I am but one among millions who shall achieve the divine purpose—one little coral insect, helping to pile up the rock on which, by-and-by, shall grow the cedar and the palm tree and the lovely flowers! And the winds shall waft across it insects in every gale—I will do my work, though it is beneath the waves! I will do my work and die—and others shall do the same, but the rock is rising and God's purpose is being accomplished! In the words of the prayer of Moses, "Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children." Lord, let us take the work and give our children the glory! Let us work on—they shall live to see the glory! Some future generation shall see the triumph. And the best of it all is, we shall see it, too, for it will be but a sleep between now and then—a little leaning upon the Savior's bosom in our disembodied state—and then the trumpet shall ring so shrill and clear through heaven and earth and we shall come to dwell again in these bodies of ours, restored and rendered fit for purified spirit to dwell in! And our eyes shall see in that day, the God that died for us, and oh, how we will adore Him and magnify Him! And we will say together, the cause for which we struggled, the kingdom for which we fought, has come at last! It was a long day and a weary one, and we feared the Master would not come. Some of us fell asleep before His appearing, but we awaken at the knocks at the door—we awaken even with the blessed sleepers, and we come to see the triumph as we once of old saw the praise! Glory be to God, the victory is secure! Let us work on till then.

But last of all, if God is thus zealous for the crown rights, the kingdom of Christ, *let us be zealous, too*. This is not the day of zeal—this is the day of cleverness and achievement. It is not the day of solid earnestness—it is the day of mere sensationalism and nothing more. Oh, what a sight it would have been to have seen old John Knox, when old and worn, go up into his pulpit, and though before he began to preach, he seemed so weak that he could scarcely stand, yet he did not proceed far in preaching up the Master's name, before, as an old historian says, "He did seem to use such force that one would think he would dash the pulpit into fragments"—dash it into shivers, I suppose, before the Popish priests and hypocrites of the age! How his eyes flashed fire as he spoke out his Master's truth, as he denounced Popery and held up the truths of God and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus! We need more men of this sort! Oh, that God would but send us one, such, and then to back him, a race of Covenanters who would, with their very blood dedicate themselves to the

truth and the kingdom of Christ against the insidious advances of Popery and the infidelity of Rome and hell, which are twin brothers! Oh, that once again the Church were earnest to have no head or king of the Church but Christ, no creed but the Bible, no baptism but the baptism which He has taught, no sacrament but what He reveals, no doctrine but what that book dictates—the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible! May we come back to this in purity, to this with earnestness, and then it will not be long before we shall hear Him coming in the chariot, paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem and we shall go forth to meet Him, even to meet King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart! Oh, God of zeal, drop Your zeal upon us, now, and make us zealous, too, even we, redeemed by blood, by Your Holy Spirit, inhabit and consecrate us afresh, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 40:1-17; 25-31; JOHN 1:29-42.

Verses 1, 2. *Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.* God would have His people happy. He knows that we are not in strong, vigorous state, neither do we honor His name while we are lacking in holy joy. Let the sinners be uncomfortable. Let them be "like the troubled sea that cannot rest." But as for God's people, it is His great joy that they should be happy. He bids His servants again and again to comfort them! Sometimes we are in a condition of warfare and we are under the chastising rod, but now the Lord appears graciously to His servants, and He says, "Your warfare is over: your chastisement is ended." Now the Lord returns in mercy and He grants a sense of forgiven sin.

3. *The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* You know this was John the Baptist coming to proclaim the Savior. That was the best comfort God's people could have—the coming of the Lord. So it is now. The joy of the Church is the coming of the Lord! And to each one of us the greatest source of joy is the drawing near to us of our Lord. If He appears to us, our winter is over, our summer's sun has come! If Christ is with us, the time of the singing of birds has come and our heart is glad.

4, 5. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places, plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* Wherever Christ comes, it is so. All things are right at His appearing and if the Lord but manifests Himself to us tonight, each one, we shall find the crooked things made straight. We shall see the mountains of difficulty, leveled, and the deep depressions will all be filled up and there will be a causeway along which the Lord triumphantly shall ride to display the greatness of His power! There is nothing that shall hinder the coming of

the Lord to us, and when He comes, there is nothing that shall stand against Him!

6-8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the fields. The grass withers, the flower fades because the breath of the LORD blows upon it: surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever.* Now that is a cry that we all need to hear—the death cry of all creature confidence—for man at his very best is only like grass and the flower. They will be mown down in due time, but if the scythe comes not near them, yet will they fade in their season, for they are transient things and every hope and confidence which is based upon that which is seen, must be temporal and must pass away. All the joy that you have tonight—all the hope and all the confidence you have which is based upon an earthly thing—must, by degrees, all disappear. Nothing is eternal but that which springs out of the eternal. Unless our hope is in the Lord, alone, that hope will at some time or other fail us! This is a cry we need to hear because, until we are sick of the creature, we shall not turn to the Creator! Till we have done with false confidences, we shall not make God our trust!

9. *O Zion, that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain! O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!* Look away from these fading things and behold your God. Look away from the brightest joy you have, though it is like the meadow, all alive with many colored flowers, and look to your God, and to your God, alone! "Behold your God"—your God in Christ! Your God who has come through the wilderness, making a highway for Himself, that He may come to you. Rejoice in Christ, your Savior, and you shall have a joy that never shall be taken from you!

10, 11. *Behold, the Lord GOD will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His rewards are with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.* Do you belong to the flock tonight? Then let this comfort you. Never mind about the fading flowers. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." He has brought you into the pasture tonight. Depend upon it, He has not led you by a wrong way. And now, though your soul is hungry and thirsty, you shall not lack, for, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd."

11. *He shall gather the lambs with His arm.* The feeblest, first. The most care for those that need most care. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm."

11. *And carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* Your sorrow is to come. It is known to yourself alone. None can sympathize with you. He will gently lead you. There is no overdriving with Christ. Sometimes His ministers, in order to get God's people right, one way, overdrive them another, and it is possible while rebuking the hypocrite, to cause grief to the sincere Believer, but our Lord is a better shepherd than the under shepherds are at their very best. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, carry them in His bosom, and shall

gently lead those that are with young." Oh, what a blessed Helper we have! Let us rest in Him.

12-17. *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor, has taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing: and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.* Who would not trust such a God as this—this only God? How well may we be content to turn away from the fading creatures to this eternal Lord and put our trust in Him! Indeed, the wonder is that we trust the creature and do not trust the mighty Creator! Faith, which seems so difficult, after all, is nothing better than sanctified commonsense! It is the most commonsense thing in all the world to trust in Omnipotence—in infinite, unchanging love—in infallible truth. To trust anywhere else needs a great deal of justification, but to trust in God needs no apology. He well deserves it. O My soul, trust you in Him!

25, 26. *To whom, then, will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and behold who has created these things that bring out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might for that He is strong in power; not one is missing.* There is no other power that hangs yon lamps of heaven in their places and keeps them always burning, except the power of His Word! This whole round earth of ours hangs on nothing but the bidding of the Most High. I remember how Luther used to console himself in troublous times by saying, "Look at yonder arch of blue. There is not a pillar to hold it up, and yet, whoever saw the skies fall?" Nothing but the power of God keeps them up. My soul, if all the worlds were made by His Word, cannot you hang on that Word? If all things exist but by the will and Word of your Father, can He not support you, and can you not trust Him? Oh, this confidence in the invisible and eternal ought to be natural to us as God's children! But, alas, here is our great sin—that we frequently trust in an arm of flesh and forget our God!

27. *Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* He forgets no star among the myriads, no creature among the multitudes. He has marked in His book the track of every single atom of air and every particle of dust, and every drop of spray—how can you be forgotten?

28, 29. *Have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint.* He loves to pour out into empty vessels. He does not give His power to the strong, but, "He gives power to the faint," and the more faint you are, the more room for His strength. Trust in Him! If you are so burdened

that you cannot stand, lean on Him! The more you lean, the better will He love you. He delights to help His people. "He gives power to the faint."

29-30. *And to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.* We sometimes wish that we were as young as some, and that we had all their overflowing spirit—all the effervescence of their juvenile ardor. Ah, well, we need not wish for it, for mere mortal power shall droop and die—and earthly vigor cease—while such as trust the Lord shall find their strength increased. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall."

31. *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles*—That is very much when they begin. They are all for flying and God gives them a glorious flight, and they are so happy and so delighted. But they will do better than that!

31. *They shall run, and not be weary.* Is that better than flying? Yes it is—a better pace to keep up, but God enables His servants at length to stay along the road of duty and to run in it. But there is even a better pace than that!

31. *And they shall walk and not faint.* It is a good steady pace. It is the pace that Enoch kept when he walked with God. Sometimes it is easier to take a running spurt than it is to keep on, day by day—walk, walk, walk in the sobriety of Christian conversation. Many under excitement can run a race, but it is the best of all to be able to steadily to walk on, walking with God the Lord. The Lord bring us to that pace! "They shall walk and not faint."

JOHN 1:29-42.

Verse 29. *The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.* John lost no time. He had no sooner discovered the Savior than he bore witness of Him. "The next day." As soon as ever his eyes lighted upon Jesus, he had his testimony ready for Him. "Behold!" he said, "the Lamb of God."

30-33. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not.* At first.

33, 34. *But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God.* Notice how very clear John is. There is no mistaking him. He repeated himself lest there should be any possibility of an error. And he gives the detail of the mode by which he recognized the Savior, in order that all might be persuaded to accept Jesus as in very truth the Messiah and the Son of God! And so we are to preach very plainly—not with enticing words of men's wisdom—but with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. What have we to conceal? No, we have everything to reveal and our business is that men should be

convinced that Jesus is the Christ—and should come and put their trust in Him.

35, 36. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!* There is no objection to preaching the same sermon twice if it is on such a matter as this! "Behold the Lamb of God," he said one day. And the next day he did not vary the phraseology. He had no new metaphor—no new figure with which to set forth Christ, but, as striking a nail upon the head and the same nail will help to fasten it, and may do more service than bringing out a new nail, so he gets to the same word and the same subject—"Behold the Lamb of God."

37. *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.* They went beyond their teacher. And oh, what a mercy it is if our hearers can go Christ-ward far beyond us! John was well content to be left behind if they followed Jesus, and so may any minister of Christ rejoice if his people will follow Jesus, even if they go far beyond his attainments.

38. *Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What do you seek?* Christ wants intelligent followers, so He asks the question, "What do you seek?"

38, 39. *They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where do You dwell? He said unto them, Come and see.* Which is often His answer to enquirers—"Come and see." "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." Learn by experience. Do not merely hear what I say, but come and see.

39-42. *They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.* This is how the kingdom began to grow—by individual effort. "Andrew found Simon"—one convert must bring another—"and He brought Him to Jesus."

42. *And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.* There was a meaning in the change of names, for there was about to be a change of character—the timid son of a dove soon to become a very rock for the Church!

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LOVE'S REWARD
NO. 3433

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name."
Psalm 91:14.

THAT this psalm was written by David we see no reason to doubt. In the previous verses we have the words of the Psalmist himself. Here, however, there is a change of speaker. The promise is spoken by God, Himself, in these three closing sentences. Doubtless the words of inspired men are very precious as a divine testimony, but when God, Himself, directly speaks to us in His own name, what an extraordinary weight attaches to every syllable He utters! Dear child of God, you who are a believer in Jesus, can you not think that you hear your God saying, concerning you, with His own, gracious assuring voice, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him"? And notice that He repeats these words, "I will," four times, as if to give them the most striking emphasis! Surely this is intended to minister some comfort and refreshing to the Lord's people. I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to give the Word and to apply it.

"Because," says the Most High, "he has set his love upon Me." We must look at this carefully, for it contains a description of character. If we can find ourselves classified here, it will be well for us, otherwise we shall have reason for deep anxiety. Is our love set upon God? Search your hearts, for the question is very pungent. The original Hebrew has more force in it than our translation expresses, although I do not know exactly how to improve upon our version. The idea, however, is something like this—"To have fallen in love"—as though with all the tenderness of passion and all the transport of devotion, the creature yearned for his creator, and mortal man cherished an intense affection for the eternal God.

I. THE HEART'S SUPREME LOVE.

"*He has set his love upon Me.*" His love! Such love as draws the sympathies with its irresistible attraction, as brightens the thoughts with its fervent glow, as knits the heart with its indissoluble bonds! Yes, such love as melts the soul with its potent charms. I would have you think of it, now, as a fact, not as a fiction, or a fancy. That word, *love,* is translatable into the many tongues of earth, and so it passes current among the millions in every age and every clime. But only hearts attuned can feel it—it finds echo only in the purest minds. But, to explain it, why,

one had need combine a poet's genius with the emotions of a child, a husband or wife, a parent, a friend, all earthly relations in one to paint genuine love in living language! And even then it were all felt, and little, very little, told! Oh, but this is a high matter, for a man to set his love upon God! *His love*—not a cold sentiment, not a languid approbation, not a mild complacency, not any mere formal respect, but love, burning love, which, like coals of juniper, give forth a vehement flame—"*his love set* upon God," like a river that is set upon its course to the sea, its volume always swelling, its tide becoming more and more rapid.

Answer now, dear hearer, can you say that you have set your love upon God? If so, you have been the subject of a great change—a mysterious transformation—for your heart was naturally at enmity to God, and the instincts of your mind and the desires of the flesh were alien to Him. Look back. Compare your present self with your former self and consider the difference. If you were not, in your unregenerate state, in active hostility to God, yet you were indifferent towards Him. God was not in all your thoughts. You could rise at morn and lay down to rest at night without inquiring after God. You could go forth to your work and labor, and return to seek your recreation without seeking or acknowledging God in all your ways. Gladly would you try even to suffer, to die upon the bed of sickness when called to it, struggling with weakness, confiding in the physician's skill—without appealing to God your creator and your preserver! This was your natural state, the bent and bias of your perverse will! And in such waywardness you would have continued to this hour if the free, rich, undeserved sovereign efficacious grace of God had not interposed! Is your love now set upon God? Then a great change has passed over you as though a dead man had been quickened into life! As though the darkness of midnight had been suddenly turned to the brightness of midday! A great wonder of grace, a miracle of saving mercy has been worked in you!

Though you must know to whom it is to be ascribed, let me refresh your memory, awhile, that I may awaken your gratitude. Comes not this of the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working? Depend upon it, only He who made you, could make you new! Only that voice which brought light out of darkness, and order out of chaos, could have dispelled your vain infatuations or inflamed your soul with love, and made your known apathy and aversion give place to a sacred ardor and a devout affection! Surely the kingdom of God has come near unto you! Salvation has come to your house! The Lord has looked upon you and spoken to you! The eternal Spirit has brooded over your dull faculties and, as it were, by the breath of God's mouth you have been regenerated! You are born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—by the Word of God which lives and abides forever. Therefore you are in Christ, a new creature! Revolve these things in your soul, this array of lively blessings, that your gratitude may bloom with joy in God and your praise to the Lord may burst into melodious song!

Do I not speak of a matter which should compel the tongue of every redeemed man to cry, "Hosanna in the highest"? Were it marvelous if a thousand voices should utter a loud hallelujah?

Your love to God is no self-sown plant. If you have set your love on Him, it is because He first set His love on you. What? Did your love go spontaneously towards God, without any constraint to violate your will? When He lifted upon you the light of His countenance, and when you found favor in His eyes, there were charms, attractions, drawings conformable to the nature of your mind! There were sweet constraints of divine enchantment which enamored you of the beauties of Christ—a potent spell of divine persuasion which led you to listen to the voice of Christ and believe! And now that you have seen and known Him, you cannot do otherwise than love Him! God has been revealed to you in the person and work of His Son, and your heart has been warmed—your affections have been kindled—your whole soul has been drawn towards Him! So the Lord observes you, and says, "He has set his love upon Me." Are you the man of whom God speaks? Then I ask you to avow yourself to yourself and to your God, now, in the presence of all His people. "Yes," you can say, "I do love my God. I cannot now live without thoughts of Him, nor do I wish to do so. And when, for a while, through pressure of care I do not turn my soul towards God, yet, when the pressure is removed, my mind comes back to Him, as the dove flies back to the dovecot and as the needle trembles back to the pole. Never am I happier than when my thoughts are with my God, nor is there any thought so uppermost in my soul as the thought that He loves me and that, consequently, I desire to live in obedience to His commands, seeking His honor and endeavoring to promote His glory." I, hope, beloved, if the Lord Jesus were to appeal to you, as He did to His servant, Peter, you could stand the threefold interrogation "Do you love Me?" And you would answer with Peter at the last, "You know all things. You know that I love You." Let this love of yours, then, which you possess, be in your soul more and more a consuming flame! Let nothing come in to quench it or to dim its ardor.

Let nothing in your conduct obscure its truthfulness. Suffer no idol to divide the throne which God has claimed in your affections. Cry against the admission of any intruder. Beseech the Lord to stay near to you and to drive far away every attraction and allurement that would stir up rivalry in your breast. Be it your own strong resolve, in the power of His Spirit, that, as you do love Him, you will seek to love Him more and more and, till your last dying day, it shall be your soul's passion and master thought that God should be all-in-all enshrined within the heart as the bosom's Lord. "He has set his love upon Me." I think I hear some of you say, "Oh, that I *could* love Him! I am half afraid to say that I *do* love Him." Yet, perhaps, you are the very persons that, if brought to the test, would prove to be the truest lovers of your Savior. But I hear your inward

whisper, "Though I do much that might make me fear and question the sincerity of my love to Him, yet, at times my soul's emotions get the better of these qualms, for a while, and speak out their fervor. Yes, my Jesus! I do love You! I do know and feel that You are my portion. Oh, my God, I do desire to love You more. I do give myself up to You." You know, beloved, that it is not always easy to move the affection of love. It may be in the soul and lie there quietly. Though I know that I love the Savior, I remember a time when I was in great doubt whether I had any love to Him, till, as I listened to a sermon from a good brother, the truth he uttered so stirred my soul that it set the love that had been slumbering in my spirit all in motion and I perceived that, after all, I did love my Lord and Master, and had His truth near to my heart! Now, it may be that God will raise up something in providence, or something in connection with some fellow Christian, that will cause your love to flame up and you will say within yourself, "There it is, after all! I was afraid it had died." Do you remember when you first set your love on God? Do you remember the place where Jesus met with you, where the weight of sin was taken from you and your transgression, like a thick cloud, was blown away? Ah, then the Savior was very, very dear to you. You fixed your love on Him. Do you not remember, since then, many high times and choice occasions when you have renewed your vow, when your soul has stretched out her wings towards Jesus, and He has looked towards you, and you towards Him, and the love of your espousals has been restored? Oh, that it might be so now! But whether or not there are any flames of affection, let the coals burn on, and say within your spirit, "Yes, my Savior, beyond a doubt, I do love You and I cling to You! Better it were that my heart should cease to pray than cease to love You!"

I am afraid there are some here that neither set their hearts on God nor care to do so. To them I can only say, God forbid that your present indifference should be your permanent choice! Your resolve not to love the God who made you, not to love the Redeemer of men, the Savior of sinners, the spirit of grace—such an obstinate resolution as that will involve the loss of all the privileges which belong to the lovers of Christ! And in that day "when the nearer waters roll, when the tempest rages high," you may regret, when it is too late, that you rejected that Jesus who, as lover of our souls, can alone find us a haven from the storm and protect us from the wrath to come. You know, after all, that they are happiest who love God the best. I can only pray for you that His Spirit may teach you wisdom and lead you to renounce your culpable indifference and your wicked aversion—and draw you into the fellowship of those who have set their love upon God. Now we must pass on. Is our love set? Then the next thing we have to notice is—

II. GOD'S LOVE PROVED TO THE LOVING HEART.

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." Rightly understood, this savors not of human merit, but of divine mercy. The possession of this love reflects no credit on the creature, but the

production of it redounds to the praise of the creator. He that gives grace for grace adds here another golden link to the chain of His own loving kindnesses when He says, "I will deliver him." By what gentle ways does a mother fondle her baby till the wee child clings to her? And to no stranger's arms will it go without a scream! The mother is pleased. She presses the infant to her breast and she says, "You sweet, affectionate little thing, I will take care of you. Nobody shall hurt you." Even so, beloved, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you," says the Lord. There is more than a mother's tenderness in our heavenly Father's heart! Come, you children of God, take this gracious word from your Father's lips, and let your souls be satisfied with fatness as you feed on it, "I will deliver him." Does it not mean that *He will defend you from all your foes and all your fears?* Are you exposed to ridicule, slander, persecution, tyranny? Or are you teased and tormented with the fawning looks, the treacherous words, the cunning devices, the gaudy allurements of those who would beguile you? Fear not their faces, whether they frown or smile! Cling to your own protector, for thus says the Lord, "I will deliver you." Your worst enemies are evil spirits, able to tempt you in many ways, and to suit their devices to your weaknesses—fear them not, for even the prince of the power of the air, though he comes against you with all his fiery darts at once, shall not prevail to destroy you, since it is written, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." As you love God, He will certainly deliver you from all the powers of earth and hell. It may be that your *temporal trials* harass you. Are you poor and friendless, without supplies and without prospects? None know the stings of poverty but those who endure them. It were foolish to fret yourselves for the morrow while you have enough for today. Take heart, you that love the Lord, and cling closer to Him when the peril seems nearer, for this promise goes before you, "I will deliver him." Yes, doubtless the dinner is ordered when the cupboard is bare, for is it not written, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be fed"?

Or, perhaps, *sickness* has stealthily crept over your mortal frame. Gradually you have been weakened in body. Why should you tremble because of the infirmities of your constitution, or the natural decay that comes with growing years, for you shall be rescued from all the ill-consequences of depression of spirit and of weakness of the flesh—"I will deliver him." It may be that *bereavement* has deprived your life of its joys. You have been losing friends, one by one. Already you have borne to the grave some of the nearest and dearest of your kindred—and others are going. Fear haunts your breast that you will soon be left alone. What will you do when all help has failed and all light faded from your dwelling? Why, will you not then have this promise to fall back upon?—"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him"? There are no straits or struggles, no cares or crosses, no weary loads or dreary

hardships, no privation at present, or famine in prospect, no pains or perils of any kind out of which the all-bounteous God cannot, and will not, deliver His people! Only believe the promise and you shall find it true! "I will deliver him." Do you tell me that you are haunted by *strong temptation,* that you have been sorely beset with them of late—that your condition and position are full of danger and jeopardy—that, being tempted by those who have great influence over you, your steps have well near slipped? Go to your knees! Cry to your God for strength to endure and might to overcome, but be not dismayed with cowardly fear, for if you have set your love on God, there stands this record, engraved as in eternal brass, "I will deliver him." You shall have grace equal to your time of trial! You shall break the snares of the foe! Though you are shut in like Samson in Gaza, and compassed about on all sides with temptations, you shall wake up as a giant, refreshed and, by your strength in God, pluck up the gates of the fortress and carry them away—post and bar and all—and your soul shall be free!

Perhaps, however, you are the victim of another fear, *you are afraid of dying*. Dying is at no time child's play, and he that treats the matter lightly knows not what he does. But you, perhaps, are subject to bondage through fear of death; its dread accompaniments, pain of body, gasping for breath; its strange outlook, a vast eternity; and its near approach, the rolling up of the curtain that hides from mortal view the scenes that lie beyond—all these appall you! Oh, be not troubled in mind! Have you set your love on Jesus, and does your heart cling to the Father, God? Then on the bed of languishing you shall find gracious succor and grateful relief. When your heart grows faint and your flesh wastes away, your soul shall be strengthened and your spirit endowed with fresh vigor! The noisome graveyard shall be fragrant with flowers of paradise and the dark sepulcher shall be lighted up with a blessed hope! You shall be gently led, not roughly driven, through the dark shades. And as with the tender notes of a requiem, sweet though solemn, you shall hear this glad word, "I will deliver him: I will deliver him." Delivered you shall be! The trial shall issue in triumph! Victim of death, you shall be victor over it! As in a chariot of fire, you shall be borne from the land of gloom to the land of joy! To your Father and your God you shall rise, leading your captivity captive. But ah, this is not a subject to stand and preach about—it is rather one upon which to sit and think! So sit down, you who love the Savior, and again, and again, and again delight yourself with this sure word of covenant promise which is given to you for your portion, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him"!

III. GOD'S PROMISE TO HIGH KNOWLEDGE.

It is set forth in the latter part of our text, "Because He has known My name, I will set him on high." This expresses a sacred mystery, "He has known My name." The Hebrew of old was not accustomed to use the name of Jehovah, either in ordinary speech or in their writing. In their

sacred books they were commonly in the habit of putting in the word, "Adonai," or, "Lord," instead of the word, "Jehovah," the name of their God. To many of the heathen nations the distinctive name of the one God was not even known! They only heard it alluded to by the peculiar people who delighted to keep the name to themselves. Now there is always a secret about that vital religion which comes to the believer not in word, only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit—a secret which the natural man cannot discern. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." The particular form of expression used in the text arises from the fact that there were some in Israel who did not know the name of God, while others did not know Him as the "I AM"—by that superlative name which is His memorial unto all generations. See Exodus 3:13-15. And just so, there are today people taught of God, who know the Lord, while the rest of mankind know Him not.

Let us try to give this matter a practical bearing.

"He has known My name." This means *information*. Have you, O my soul, a part in that high privilege of which our great intercessor spoke when He said to His Father, "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent"? Ask yourself, my hearer, the question: are you initiated into the mystery of that fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, which they enjoy who walk in the light of God? Do you know the living God? Do you know that He is, and there is none beside Him? Do you know that He is almighty and, therefore, do you bow down before Him? Have you seen that He is merciful and, therefore, put your trust in Him? Have you understood that He is just and, therefore, do you fear Him? Have your eyes ever perceived the blended attributes that make up the crown of Deity and compel you to worship Him in the beauty of holiness? Can you discern how impartial He is in punishing sin and yet how gracious in providing a ransom for sinners? As for the ungodly world, it concerns them not whether there is a God or not! And as to the excellence of His character, they do not regard it. But those whom He loves and whom He will set on high, delight to know the name of God and to spell out its mystic letters as they are painted on His works, unfolded in His ways and revealed in His Word! They make it their study to know what can be known of Him. God is the one object of their life's pursuit. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, is their instinctive cry! And the Holy Spirit is pleased to help them in their searches. Opinions, conjectures, guesses at the truths of God count for nothing. Do you know for sure the name of the Lord, so that without hesitation you can say, "I know whom I have believed"? "He has known My name." That means *trust*. He has relied upon it. He has come and depended upon the name of God as his dwelling place, the home of his soul. Wherein is your reliance, O man, O woman? On what do you depend for time or eternity? Is it on your own

strength, your works, or your merits? Is it on your wit, your wealth, your rank? Ah, then these poor props will fail you before long. But happy is that man who knows the name of God as his confidence, his refuge, his high tower, his place of defense and security!

To know God's name, likewise implies *experience*. I think many of you could rise and say, "Glory be to God, I do know Him by the distresses in which I have called upon Him, and the deliverances He has sent me! In my hours of darkness I have found Him to be a never-failing light. I have gone to His mercy-seat in times of need, and then He has appeared to me. I have inquired at His holy oracle, and He has answered me with the words of His mouth." Little can anyone know of God who has but heard of Him with the hearing of the ears. Nothing is known of God till we know Him by experience—nothing that is of value. All that the ear learns of God from another's teaching is shallow and superficial. Your heart must know God by its own deep communing. Let me ask you, dear hearer, how far you have gone in this school of instruction and discipline? We shall ascertain who you are and where you are by the answer you are able to give to this question. Tens of thousands of men walk through this world and never meet with God—they do not seek Him in their troubles. They may invoke His name, and cry out, "God help me!" in a stress of grief or a surge of pain, but they forget Him when their trials are over.

Oh, how different the children of God! "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." Theirs is not occasional, but habitual drawing near unto God! A good minister, sitting one day in the house of one of his people, overheard a dialog with a beggar woman who knocked at the door. The good housewife opened it and said to the poor creature, "Do not trouble me, now. I do not intend to give you anything today." The reply was, "Please don't say so, Ma'am. I am no upstart. You know me very well. I am an old beggar at your door. I think I have begged of you every week for the last seven years. Do not turn me away, kind lady, I pray you." She was about to be sent off without any relief, when the minister said, "Give her something for my sake. She is the exact picture of me. Her plea with you is just what I am obliged to plead with my God whenever I go to Him. 'Lord, give me Your mercy. I am no new comer—I am an old beggar. I have been dependent upon Your bounty, a pensioner upon Your charity these many, many years. Oh, cast me not away!" The Christian's life is a life of dependence upon God. He always has to go to Him. There is never an hour in which he could do without his God. Now this is the man off whom the text speaks, "He has known My name"—by long experience—he has come to rely upon My goodness and My love."

Then, beloved, you will observe the promise that is given to such, "I will set him on high because he has known My name." "If He knows My name, I taught it to him—My grace made him know it. And now, having given him so much grace, I will give him more, and I will give him glory at the last—I will set him on high." What does it mean, to be set on high by God? It certainly implies *rank*. The Christian is a man of rank. How so?

Because every man whom God sets on high, He acknowledges as His child, makes him to be, "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ." There is much respect shown in the world to the young man or the young woman whose good fortune it is to be heir of a noble title and large estates. But what must it be to be "an heir of God," to be "a joint-heir with Christ Jesus"? To be the son of a prince or the son of a king is no small thing in the esteem of most men. To have the blue blood in one's veins is thought to be honorable. To trace your pedigree up to an emperor is a matter for pride. But the child of God, mean as he may be reckoned on this base earth, though he should have lived and died in an attic or a cellar, near the wind or near the damp soil, is a prince of the blood imperial! He is of the royal family of heaven! He shall be a peer! He shall be, before long, in the court of the Most High! The blood royal runs within his veins, only it is not the royalty of a day, nor does it belong to the crown that is so readily taken from the wearer's brow. The "crown that fades not away" belongs to every man who has set his love upon God and who knows God's name! He is set on high, for God has made him of a princely rank.

The promise to "set him on high" will further mean a place of *security*. The Christian, when his faith is as it should be, is set so high above his enemies that they cannot reach him. We have sometimes been on the top of the Alps and seen a storm below in the valley. All has been calm over our heads in the sunlight, while below there has been all the tumult of the storm. God sets His servants on high, and often so high that when others think they will surely disturb their peace and break their comfort, they have been smiling and rejoicing in the clear atmosphere of heaven, undismayed by the tumult that has raged beneath them! "The Lord is my shepherd" they say, "I shall not want. He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies." It must have been a glorious thing for those Frenchmen who went up in one of those balloons that ascended from the besieged city of Paris, to look down on the Prussian soldiers, vainly trying to reach them with their bullets, but they were up too high! It must give one a sense of security to think of the bullets coning half-way up, and then falling short. But such is the position of the Christian by faith. He is on a rock so high that all the gunshots of his enemies cannot reach him! He is perfectly safe while he is near his God. "I will set him on high"—out of harm's reach—"because he knows My name." It is rank and it is safety.

To be set on high, again, means *happiness*. He is the highest man, in some respects, that is the happiest man, for he wears contentment within his bosom. To bear within the soul a pure satisfaction with the divine will has more to make him wealthy than all the coffers of Croesus! And such is the Christian. Commend me to the man whose sin is forgiven, to whom a perfect righteousness is imputed, who is adopted into the divine family, from whose past all the blackness is blotted out,

whose present is full of contentment and whose future is radiant with glory—commend me, I say, to such a man whom nothing can separate from the love of Christ—a man to whom all things belong, whether things present or things to come, a man to whom Christ, Himself, belongs, and all the treasures of God—and say if such a man is not blessed to all the intents of bliss, where are the blessed ones to be found? If he is not ranked among the happy, and set aloft above all others, where can happiness even be dreamed of? Verily the true Christian has a portion of happiness allotted to him here below which far excels all the voluptuous pleasures and intoxicating joys of sense! He has a right to be cheerful, a duty to rejoice evermore! The worldling boasts that he is happier than you are—it is a vain boast, an empty vaunt. His mirth—what does it consists of but quips, cranks, and wanton wiles? His joys but flash and crack and sparkle—like thorns that burn for a few minutes, and then turn to ashes. Their fun will never compare with your happiness! They may have more laughter, but you have more liveliness. They dissipate their spirits, while you renovate your strength! Gloom follows their glee, but your calm eventides forestall bright tomorrows, and your present serenity is the sure presage of a welcome eternity! Then "hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown."

"Because he has known My name, I will set him on high." Yes, beloved, He has raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Before long, so short the time with some of us, that it may seem like tomorrow, we shall have our place among the angels. Among the angels, did I say? Nearer the throne of God than they! Where even Gabriel cannot sit—at God's right hand, by His side who wears our manhood on the throne of God! There will He set us on high, where sits the crucified, His hands still bearing the scars, and His feet the nail prints—He will set us there! Do not our hearts leap at the very thought? Worthy to be cast into the lowest pit of hell, and yet infinite mercy promised us a seat of honor in heaven! During the last week two, three venerable brothers and sisters, ornaments of our denomination, have passed away—some with whom it has been my habit to take sweet counsel. There was one dear brother, who, last week, was hale and strong—a man who, though his hands were busy and his mind occupied with the cares of this life, delighted to preach the gospel and was the pastor of a church. When I heard of his departure, I seemed to realize more vividly how close we are to the world to come. Very soon, my brothers and sisters, you will hear of some in this congregation that have passed the flood. We have dear names in our recollection, the names of those dear to this congregation, whose spirits I could imagine are with us whenever we gather at the communion table. I can, without any immoderate stretch of fancy, picture them often within these aisles. So much did they seem to be part and parcel of ourselves, that when I miss them from their known place, I marvel that they shall occupy it no longer; and before long some of you also will be missing—the pastor,

perhaps? Or the deacons, or the elders, or some of you whose old familiar faces greet us constantly. At length you are gone! But oh, what a blessing if gone to swell the number of the glorified, to complete the orchestra of heaven, to add some fresh notes to the everlasting music! The army there has gaps in its ranks—they, without us, cannot be perfect. We shall soon go over to the majority. We shall soon go from the militant to the triumphant, from those that sit down here and weep over their imperfections, to those who sit up there, see their Lord and rejoice that they are like He! Let us anticipate the reunion, there, and celebrate the communion, here, full of the joys of hope and the visions of that better land towards which we journey as pilgrims! "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him"—there is your promise for this life! "I will set him on high because he has known My name"—there is your promise of the life to come!

I wish, oh, how I wish, this promise belonged to all of you! Alas, that some of you do not know His name! Neither do you set your love upon Him. You must go away without this blessing! Do seek it. Do ask forgiveness at the Savior's feet. God is willing to hear prayer, and when He compels you to pray, He will surely give the answer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 42:1-6.

Verse 1. *Behold My servant, whom I uphold; My elect, in whom My soul delights: I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* Verily this prophecy is concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe the title which He takes. He is called the servant of God. The Father calls Him, His servant. Above all others is Christ the servant of the highest deigning to become the servant of servants, though He is the King of kings. "Whom I uphold"—which may be read two ways. According to some renderings, it should be, "Whom I lean upon"—as if God leaned the full weight of His glory upon Christ and gave over the work of grace into His hands—that is, if the passage is read passively. If actively, it runs as in our text, "Whom I uphold." And both are true. God leans upon Christ. Christ draws His strength from God. They co-work, and mutual is the glory. "My elect." That is first. "My choice One," for there is none so choice as Christ. "My elected One," for Christ is the head of election. We are chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world so that God specially calls Him, "My elect." "In whom My soul delights." The delight of the Father in the Son is infinite. He delighted in His person. Now He delights in the work which He has accomplished. The delight of the Father is in Christ, and He delights in us because we are in Him. If, indeed, we are members of Christ, He is well pleased with us for Christ's sake. "In whom My soul delights." "I have put My Spirit upon Him." That

was publicly done when He was baptized in the Jordan. The Spirit without measure rests and abides on Him, our covenant head. "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Rejoice, then, you Gentiles! You are no longer excluded. At first the Word of God came to the Jews, only, but He has given the man, Christ Jesus, who has brought forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2-3. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.* Jesus was gentle, retiring, meek, quiet. His testimony was a very powerful one, but not a noisy one. He sought no honor among men. He frequently forbade the healed ones to tell of His miracles. He rather retire than came into public notice. He was not contentious. He did not seek to put out the Pharisees, who were like smoking flax. He was never hard towards the tender ones, but always gentle as a nurse among her children. Now it is very often found that where there is quietness and meekness, there is, nevertheless, great firmness of purpose. Noise and weakness go together, but quietness and strength are frequently combined. So read the next verse.

4. *He shall not fail.* He shall not faint. So it may be.

4. *Nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.* This quiet, gentle Christ goes on pushing on His empire and extending His dominion till these far-off islands of the sea already know His power! And the day comes when the whole round earth shall be obedient to His sway! O blessed Christ, how glad we are to think that when we are discouraged, You are not, and when we fail and faint, You do not. You hold on forever, like the sun who comes forth from his chamber in the morning and stops not till he has run his race.

5, 6. *Thus says God the LORD, He that created the heavens and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it, He that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You, and give You for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.* Thus the great God commissions Christ! Thus He declares that the eternal power and Godhead will back Him up till the Gentiles shall perceive His light, and the people shall be brought into covenant with God.

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"Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone."
James 2:17.

WHATEVER the statement of James may be, it could never have been his intention to contradict the gospel! It could never be possible that the Holy Spirit would say one thing, in one place, and another in another. Statements of Paul and of James must be reconciled, and if they were not, I would sooner be prepared to throw overboard the statement of James than that of Paul. Luther did so, I think, most unjustifiably. If you ask me, then, how I dare to say I would sooner do so, my reply is, I said I would sooner throw overboard James than Paul for this reason, because, at any rate, we must keep to the Master, Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought never to raise any questions about differences of inspiration, since they are all equally inspired, but if such questions could be raised and were allowable, it were wisdom to stick fastest to those who cling closest to Christ. Now the last words of the Lord Jesus, before He was taken up, were these, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," and what was this gospel? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To that, then, we must always cling, and Jesus Christ has given a promise of salvation to the baptized believer, for He has said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here it is clear He promises everlasting life to all who believe in Him, to all who trust in Him. Now from the Master's words we will not stir, but close to His own declaration we will stand. Be assured that the gospel of your salvation as a believer, with a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead, will save your soul—a simple and undiluted reliance upon the life, death, resurrection, merit and person of Jesus Christ, will ensure to you everlasting life. Let nothing move you from this confidence—it has great recompense of reward! Heaven and earth may pass away, but from this grand fundamental truth of God not one jot or tittle shall ever be moved! "He that believes in Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God."

The fact is, James and Paul are perfectly reconcilable—they are just viewing a truth of God from different standpoints. Whatever James may

mean, I am quite confident about what Paul means, and confident about the truth of the two.

A second remark. James never intended, for a moment, nor do any of his words lead us into such a belief, that there can be any merit whatever in any good works of ours. After we have done all, if we could do all, we would only have done what we were bound to do! Surely there is no merit in a man's paying what he owes—no great merit in a servant who has his wages for doing what he is paid to do. The question of merit between the creature and his creator is not to be raised—He has a right to us. He has the right of creation, the right of preservation, the right of infinite sovereignty and, whatever He should exact of us, we should require nothing from Him in return! And, having sinned as we all have, for us to talk of salvation by merit—by our own works—is worse than vanity! It is an impertinence which God will never endure—

"Talk they of morals, O You bleeding Lamb!
The best morality is love of You."

Talk of salvation by works and Cowper's reply seems apt—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord."

What James does mean, however, is this, no doubt, in brief and short—that while faith saves, it is faith of a certain kind. No man is saved by persuading himself that he is saved! Nobody is saved by believing Jesus Christ died for him. That may be, or may not be true in the sense in which he understands it. In a certain sense Christ died for all men, but since it is evident that many men are lost, Christ's dying for all men is not at all a ground upon which any man may hope to be saved. Christ died for *some* men, in another sense, in a peculiar and special sense. No man has a right to believe that Christ peculiarly and specially died for him until he has an evidence of it in casting himself upon Christ, trusting in Jesus and bringing forth suitable works to evince the reality of his faith. The faith that saves is not a historical faith, not a faith that simply believes a creed and certain facts—I have no doubt devils are very orthodox—I do not know which church they belong to, though there are some in all churches! There was one in Christ's Church when He was on earth, for He said one was filled with devils—and there are some in all churches. Devils believe all the facts of revelation. I do not believe they have a doubt—they have suffered too much from the hand of God to doubt His existence! They have felt too much the terror of His wrath to doubt the righteousness of His government! They are stern believers, but they are not saved—and such a faith, if it is in us, will not, cannot save us—but will remain to all intents and purposes, a dead, inoperative faith! It is a faith which *produces* works which saves us. The works do not save us. And a faith which does *not* produce works is a faith that will only deceive—and cannot lead us into heaven. Now this evening we shall first speak a few words upon—

I. WHAT KIND OF WORKS ARE NECESSARY TO PROVE OUR FAITH IF IT IS A SAVING FAITH.

The works which are absolutely necessary are, in brief, these—First, there must be *fruits meet for repentance*, works of repentance. It is wrong to tell a man he must repent before he may trust Christ, but it is right to tell him that, having trusted Christ, it is not possible for him to remain impenitent. There never was in this world such a thing as an impenitent believer in Jesus Christ, and there never can be! Faith and repentance are born in a spiritual life *together* and they grow up together! The moment a man believes, he repents, and while he believes, he both believes and repents, and until he shall have done with faith, he will not have done with repenting. If you have believed, but have never repented of your sins, then beware of your believing! If you pretend, now, to be a child of God, and if you have never clothed yourself in dust and ashes. If you have never hated the sins which once you loved—if you do not now hate them and endeavor to be rid of them, if you do not humble yourself before God on account of them—as the Lord lives, you know nothing about saving faith! For faith puts a distance between us and sin! In a moment it leads us away from the distance between us and Christ—nearer to Christ, we are now far off from sin! But he who loves his sin, thinks little of his sin, goes into it with levity, speaks of sin as though it were a trifle, has the faith of devils—but the faith of God's elect he never knew! True faith purges the soul, since the man now hunts after sin that he might find out the traitor that lurks within his nature. And though a believer is not perfect, yet the drift of faith is to make him perfect—and if it is faith to be perfected, the believer shall be perfected—and then he shall be caught up to dwell before the throne of God! Judge yourselves, my hearers! Have you brought forth the fruits of repentance? If not, your faith without them is dead!

Works of secret piety are also essential to true faith. Does a man say, I believe that Jesus died for me, and I hope to be saved, and does he live in a constant neglect of private prayer? Is the Word of God never read? Does he never lift up his eyes in secret with, "My Father, be You the guide of my youth"? Has he no secret regard in his heart to the Lord his God and does he hold no communion with Christ, his Savior, and is there no fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Then how can faith dwell in such a man? As well say that a man is alive when he does not breathe, and in whom the blood does not circulate, as to say that a man is a believer with living faith who does not draw near to God in prayer, that does not live, indeed, under the awe and fear of the Most High God as ever present and seeing Him in all places! Judge yourselves, you professors—are you neglecting prayer? Have you no secret spiritual life? If so, away with your notion about saving faith! You are not justified by such a faith as that! There is no life in it! It is not a faith that leads to the Lamb and brings salvation! If it were, it would show itself by driving you to your knees and making you lift up your heart to the Most High!

Another set of works are those which I may call *works of obedience*. When a man trusts in Jesus, he accepts Jesus as his Master. He says, "Show me what You would have me to do." The Father shows Christ what

He would have Him to do. He does not set up His own will and judgment, but He is obedient to His Father's will. I will not tonight speak of those who know not their Lord's will, who shall be beaten with few stripes, but I do fear there are some professors who are living in willful neglect of known Christian duties, and yet suppose themselves to be the partakers of saving faith. Now a duty may be neglected, and yet a man may be saved, but a duty persistently and willfully neglected may be the leak that will sink the ship! Or the neglect of any one of such duties for the surrender of a true heart to Christ does not go such-and-such a length and then stop! Christ will save no heart upon terms and conditions—it must be an unconditional surrender to His government if you would be saved by Him. Now, some will draw a line here, and some will draw a line there, up to this and say, "I will be Christ's servant." That is to say, sir, you will be your own master, for that is the English of it! But the true heart that has really believed says, "I will make haste and delay not to keep Your commandments. Make straight the path before my feet, for Your commandments are not grievous." "I have delighted in Your commandments more than in fine gold." Now, sons and daughters of sin, professedly, what do you say about this? Have you an eye to the Master, as servants keep their eyes to their mistress? Do you ever ask yourselves what would Christ have you to do? Or do you live habitually in the neglect of Christ's law and wills? Do you go to places where Christ would not meet you, and where you would not like to meet with Him? Are some of you in the habit of professing maxims and customs upon which you know your Lord would never set His seal? You say you believe, you have faith in Him? Ah, sirs, if it is a *living* faith, it will be an *obedient* faith!

Living faith produces what I shall call *separating works*. When a man believes in Jesus, he is not what he was, nor will he consort with those who were once his familiars. Our Lord has said, "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Now Christ was not an ascetic—He ate and drank as other men do so that they even said of Him that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber because He mingled with the rest of mankind. But was there ever a more unearthly life than the life of Christ? He seems to go through all the world a complete man in all that is necessary to manliness, but His presence is like the presence of a seraph among sinners! You can discover at once that He is not of their mold, nor of their spirit, but harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Now such will the believer be if his faith is genuine. This is a sharp cut to some professors, but not a whit more sharp than the Scripture warrants! If we are of the world, what can we expect but the world's doom in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? If you find your pleasure with the world, you shall meet your condemnation with the world! If with the world you live, with the world you shall die—and with the world you shall live again forever—lost! Where there is no separation, there is no grace! If we are conformed to this world, how dare we talk about grace being in our souls! And if there is no distinguishing difference between us and worldlings, what vanity it is, what trifling,

what hypocrisy, what a delusion for us to come to the Lord's table talking about being the Lord's sons when we are none of His! Faith without the works which denote the difference between a believer and a worldling is a dead, unsaving faith!

Now I have not said that any believer is perfect. I have never thought so, but I have said that if a believer could be a believer altogether, and faith could have her perfect work, he would be perfect, and that in proportion as he is truly a believer, in that proportion he will bring forth fruit that shall magnify God and prove the sincerity of his faith.

One other set of works will be necessary to prove the vitality of his faith, namely, *works of love*. He that loves Christ feels that the love of Christ compels him—he endeavors to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ! He longs to win jewels for Christ's crown. He endeavors to extend the boundaries of Christ's and Messiah's kingdom—and I will not give a farthing for the loftiest profession coupled with the most flowing words that never shows itself in direct deeds of Christian service. If you love Christ, you cannot help serving Him! If you believe in Him, there is such potency in what you believe, such power in the grace which comes with believing, that you *must* serve Christ! And if you serve Him not, you are not His!

This proof, before we leave it, might be illustrated in various ways. We will just give one. A tree has been planted; now the source of life to that tree is at the root, whether it has apples on it or not. The apples would not give it life, but the whole of the life of the tree will come from its root. But if that tree stands in the orchard, and when the springtime comes there are no buds, and when the summer comes there are no leaves and no fruit. And the next year, and the next, it stands there without bud or blossom, or leaf or fruit, you would say it is dead—and you are correct—it is dead. It is not that the leaves could have made it live, but that the absence of the leaves is a proof that it is dead! So, too, is it with the professor. If he has life, that life must give fruits. If not fruits, works. If his faith has root, but if there are no works, then depend upon it, the inference that he is spiritually dead is certainly a correct one! When the telegraph cable flashed no message across to America; when they tried to telegraph again and again, but the only result following was "dead earth"—they felt persuaded that there was a fracture, and well they might! And when there is nothing produced in the life by the supposed divine grace which we have, and nothing is telegraphed to the world but, "dead earth," we may rest assured that the link of connection between the soul and Christ does not exist!

I need not enlarge. We should just put it into that one sentence—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Bring forth, therefore, works meet for repentance! And now we turn to the second point with more brevity—

II. SOME FACTS THAT BACK UP THE DOCTRINE THAT "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD."

These facts show that it is evident to all observers that many professors of faith without works are not saved. It would be very ludicrous, if it were not very miserable, to think of some who wrap themselves in the conceit that they are saved about whose salvation nobody but themselves can have any question. I remember a professor who used to talk of being justified by faith who was most assured about it when he had consumed much beer. Such professors are not at all uncommon, sad to say! They seem at the moment, when their condemnation seems written on their very brow to all who know them, to be most confident that they, themselves, are saved! Now, brothers and sisters, if such cases are convincing and you entertain no doubt but decide in their case, apply the same rule to yourselves, for although you may not plunge into the grosser vices, yet if you make your homes wretched by your selfishness, if you fall into constant habits of vicious temper, if you never strive against these sins, and the grace of God never leads you out of them—if you can live in private sin and yet pacify your conscience and remain just as you were before your pretended conversion—when you sit in judgment and pronounce the verdict on others, feel that you pronounce it upon yourself, for surely for one sin that is openly indulged in, which is manifested to you in the dissipation of your fellow creatures, it is not hard for you to believe that any other sin, if it is constantly indulged and is loved, will do the same to you as it does to him! You know men who have not faith, but have a sort of faith, are not saved. It must be true, or else where were the Savior's words, "Straight is the gate and narrow the way, and few there are that find it"? For this is no straight gate and no narrow way, merely to be orthodox and hold a creed and say, "I believe Jesus died for me." No, it is a very narrow gate so to believe as to become practically Christ's servants, so to trust as to give up that which Christ hates! Truths which Jesus bids us believe are all truths which if believed, *must have an effect upon the daily life*.

A man cannot really believe that Jesus Christ has taken away his sin by such sufferings as those of the cross, and yet trifle with sin! A man is a liar who says, "I believe that yonder bleeding Savior suffered on account of my sins," and yet holds good fellowship with the very sins that put Christ to death! Oh, sirs, a faith in the bleeding Savior is a faith that craves for vengeance upon every form of sin! The Christian religion makes us believe that we are the sons of God when we trust in Christ. Will a man believe that he is really the son of God, and then daily and willfully go and live like a child of the devil? Do you expect to see members of the royal court playing with beggars in the street? When a man believes himself to possess a certain station of life, that belief leads him to a certain carriage and conversation—and when I am led to believe I am elected of God, that I am redeemed by blood, that heaven is secured to me by the covenant of grace, that I am God's priest, made a king in Christ Jesus, I cannot, if I believe, unless I am more monstrous than human nature, itself, seems capable of being—go back to live after just

the same fashion, to run in the same course as others and live as the sons of Belial live! We constantly see in Scripture, and all the saints affirm it, that faith is linked with divine grace—and that where faith is, the grace of God is—but how can there be the gift of God reigning in the soul and yet a love of sin and a neglect of holiness? I cannot understand grace reigning and vice ruling over the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever in the inner man—and for this man to give himself up to be a slave of Satan is a thing impossible!

Faith, again, is always *in connection with regeneration*. Now regeneration is making of the old thing new. It is infusing a new nature into a man. The new birth is not a mere reformation, but an entire renovation and revolution! It is making the man a new creation in Christ Jesus. But a new creature, if he has no repentance, if he has no good works, no private prayer, no charity, no holiness of any kind, then regeneration will be a football for scorn! The new birth would be a thing to be ridiculed if it did not really produce a hatred of sin and a love of holiness. That kind of new birth which is dispensed by the Church of Rome, and also by some in the Church of England, is a kind of new birth which ought to excite the derision of all mankind, for children are said to be born-again—certified to be born-again, made members of Christ and children of God—and afterwards they grow up, in many cases—in most cases—let me say, to forget their baptismal vows and live in sin as others do! Evidently it has had no effect upon them! But regeneration such as we read of in the Bible changes the nature of man, makes him hate the things he loved, and love the things he hated! This is regeneration! This is regeneration which is worth the seeking! It always comes with faith, and consequently good works must come with faith, too. But we pass on to the last matter, which is this—

III. WHAT OF THOSE MEN WHO HAVE FAITH, BUT WHO HAVE NO GOOD WORKS?

Then what about them? Why, this about them—that their supposed faith generally makes them *very careless and indifferent*, and ultimately hardened and depraved men! I dread beyond measure that any one of us should have a name to live when we are dead, for an ordinary sinner who makes no profession may be converted, but it is extremely rare that a sinner who makes a profession of being what he is not is ever converted! It is a miserable thing to find a person discovering that his profession has been a lie. A man sits down and he says, "Why, I believe," and as he walks he is careful, because he is afraid of what others might say. By-and-by, he begins to indulge a little. He says, "This is not of works. I may do this and yet get forgiveness." Then he goes a little further away. I do not say that, perhaps, at first he goes to the theater, but he goes next door to it. He does not get drunk, but he likes jovial company. A little further and he gets confirmed in the belief that he is a saved one, and he gets so much confirmed in that idea that he thinks he can do just as he likes! Having sported on the brink without falling over, he thinks he will try again—and he goes a little further and further until I may venture to

say, if Satan needs raw material of which to make the worst of men, he generally takes those who profess to be the best! And I have questioned whether such a valuable servant of Satan as Judas was, could ever have been made of any other material than an apostate apostle. If he had not lived near to Christ, he never could have become such a traitor as he was! You must have a good knowledge of religion to be a thorough-faced hypocrite! And you must become high in Christ's Church before you can become fit tools for Satan's worst works. Oh, but why do men do this? Oh, what is the use of maintaining such a faith? I think if we do not care to get the vitality of religion, I would never burden myself with the husks of it, for such people get the *chains* of godliness without getting the *comforts* of godliness. They dare not do this, they dare not do that—if they do, they feel hampered. Why don't they give up professing—they would at least be free! They would have the sin without the millstone about their neck! Surely there can be no excuse for men who mean to perish coming to cover themselves with a mask of godliness! Why cannot they perish as they are? Why add sin to sin by insulting the Church through the cross of Christ?

When men make a profession of religion, and yet their works do not follow their faith, what about them? Why, this about them. *They have dishonored the Church* and, of all others, these are the people who make the world point to the Church and say, "Where is your religion? That is your religion, is it?" So it is when they find a man who professes to be in Christ and yet walks not as Christ walked. These give the Church her wounds! She receives them in the house of her friends! These make the true ministers of God go to their closets with broken hearts, crying out, "Oh, Lord, why have You sent us to this people to speak and minister among them, that they should play the hypocrite before You?" These are they who prevent the coming in of others, for others take knowledge of them, as they think religion is hypocrisy, and they are hindered. And, if not seriously, they get, at any rate, comfort in their sin from the iniquity of these professors! What their judgment will be when Christ appears, it is not for my tongue to say. In that day when, with tongue of fire, Christ shall search every heart and call on all men to receive their judgment, what must be the lot of the base-born professor who prostituted his profession to his own honor and gain? He sought not the glory of God. What shall be the thunder bolt that shall pursue his guilty soul in its timorous flight to hell? And what the chains that are reserved in blackness and darkness forever for those who are wells without water and clouds without rain? I cannot tell, and may God grant that you may never know! Oh, may we all tonight go to Christ Jesus humbly and freely, confessing our sins and take Christ to be our complete Savior in very deed and truth! Then shall we be saved! And then, being saved, we shall seek to serve Christ with heart, and soul, and strength!

Lest I have missed my mark, this one illustration shall suffice and I have done. There is a vessel drifting. She will soon be on the shore, but a pilot has come on board. He is standing on the deck and he says to the

captain and crew, "I promise and undertake that if you will solely and alone trust me, I will save your vessel. Do you promise it? Do you believe in me?" They believe in him. They say they believe the pilot can save the vessel and they trust the vessel implicitly to his care. Now listen to him. "Now," he says, "you at that helm there!" He does not stir. "At the helm there! Can't you hear?" He does not stir! He does not stir! "Well but, Jack, haven't you confidence in the pilot?" "Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I have faith in him," he says, "he will save the vessel if I have faith in him." "Don't you hear the pilot, as he says, "have faith in me and you won't touch the helm?" "Now, you aloft there! Reef that sail." He does not stir, but lets the wind still blow into the sail and drift the vessel on to the coast "Now then, some of you, look alive and reef that sail!" But they do not stir! "Why, Captain, what shall I do? These fellows won't stir or move a peg." "Oh," says the captain; "I have every confidence in you, pilot. I believe you will save the vessel." "Then why don't you attend to the tiller, and all that?" "Oh, no," says he, "I have great confidence in *you*. I don't mean to do anything." Now when that ship goes down amid the boiling surges, and each man sinks to his doom, I will ask you—had they faith in the pilot? Hadn't they a mimicking, mocking sort of faith, and only that? For if they had been really anxious to have the vessel rescued and have trusted in the pilot, it would be the pilot who had saved them, and they could never have been saved without him. They would have proved their faith by their works! Their faith would have been made perfect, and the vessel would have been secured.

I call upon every man here to do what Christ bids him! I call upon you, first of all, to prove that you believe in Christ by being baptized! "He that believes in Christ and is baptized shall be saved." The first proof that you believe in Christ is to be given by yielding to the much despised ordinance of believers' baptism and then, having done that, going on to the other means of which I have spoken. Oh, I charge you by your soul's salvation, neglect nothing Christ commands, however trivial it may seem to your reason! Whatever He says to you, do it, for only by a childlike obedience to every bidding of Christ can you expect to have the promise fulfilled, "They that trust in Him shall be saved." The Lord bless these words, for His name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JAMES 1:1-26.

Verse 1. *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.* James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was an apostle and he was the Lord's brother, yet he mentions not these greater things, but he takes the lowly title, in which, no doubt, he felt the highest honor—and calls himself, "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." Happy is that man who serves the Lord, whose whole life is not that of an independent master of himself, but of one who is fully submissive to the divine

command! Where is the fiction of the ten lost tribes? He writes to the *twelve* tribes that were scattered abroad, and gives them greeting, so that this Epistle is first directed to the seed of Israel, and then, as in all things, to all the Church of God, seeing all the saints of God are the true seed of believing Abraham, the father of believers.

2. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers trials.* Do not sorrow over your trials, do not look upon them as misfortunes and calamities—they are black vessels, but they are loaded with gold! Your choicest mercies come to you disguised as your sharpest trials. Welcome them! Do not sorrow over them, but rejoice in them!

3, 4. *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* Endure everything. Suffer everything that God sends you. Bathe yourself in this rough sea till, by God's blessing, it has strengthened you and cleansed you, for to that end He sends it, that it may perfect you by discipline, educating all your spiritual faculties and bringing out all your powers for His glory. Shrink not, then, seek not to escape by any wrong means from trial, but go through with it, have perfect endurance of it, that you may be perfect and whole, wanting nothing. "If any of you lack wisdom," and that is the point where you are most likely not to be perfect and entire—

5. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men, liberally and unbraids not; and it shall be given him.* We are so apt, when we give anything, to diminish the value of it by some unkind remarks. But God does not so—He gives, as He bids us give, with simplicity. There is the gift and He will not detract from it by upbraiding us. Why, some will upbraid the poor while they help them—"How did you come to be in such a condition?" But God says not so to us—the gift is given in pure liberality without any upbraiding. Wisdom is a gift! The best wisdom is not that which we acquire by study, but that which is the distinct gift of God in answer to prayer!

6. *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.* Now on the shore, now sinking back, now driving fearlessly ahead, then sinking down. This is not the kind of man that prevails with God in prayer! It is not the kind of faith we ought to have in God—a faith that is very brilliant on Sunday, but very dull on the Monday—a faith that is triumphant after a sermon, but which seems to be defeated when we get into actual trouble.

7, 8. *For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.* Unstable in everything! Till you get a single heart, till your whole soul is bound up in confidence in God, you cannot expect to be stable in your ways. "Unite my heart to fear Your name," and then I shall not be a double-minded man.

9. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted.* The lowness of his estate is an exaltation! He shall find in his troubles a double blessing—he shall be made greater by being so little. "But let the

rich rejoice in that he is made low," so that what would have been foolish pomp and pride is taken away from him and, by the grace of God, he is kept low. "Because as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away."

10, 11. *But the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away, for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withers the grass, and the flower thereof falls, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes, so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.* Oh, to be delivered from all glorying in such uncertain riches! Whatever God gives you, He may soon take away from you. If He takes it not away, He may take away your power to enjoy it! It is poor, slippery stuff at the very best. Rejoice that you have something better, something lasting!

12. *Blessed is the man who endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.* It is promised to love, but it is given to endurance! It is the love of God which spies out our love and rewards it, but rewards it partly by trying it and then ultimately by bringing forth the crown of life. Men ran for a crown in the Greek games, and could not win the crown without the running. So does God give to them that run, a crown, but not without the running. He gives to them, first, the privilege of suffering for His name's sake—and then of being rewarded for it.

13. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man.* God tries men, but the *motive* of a trial is that which differentiates it from a temptation. In a temptation we try a man with a view of inducing him to do wrong, but God tries men to better them, that they may, by finding out their weakness, be saved from doing wrong. He never inclines a heart to evil. While He does all things, and is in all things, yet not so that He, Himself, does evil, or can be charged therewith.

14. *But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.* This is the wanton harlot that deceives the heart of man—his own desire, grown strong and hot till it comes to be a lusting—this draws a man away. It baits the hook and man swallows it and is thus entrapped and enticed.

15. *Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.* There is the history and pedigree of sin! God save us from having any connection with the desire to sin, lest from that we be led into sin and then, from sin, descend into death!

16, 17. *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.* All good from God, all evil from ourselves!

17. *And comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* There is variableness and there is the shadow of turning in the sun, but in that greater Father of lights there is neither parallax nor tropic—He is always the same and we may go to Him with unwavering confidence because He is the same. Oh, what a blessing to such changing creatures as we are to have an unchanging

God! "Of His own will." If you want to know the power of God's will, it never goes towards evil.

18. *Of His own will He brought us forth with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.* The best and noblest part of His creation, the twice-begotten, the immortals that shall be the bodyguard of His Son, that shall stand about His bed, which is Solomon's, each man with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. What a privilege it is to be begotten of God, to be the "first fruits" of His creatures!

19. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear.* Because it is by the Word that we are begotten—let us be swift to hear it. "Slow to speak," because there is so much sin in us that the less we speak, the better. In the multitude of words there lacks not sin. Great talkativeness is seldom dissociated from great sinfulness. "Slow to wrath."

20. *Slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.* There is a tendency to grow angry with those who do not see the truth of God, but is it not a foolish thing to be angry with blind men because they do not see? What if you see yourself? Who opened your eyes? Give God the praise for what you see, and never think that your anger, your indignation, your hot temper can ever work the righteousness of God! It is contrary thereto and cannot work towards it.

21-23. *Therefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls. But be you doers of the word, and not hearers, only, deceiving your own selves, for if any is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.* It is a good thing for him to do that, to see himself as others see him. "Beholding his natural face," even as men in looking into the Word of God behold the face of their nature—they see what they are like as they look into the mirror.

24-26. *For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But who so looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall blessed in his deed. If any man among you seems to be religious and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

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SANCTIFIED SORROW
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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1914,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones." Isaiah 54:11, 12.

WHO can doubt that this promise belongs to the Gentile Church, since it has been so richly fulfilled in her history? For many an age the light did not shine upon heathen lands. One spot, alone, upon all the earth received the genial beams of the Sun of righteousness. Vast continents, thickly populated, full of life, bustle and enterprise, lay spread out as a moral waste, barren and neglected. But little revelation of God had found its way among the teeming multitudes of the population. To them the dispensation of the grace of God had not been proclaimed. The mystery of Christ was not as yet made known unto the sons of men. The Israelites had a monopoly of covenant privileges. But now in these latter days, how wondrously are the tables turned! The branches of the wild olive have been grafted in "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Thus the Lord has taken unto Himself a numerous seed once ignored by Israel, "which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Not after the lineage of the flesh, but according to the nobler lineage of faith, the same are the children of Abraham—and with faithful Abraham do they inherit the covenant mercy of God. This day the barren woman keeps house and is the joyful mother of many children. The Gentile Church has her stones of sapphire—God is in the midst of her to make her glad!

Not less fully persuaded am I that this promise belongs to the Jewish Church. Among the natural descendants of the old Hebrew Patriarch, the Lord has preserved to Himself a spiritual people. Glory be to His name, He has not cast off His people whom He did foreknow! Even at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Of the Jewish race there is a certain number of disciples who are witnesses of the truth of God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and worshiping Him as their Messiah! But the day as yet is dark for Israel. Thick clouds encompass her. The veil is still upon the hearts of her children. The converts gathered from her tribes are few in number compared with those from different branches of the Gentiles. Seems it not as though her cup of

sorrow were not yet drained? God has put the sons of Jacob for a while out of their place as a punishment for their great sin in rejecting Him, whom their own inspired prophets had foretold. But doubt not, beloved, that their future is radiant with hope!

The day will come, and that day may come speedily, when the glory shall return to Zion and the excellence unto Judah. The fullness of the Gentiles, then, shall acknowledge the Lord when Jewish eyes shall behold and recognize Him, Messiah, Prince of Peace. Well may we look and long with eagerness for that happy era! If I rightly read the Scriptures, the lost tribes are to be converted, first, and gathered afterwards, while the people distinguished among us as Jews are to be restored to their own land, and then convinced by seeing the man whom they pierced, enthroned with honor and majesty. Here the world's history reaches a majestic climax! Once with their day of fearful recompense came our day of grateful visitation. Yes, the day-spring from on high has visited us! What next is unrolled in the scroll of dispensations? If the casting away of them became the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them again be but life from the dead? So let the people to whom this great promise was originally spoken have all the good that was stored up for them in it!

May not, however, this rich consolation be applied to any Church that is passing through a time of depression? All the promises of God are like minted gold, of sterling value and intended for circulation. The general principles of the promises of God may be appropriated by those to whom they are appropriate. Let any faithful Church of Jesus Christ be passing through severe trial of persecution and declension, if there is a true likeness to Christ in it, the tempest and storm will eventually exhaust their fury and accomplish their end and afterwards a time of establishing and building up shall follow. It is said of some persons that they cannot fight losing battles. No such fatality need haunt us. We ought always to stand our ground, for when we have been worsted in the conflict; we have always before us the prospect that we shall at length be conquerors because our defeats are permitted for our discipline without peril to our destiny! "A troop shall overcome Gad, but he shall overcome at the last." Where would be the honor of a victory which was gained without a struggle? Is not the prize more welcome when it has been competed for with toil and strain? Do we not account any kind of success the sweeter for the toil expended and the difficulties mastered in reaching it? Are we to expect honor without labor? Take heart, then, you afflicted church, and faint not in the day of adversity, for God has set over against it the day of prosperity when you shall be built up with all the riches and treasures of His grace and when your mouth shall be filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing! And then shall you say, "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

If, now, my text thus stands good to the Gentile Church, and to the remnant of Israel, and if it may serve to cheer and encourage the little

Christian churches, not only in our own land, but in all the regions of the earth where Christ is preached, may it not in like manner be applied to the experience of individual believers? And may we not find in it a rich draught of consolation for ourselves? Depend upon it, brothers and sisters, our period of trial and suffering will come to a close and it will be overruled in the gracious providence of God to the promotion of our best prosperity and our highest interests! We may be afflicted and tossed with tempest, but for this very cause we shall ultimately have our foundations laid in sapphire and our stones with fair colors! I will endeavor to work out this one thought in respect to three kinds of distress which are known to raise a tempest in the believer's soul.

The first is *the great life storm in which we are turned from darkness to light* and from the power of Satan to God. The second, *the common life storms in which divers afflictions befall us*, and manifold temptations try our faith. And the third is *the last storm, which brings with it the wreck of our frail boat* after all its tossing on the troubled sea of life, *the death of the body*—then no more fatigue, no more distress—for we shall enter the haven of rest and enjoy an endless peace! Now, with regard to—

I. THE DAWN OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. Is it not true that well near every Christian is born of a storm? We are driven to Christ through stress of weather. We look to Him because we have nowhere else to look for shelter. We drift to Christ, all of us, as mariners that are hard on rocks with all our righteousness wrecked, and all our other hopes gone to the fore. That first storm with some of you may have lasted long. For months or years it may have threatened your destruction. You remember it, and you think of it, now that the tempest has spent itself, that the sky is clear and you have come to rest calmly in Jesus Christ. Do you think that you lost anything by that storm? Do you not know that you gained much? You lost what it was good for you to lose! You gained the very blessings which you were most in need of. Do I speak to one who is at this hour in the very midst of such a trial? He that sits in the heavens looks down upon you through this storm and says to you, "O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors." You are afflicted with a sense of sin, the direst and sharpest of all afflictions. The arrows of adversity are blunt in comparison with those of guilt! Afflictions, without sin to aggravate them, are as a knife without an edge—they do not cut deep. But when there is sin to whet the blade, then the knife cuts to the very bone. What are those sins which now wring your hearts with anguish, but the very same sins that once fascinated your hearts with delight? Feeling that God is angry with you, every incident or act of providence seems to you a token of judgment. Terrors haunt you in every gust of wind that blows and you seek in vain to extricate yourself from your present forlorn condition! Hold on, man, woman, do not despair! Better to be stricken with pain and suffer the smart pangs of a wounded conscience, than go on with giddy step, frothy song and frivolous talk to enjoy the pleasures of sin for

a season, and then find out your mistake when it is too late because you are swept away like the chaff from the threshing floor! Your afflictions, if they lead you to God, will prove the healthiest discipline and the happiest circumstances that ever happened to you! "O you afflicted one," says God, "I will lay your stones with fair colors," as if, in the bitterness of repentance, you did meet with the blessedness of remission and the brightest sunbeams shone upon you just when the darkest shadows crossed your path and the heaviest clouds loomed over your head! Fly to your God, O sinner! Hasten to Jesus! Look to His atoning sacrifice! For such an afflicted conscience as yours, Jesus bled, He came to bind up the broken in heart, and to proclaim liberty to captives such as you are!

Note the next word—"O you afflicted, *tossed with tempest*." Does this describe the heaving and flurry of your agitated breast? Are you tossed to and fro? Once you were at ease, becalmed aground, and you thought yourself as safe as you were quiet. You had a hope of your own and you said in your heart, "I shall never be moved." But that hope of yours was no sure anchorage. It served you not in any place when the clouds began to gather and the fierce winds began to blow. Then were you tossed here and there. You have tried to find some stay, some anchor, but alas, you have sought it in vain! You are like a ship which has become the sport of the winds and waves and now your spirit sinks within you. You reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and you are at your wits' end. All your wisdom is swallowed up. You cannot lay hold of a promise! You cannot take comfort from any providence! You see not your signs, and yet all this tossing and all this tumult, with the peril in which it places you, are meant for your good! So, indeed, it shall prove when you cry unto the Lord in your trouble and He brings you out of your distresses, for notice the prophecy which is spoken by the mouth of the Lord, and say if it should not inspire you with confidence, "I will lay your foundations in sapphires." When you shall have a foundation of God's laying, it will be, verily, a safe foundation and, being of sapphire, this foundation is very precious! There will be no more sorrow and sadness for you, then, but a sacred satisfaction which it were beyond the power of any circumstance to mar! No more shall the buffeting of rough billows and rude breakers toss you to and fro, but throbs of deep joy, like waves of the mighty sea, shall swell their ceaseless anthem in your ears! Oh, how you will bless the Lord, then, that He ever drove you from your refuge of lies and drew you to a sure foundation upon which you might build, and be built up for eternity! You may be just now the sport of the tempest—high winds may rage within your breast—stormy passions may convulse your soul! Well do I remember when that same tempest howled through my spirit, sweeping away every fond hope and every fine conceit I had cherished. Before that I would gladly have contented myself with the world and the little ambitions it held out to my view. Ah, I would, but I could not! God's tempest howled through my soul and as for me, I was as a tiny leaf in a strong breeze, or as a ball before the whirlwind! Are

you passing through such an ordeal? Yield not to the misery and madness of despair—

"Though plunged in ills, and harassed, too, with care,
'Twere treason to your soul did you despair!
When pressed by dangers and beset by foes,
God will His timely succor interpose!"

When your present emergencies shall be gathered up into past experience, you will look back upon them as a meet preparation for your better destiny. Every vestige of your own righteousness must be taken away in order that He may "lay your stones with fair colors, and build up your windows with agate, and your gates with carbuncles." Are not both in the promise—both the agitation and the salvation? The Lord has promised both. Mark that word *promised*, how it is used by Paul. "Now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Then observe the consequence. The removing of those things that are shaken makes way for another thing, namely, that those things which *cannot* be shaken may remain! Therefore it is that we who feel that everything earthly is drifting from under our feet are favored to receive a kingdom which cannot be moved! Ought not this to reconcile our hearts to trial? Will it not make us rejoice in it, if we have only faith to believe that it will certainly turn out for our good?

The other part of the description—after being tossed with tempest—is this, "*not comforted*." Is there nothing you can do to get out of this strait? Is there no solace to relieve the stress of your trial? Ah, poor soul! No doubt you have been looking for light and, behold, there was darkness! While you have been seeking after relief, your sorrows have been aggravated. Did you go to the world and ask sympathy of your neighbors or kinsfolk, the best comfort they could offer you would but wound your feelings! Have you tried the merriments and gaieties of sin, as though you would forget the arrows of the almighty? Lo, then, how visions of judgment to come should scare you!

Perhaps you feel you cannot be comforted on earth. Then you are in a fair way to get deliverance, for you shall be comforted by the God of heaven! If your sore is such that no plaster of man could ever cure it, glory be to God, for, blessed be His name, He delights to find those cases which baffle all human skill! There shall be seen the power of His grace, and then will He send His Word and heal you! Your extremity of anguish is a token for good—a token that God means to bless you! If your soul refuses to be comforted by man—if you are brought to a stand, in which you wait only for God—then of you is it spoken, "I will lay your stones with fair colors and your foundations with sapphires." He will perform all things for you, and do on your behalf what you cannot do for yourself!

Every Christian will, I think, join with me in confessing that the dealings of the Lord with us have always baffled our own understanding, until we have been brought to see the end of the Lord, as Job saw it—that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy. Our heaviest losses have

thus enriched us with our choicest gains. The things which, as they happened, caused us the most terror, have fallen out to the furtherance of our best interests! And, in the same manner, I believe the more you feel the burden of sin, the majesty of the law of God and the inflexible claims of divine justice, the sweeter, afterwards, will be your apprehension of guilt removed by the blood of Christ, of the law fulfilled by His obedience and of justice satisfied by His suretyship. Did you sink as low as Jonah sank, when he was in the fish's belly, and cried by reason of his affliction unto the Lord, when, as he testifies, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and You heard my voice"? Then you might purge yourselves of all false confidence, as Jonah did, saying, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Then, too, with the voice of thanksgiving, you would pay your vow as Jonah did, when he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Take heart now, O you afflicted ones, tossed with tempest and not comforted! Pour no fresh bitters into your cup by murmuring against God and repining at His dispensations! Rather cry mightily and pray earnestly that the God who has made your experience tally with the first verse of the text may give you to realize the fullness of that recompense which is promised in the next verse! And so shall your sighs be turned into songs. So shall you sing with David, "You who has showed me great and sore troubles shall quicken me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." Happy day, dear soul, when you are delivered from this first storm! Yet there are—

II. OTHER STORMS OF LIFE WHICH THE CHILDREN OF GOD HAVE TO ENCOUNTER.

After we find Christ, we meet with many afflictions. We are "tossed with tempest, and not comforted." It seems to me that the prophet has used a very remarkable metaphor. Suppose you have a home—a house rendered dear to you by a great many pleasant associations. Into this cheerful abode, one night, there comes a fire. You stand with tears in your eyes and see it all ablaze, and you watch it as it goes, story by story, room by room, till all your precious treasures are consumed. You go away and sit down, and wring your hands in agony, for all is burnt up—nothing remains. But with the first dawn of the morning an angel appears to you and says, "Come with me to the place where your home once was." You go and find that all the stones that made up your house have been turned into jewels—and all the lime and cement have been transmuted into bright lustrous colors, and the pavement and flagstones have become sapphire! You go to the door, there are jewels—carbuncles! You look out of the windows and instead of their being, as before, common sashes and sills, you find agates all sparkling! You are looking almost as if you had Aladdin's wonderful lamp, which transformed everything. Well, now, I think that is just the thought of this verse. Let us read it over again. "I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agate, and

your gates of carbuncle, and all your borders of pleasant stones." "Well," you say, "that is the fact, and no fancy or dream to me, I have realized it. A fire kindled on me which raged in my soul till it reduced to ashes all the goods I prided myself in. My hopes were laid waste, and I was left desolate. My nights were sleepless and every bone in my body was full of pain—this have I proved. Then, all of a sudden, there has been worked in me a marvelous change! My soul has had such joy—such blessing—such nearness to Christ—such delight in His word—such uplifting of a spiritual temple, far richer than all the palaces of Oriental imagination, springing up from a furnace of affliction as no common language would describe." Let us just turn over these things, one by one, as they are painted to us by the tongue of inspiration.

You are tossed and not comforted. Bear it patiently, knowing that good will come to you in a far better and richer shape. Observe how it begins with *edification*. "I will lay your stones in fair colors." In the time of trial we not only get the proof, but we get the profit of experience—and these results are laid in fair colors. Do you think it possible for me to relate to you all the salutary lessons that I have acquired in affliction? The truth is learnt, thus, after quite a different manner from anything taught in the Sunday school! You may afterwards renounce all the credit you ever professed in the teaching, which stands merely on the authority of the teacher, but when God's affliction brands the truth of God into your inmost soul, then you are bulletproof against all heterodoxy and it is not possible that the doctrine in which you have been rooted and grounded can ever forsake its hold upon you! It has found an entrance into your very soul—is not that a grand means of steadfastness? Such strong-holding cement binds the stones of which your spiritual temple is built, and by such personal experience your character becomes shaped and fashioned according to the truths of the gospel. Thus, as affliction is not sent without design, one benefit you are to expect from it is that a fundamental, solid groundwork shall be worked in you.

But, brothers and sisters, you will not fail to notice that while the Word of the Lord is addressed to the afflicted, *the hand of the Lord is engaged very particularly on their behalf*. "I will lay your foundations with sapphire." Times of public calamity try our foundation and so do all times of private affliction. When the natural emotions are violently excited, all the beliefs and sentiments, all the hopes and aspirations to which men have clung in calmer days are put to the test. And if they are not well and truly based, they can easily be shifted. This, therefore, is one of the salutary effects of sanctified affliction—in the process of such discipline we get to have the foundation of our faith laid by a divine hand. "I will lay your foundations." The Lord draws near to us and works in us after His own sovereign good will, imparting to us the true faith and the ardent love which are consonant with the truth of God. Then we have foundations hard as sapphire and as precious, as unbreakable, as divine! We feel that now we have received the truth, not in the mere

abstract, but in its vital power, its moral influence and its spiritual beauty, as the foundation of our souls and as a foundation of our hope which can never be removed.

What a lovely change, too, is made in our outlook! "Your windows of agate!" Before I was afflicted I looked through the lattices of carnal sense. I was well contented, though the things of this life and the objects near at hand bounded my view. But now I have been taught to look upwards and to long for the life to come and the land that is far off. Now my soul says, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove that I might fly away and be at rest." And as I open the window towards the new Jerusalem, I sing—

"Brief life is here our portion,
Sorrow and short-lived care.
The life that knows no ending,
The tearless life is there."

It is wonderful how affliction cleans the windows of the soul! I find the word, "windows," here might be much better translated "bulwarks," or, "defenses," as if to show the manner in which we are fortified against temptation and enabled to resist the destructive force of those strange changes and perilous waves that are common to this stormy life. Have you learned, beloved, to fly to the Rock for shelter? Have you come to hide behind the dying Savior? Do you know the tune of David's Psalm, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight, my goodness and my fortress; my high tower and my deliverer, my shield, and He in whom I trust" Then your godly sorrow has produced some happy results! Not in vain has your spirit been overwhelmed within you! This is a lesson to be acquired in the school of adversity whereby we are brought to rest in the Lord more abidingly than we ever did before—and thus we prove that He has made our fortifications of agate.

Still further it is said, "I will make your gates of carbuncle," as if to intimate *more close and intimate communion with God*. We come nearer to Christ, think more of Him, spend more time in meditation, get to understand more of His work and His person, set our hearts more fully towards Him and the good things of His grace after the tempest has spent its fury and the clear shining has followed. Surely, if affliction did nothing more for us, it would be a great gift! It takes away the doors of iron and wood, and it gives us gates of carbuncle! And we say—

"Come, then, oh, you sweet affliction,
Thus to bring our Savior near."

Right sure I am that many of our tossing and buffeting have produced a permanent benefit which has given tone to our character and shed a hallowed light over our whole career! Find me a Christian whose conversation is full of rich savor, whose judgment is tempered with charity, one whose fervent zeal is blended with the meekness of wisdom, and I will guarantee you, as a rule, he has seen much affliction! "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." Physicians often

recommend a sea voyage to their patients. Do you think it is merely for the fresh air they breathe? No, I can tell you there is more than that in the prescription. It breaks the links that bind one to everyday life. There is solitude on that broad expanse of waters which does not admit of the newspaper or the post office breaking in upon the stillness of your reflections! Your country, your office, your friends, your home are all at a distance. The communications you are known to hold with them are broken. And is it not so with Christ's disciples, when He compels them to get into a ship and leaves them a while to be tossed with waves in the midst of the sea? Do not they then feel a profound solitude which changes the hue of all their thoughts? Mind you not what he said who was the saddest of all the old Hebrew prophets—Jeremiah in his lamentations bears this witness—"It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth. He sits alone and keeps silence because He has borne it upon him." There is no room to doubt it, friends—sorrow is favorable! God's brightest gems have had the most polishing on the lapidary's wheels. The purest, cleanest wheat is that which has had the most winnowing. We grow in grace, doubtless, in our times of joy, but I think it is slow work. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as precious fruits brought forth by the sun. Bright days would wither us if there were no shady nights to temper our gaiety. We are like the sycamore tree—unless we had trials, we would never come to spiritual perfection. Well, we have cause to be thankful if, speaking experimentally, we can say, "All the storms we have encountered up to now have been blessed to us—all our tossing and tempests have furthered our good speed, and all the convulsions that have shaken our house have thus far contributed to its being built up with stones laid in fair colors upon a foundation of sapphire. And now, lastly—

III. THE SAME HAPPY ISSUE OUT OF ALL OUR AFFLICTIONS WILL HAPPEN, IN A GRANDER SENSE, WHEN THE LAST HURRICANE SHALL BLOW.

Then shall this frail tabernacle totter and fall! Then eyes, and ears, and hands and feet shall fail us. Then back to mother earth shall this feeble flesh return. I know the earthly house of my tabernacle shall be dissolved. I expect it. I look for it. The affliction may take the form of grievous disease—the tossing to and fro on my couch may be distracting—it may be that no medicine can relieve my pain or comfort me. But oh, the glory that is to follow! This very body of ours—who shall tell what it shall be like? We know that it shall be transformed and made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus, our Lord! We may patiently endure the cross, since we shall so soon receive the crown! We may placidly go down to the grave, since we shall so triumphantly come up from it! We may cheerfully take leave of our lodgings, here, since we have a home in prospect where our kindred shall all be gathered, and our Lord never absent! Brothers and sisters, we are, as it were, in a ship at sea today, tossed with tempest, but we are to be in a palace before long! You

observe how the figure changes, never tossed again, never again put forth on a tempestuous sea. Like buildings and mansions, we shall be fixed and permanent. In that land of our inheritance is a mansion with its foundation of sapphire, with its windows of agate, with its gates of carbuncle! What a sweet surprise for the sons of poverty on earth! Those jewels, since jewels are always connected with rank or royalty, are meant to betoken the honors in the next world to those who are humble and faithful in their sacred calling here. You shall have such palaces as Oriental extravagance could never emulate! Does it belong to kings to dwell in palaces? You shall be kings and priests unto God! A few more days of languishing with your faint hopes and fretting fears, your throbbing temples and feverish pulse before Christ bids you come! The Master calls for you! You must obey the summons! And what next? Forever with the Lord!

I think I hear you say, "Amen, so let it be." Do notice how three times, here, it is repeated, "I will," "I will," "I will." God has said it and He will do it! Believe and rejoice therein, therefore, for it is no fiction, but a fact! Yet a little while and you shall leave your cottage for a mansion, your toil shall be exchanged for rest, your dishonor for glory, your pain for infinite pleasure! You shall find new company and better in yonder world of the light of God! Though you close your eyes on fair prospects, below, fairer scenes await you above. Be comforted! Notwithstanding any distress, the last tempest may occasion you, depend upon it—"to die is gain." You shall lose nothing that it would be worth your while to keep. You shall gain all your "capacious powers can wish, more than your imagination can paint." Press forward, beloved, and may the confidence of a joyous future make you bold to brave the tempest and the storm! Peace be with you!

Alas, then, if you are not in Christ, if you are not a child of God, this promise melts away before your eyes! You have no part or lot in it. May God change your heart, renew your nature, lead you to receive Christ and believe in Him—then will He give you to be His sons and daughters and so shall your heritage be secure forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 54:1-16.

Try and suck all the sweetness that you can out of this chapter while we read it. The personal application of a promise to the heart by the Holy Spirit is that which is needed. The honey in Jonathan's woods never enlightened his eyes until he dipped the point of his rod into it and tasted it. Try and do the same. This chapter is the woods wherein every branch drips with virgin honey. Sip and taste. Be satisfied.

Verses 1-3. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the*

LORD. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; For you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. You see they are called upon to praise God before the mercy comes. "Sing, O barren," while yet barren! Sing, O desolate one, while yet desolate! And you who are narrowed and confined for space, thank God that He is about to enlarge you! Begin, already, to stretch your cords and strengthen your stakes. We ought to act upon faith and sing upon faith. The songs which are made at the sight of mercy are very sweet, but the songs that are sung *before the mercy comes* are those which are most acceptable to God! We may say of the sonnets of faith, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

4. *Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded, for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* The dark past, the dreary past shall be so obliterated with abounding mercy that they shall forget it. Your memory of it shall not be painful. It shall only be as a foil behind the bright diamond of mighty mercy, if you remember it at all.

5. *For your Maker is your Husband*—Bound to you by the dearest, closest and most enduring ties.

5-7. *The LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall be called. "For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment.* Not, "a moment," but "for a small moment."

7, 8. *Have I forsaken you: but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you; says the LORD your Redeemer.* This belongs to the whole Church of God. I know we might refer it all to the Church in general, but I invite you tonight to remember that what belongs to the Church as a body belongs to every member of that mystical body. Therefore, feast here. Be not afraid. Take these words as spoken to you—even to you—by God the Holy Spirit!

9, 10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* What more can He say than to you He has said? What surer pledges can He give? Oh, rest, rest, rest, sweetly rest on this sure word of covenant love! Then let the mountains move. He told you they would. Then let the hills of your comfort sink. He told you they would. But even then, when the earth, itself, does reel, and the very

pillars of the universe are snapped, He stands, still the same! "I have sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."

11. *O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires.* Built with jewels.

12. *And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles and all your borders of pleasant stones.* They must be rare sights if the windows are so rare. If the windows are of agate, what are the sights that are seen through them? And if the very gates and doors are carbuncles what must there be in the house of love within? If the very borders and the outside fringes of the royal domains of heaven are of precious stones, what must it be to be there? Remember that the best thing in this world is trodden under feet in the world to come, for we are told that the streets are paved with gold. Men hunt after it here and tread on it there, for they have nothing better, there, than this world can possibly afford them.

13. *And all your children shall be taught of the LORD.* It must be a greater privilege than windows of agates and gates of carbuncle, to see our children—to see all the children of God—taught by His own Spirit!

13. *And great shall be the peace of your children.* That is the most precious pearl of all, with its soft radiance, precious to the soul.

14, 15. *In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror, for it shall not come near you. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me.* Enemies will come, but God will not be with them.

15, 16. *Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire.* For he cannot blow any more than God lets him. He is God's creature. The maker of the weapons of war is still in the hands of God.

16. *And that brings forth an instrument for his work: and I have created the spoiler to destroy.* When he does his worst, he is only doing what I meant he should do. The divine decree of God still, with its mighty circle, does encompass the worst deed of man, and overrules it all for the good of His Church.

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"He has glorified You."
Isaiah 55:5.

GOD has glorified His Son. How deeply we ought to regret that we glorify Christ so little, bought with His precious blood, owing all we have to Him. We make but a very poor return and even when we are helped by the Spirit of God to glorify Christ, yet I am sure we should always feel an insatiable desire to do it yet more. To glorify Christ is so sweet a thing that when a man has once tasted of it, he pants and pants within his spirit for a greater capacity to glorify Christ—and this is one of his griefs, that he cannot praise his Savior as he would—hence it is that oftentimes the prophet and the psalmist, when they were most full of praise, would bid the earth, the sea, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, help to praise the King in whom they saw such ravishing beauties and delights! Hence it is that godly men, whenever they are stirred up and feel that they could magnify and bless the Lord, always want their fellow creatures to join them—and their sorrow is that Jesus does not reign in every heart and that He has not a throne in every soul!

Now it must be a great comfort to lovers of Christ, who mourn that He is not honored as He should be, that God has taken care of His Son's honor. "He has glorified You," and you know when God glorifies, He does the work perfectly! He does it after His own Spirit and that an infinite One, so that the glory of Christ, after all, is safe. And though He is blasphemed by rebels, dishonored by apostates and grieved by ourselves, yet God, after all, shall not suffer Christ's fame to be tarnished for a single moment by all this, for He has said, "He has glorified You." I don't know that I can preach from the text, but I do know what I can do. I can feel thrice happy at the thoughts which it raises in my mind! It is so delightful to think that the crown is safe upon His head, though the nations rebel and the kings take counsel against Him, that his shield is forever glorified and untarnished, let men do what they may! Him has God the Father exalted and given Him a name which is above every name, which is first and chief and shall never be second, but shall forever reign and must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Now glancing across the subject, as some skiff flies over the sea, we will talk about what God has done by way of glorifying His Son, Jesus—

I. GOD HAS GLORIFIED HIM IN THE ENTIRE ECONOMY OF SALVATION.

From first to last, Christ glorifies His Father, and the Father glorifies Him. Begin with that which has no beginning, namely, everlasting love, and we find that we are chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world. The love of God which comes to us through Jesus Christ always is the channel—and it is connected with Jesus Christ before the heavens were stretched abroad! He was glorified in our election! Now with Christ Jesus in the mind of the eternal Father, there is no election to eternal love except through Jesus Christ! And if you and I are chosen, it is—

"Because Christ is My first elect, He said,
He chose our souls in Christ our head."

We dare not look into that council chamber unless we knew that Christ was there. We dare not think of the infinite wisdom of God in the arrangement of all things from the beginning, if we did not remember that Christ was the center of these arrangements and that as many as have believed on Him were represented in Him in those days before the daystar knew its place, or planets ran their round. God has been pleased to glorify Christ afterwards in all the promises which, one by one, revealed the glorious grace of God, from that first promise at the gates of Eden concerning the seed of the woman, right on until He appeared—the hand that drew back the black curtain that hid the face of God was always the hand of the crucified—and whenever men come to see anything of the marvelous love and goodness of God, they always behold it in connection with the Messiah, the anointed One yet to come.

God has glorified His Son in *the matter of redemption*. There is no redemption out of Christ, and there is none to help Christ in the matter of redemption. Albeit that Calvary seems to have a black cloud of shame hanging over it, yet is there no spot on earth or heaven more glorious, for there it was that God permitted His Son to bear, without assistance, the divine wrath which was due to our sins, allowed Him to tread the winepress alone and would not permit that of the people there should be one with Him, lest the glory should in any way be divided. Christ, and Christ, alone, must pay the price of our souls with His own soul!

So onward, if you come to the matter of *our justification* or our acceptance which sprang out of redemption, God glorified His Son. We are, if pardoned, only forgiven through His blood! If justified, entirely by virtue of His righteousness! If accepted, it is always in the Beloved! If perfected, we are completed in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus! There is not a single covenant blessing—as I begin at the beginning so may I continue to the close—there is not a single blessing in the economy of Christ which comes to us apart from Christ! And as we receive these gifts, one by one, the Holy Spirit takes care to make us know this—He empties us of self that we may see the fullness of Christ. He kills our pride that we may see the excellence of Christ. He takes away our strength that we

may behold the power of Christ. In the operations of the Holy Spirit within our soul, while they aim at destroying sin and at many other blessed results, yet they have for their first and chief purpose, the making Christ glorified in the heart of all His people, in every gift that comes from the hand of the Most High! Brothers and sisters, our preservation, our final perseverance and every other blessing which is secured to us, and about which we have no doubt—all this comes to us in Him! We are preserved in Christ Jesus. Because He lives, we live, also, and only because He lives and by virtue of our union with Him—we who are the branches continue to bring forth fruit—but if we were separated from Him, we should be only fit to be cast into the fire to be burned! Right away from the gates of hell, up to the pearly gates of heaven, it is Christ Jesus who is glorified! In every step the believer takes, right out of the slough of despondency, up to the Beulah hilltop of full assurance and still onward beyond the clouds, and beyond the stars in the palace of eternal glory, it will be Christ, and Christ Jesus, alone, who shall have all the praise! God has taken care in the planning of the whole economy of Christ, that Jesus Christ should have the pre-eminence. There is much to talk of here, but *think* of it—that will be better than my speaking. Turn it over as Abraham Booth wrote a book showing the grace of God in all the ways of salvation, so somebody else might write a book showing the glory of Christ in every single part of the way. And if we cannot write such a book, yet at least we must feel precious emotions as we contemplate the whole. In the next place, God has glorified His Son—

II. IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is to Christ what Eve was to Adam. She was taken out of Christ—she is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. As the apostle says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning what? Concerning matrimony? Yes, in one sense, but not in another sense. Concerning Christ and His Church, for your cause did Christ leave His Father and He came into your world that He might be one flesh with His Church—she owes all to Him—her very existence is owing to Christ. As Eve springs from Adam, the Church springs out of the loins of Jesus Christ!

Now, beloved, it is meet that seeing this is the case, *Christ should have no second place in His Church*, and certainly no such place has been allotted to Him by the eternal Father. As I can now but speak of the Church of God, at large, I think I am guided for a moment by an evil spirit standing at my left hand, who points with black fingers over to the city of the seven hills, and he says to me, "There is one great supreme ruler, the vicar of God on earth—behold his splendors! See how they bear him through the streets of Rome upon the shoulders of men, with canopies of silk, smothered with jewels and with peacock and ostrich feathers! Mark how they swing their censers and how the multitudes fall

down before him, for him has God exalted, for him has God glorified." Ah, but this is a vain and idle boast, for we read not in any page of this book of any such exaltation to any being! And where will be found the being that shall dare to take it, unless he shall first become the victim of Satan? Satan said to Christ, "All this will I give You if You will fall down and worship me." And he that has it, must have first fallen down and worshiped Satan, or he has no such power among the sons of men!

Now, beloved, Christ did not redeem His Church with His blood that the Pope might come in and steal away the glory! He never came from heaven to earth and poured out His very heart that He might purchase His people so that a poor sinner, a mere man, should be set upon high to be admired by all the nations and to call himself God's representative on earth! Christ has always been the head of His Church. Why, we have read in history that kings at different times have wished to play the head of the Church, and that we owe our Protestantism, as we call it over here—that we owe much of that to the desire of a certain crowned head to become a little Pope over certain dominions! This is very true, but not Henry the Eighth, nor his successor, nor any of those who now live, are more the head of the Church than he is God, Himself! It is not possible for any to be head in the Church of Christ, but Jesus! Has God exalted Him and made Him to be the head over all things—and it is usurping the prerogative of Christ for any to suppose they can be head of the Church of Christ, for Jesus Christ is the head and He, alone, holds power over ecclesiastical organizations! Over the sacred mystical, blood-bought, redeemed, regenerated Church of Christ there never can, by any possibility, be any other head but Jesus Christ, the Lord Himself! Now mark, *God has exalted the Lord Jesus Christ in the government of His Church*. All authority, all authoritative rules in Zion come through Jesus Christ. All true teaching in Zion comes from His lips. We call no man, master, upon earth, for one is our Master, and that one is Christ. No man is Rabbi in the Church, but He is our Rabboni, our teacher, and all other teachers are thieves and robbers if they teach on their own authority. They only are accepted as the Lord's shepherds, who speak Christ's truth in Christ's name—and in the power of His own Spirit. God has made Christ to rule supremely throughout the Church, and in this He has glorified Him!

He has made Him the head of the Church in another respect—*He is the head of all light in the Church*. There is no true light in the Christian Church, not a single spark of it, but what comes from Christ. All life comes to us from Him. There may be energy in the Church of a carnal and fleshly sort—she may have force and power which she derives from men—but this will die and perish, like the grass and the flower of the fields. Vital godliness always proceeds from Jesus Christ, as the branch's life comes from the vine. "Without Me, you can do nothing, but because I live, you shall live, also." He is the life of men! He quickens whom He will and it is not possible that there should exist even a grain of spiritual life

in any human heart, but that which comes to that heart through Jesus Christ! He is also *the head over all things in the Church—all spiritual things*. The Spirit of God resides in Christ without measure—and He sends forth the Spirit—He gives a Comforter to us. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and the continuance of the Church, and the growth of the Church, and the edification of the Church—all sorts of beneficial influences which come to the Church—proceed to us through Jesus Christ, the Church's covenanted head!

Now I wish that we should form parts of the true Church of Christ to whatever denominations we may belong. Let us cling closer and closer to our blessed Master, for the secret of union in the Church is union with Christ. It is utterly hopeless, brothers and sisters, for us to expect, as the world now is, and as men now are, that we shall ever, all of us, agree in our opinions about all things. God never made us such creatures that we could agree in all things. He has so constituted us, and wisely so, that we, some of us, catch one angle of the truth of God, and others another. To me one doctrine, perhaps, will always stand out much more clearly than certain others. I wish it were not so. I should like to have a mind comprehensive enough to grasp all truth—to attain the completed picture of the truth of God without ever caricaturing a single feature. But I am deeply conscious I am far from being able to do that! And I think, without being censorious, I may say I do not know any of my fellow creatures who do! But there is in them a warp somewhere or other in the judgment of good men. Some mistake of some man which is not an offensive mistake at all. This is rather an infirmity than a sin, for he follows what he thinks is the truth of God. His eyes are not right. He has got a little squint and he thinks truth is a thing that it is not. He shoots well, mark you, if the mark were where he thinks it is, but it is not just there and, therefore, his arrow does not quite hit the center of the target. The true place of union will be, mark you, never in the creed but in Him who is the truth! If we believe in Him, love Him, cling to Him, follow Him, imitate Him, glorify Him, we shall get nearer each other than ever we were, closer to the common center! We must be closer to one another. "I would preach up nothing but Christ and preach nothing down but sin," said a good old divine, and the good man was right! Some old lady who heard of certain high Calvinistic preachers coming to a certain place did not know who they were, or what they were, but she said she thought she liked them because of their names. She misunderstood the words—she thought they were high *Calvary* preachers—and anybody who preached high Calvary would suit her if they lifted up the cross of Jesus, preached up the Master and glorified His name! If in doubt, this should be the test of the doctrine—does it glorify Christ? This should be the test of all our opinions—do they glorify Christ? For nothing is fit to be within the walls of Zion but that which bows down before Zion's King!

To change the tone, again, ringing the same peal of bells, in the third place—

III. GOD HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIS DEAR SON IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CROSS.

Oh, for a poet's mind and seraph's tongue to speak of the wonders of the cross where Christ, the Savior, hung and died! He died in shame—this never dimmed His glory—it reveals it to the admiring eyes of all the aged saints who delight to look thereon. What did Jesus, by His dying a painful death, do for us? Why, first, as you all know, *He put away all His people's sins*. There are some that think that Christ died to make all men salvable. They may keep their doctrine—it has no charms for me! That Christ died, some think, for all men, and it is a death for every man, I know the Word of God declares, but there is a redemption, there is a redemption far other than that which is universal. He laid down His life for His sheep. He loved His Church and gave Himself for it—and there is a people spoken of who are redeemed from among men in quite another sense in which any redemption was ever made for all men. Now, beloved, as many as Christ stood for as a substitute, for so many did He take their sins. And although it is written, "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," for, "He was made sin for us," says the apostle, and the sin of His people was actually laid upon Him—imputed to Him, though it was not His—yet He took it for His people and here is the glory, that all that mass of sin no longer exists! It is gone! He has vanquished the tyrant and "made an end of sin." What a wonderful word—made an end of it, and brought in everlasting righteousness! He has cast our iniquities into the depths of the sea. The blood of Christ exterminated our sins when He stood in the place of His people! He suffered an equivalent for all that was due by them and from them to God, and the debts have ceased to be, for they are all paid and disposed of, no charge being brought against Christ's elect, for, says the apostle, "It is Christ that died; yes, rather that has risen again." In the morning when the Father raised His Son from the dead, and Jesus stood once more upon earth, no more to die—in that day the sentence went forth—"None shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect." Oh, what a blessed work was this to do, to take sin away where it never can be found again! To make it to cease to be! To cover it over forever! To blot it out! But this was not all—our Lord, by His death, destroyed death and he that has the power over it—the devil!

But let us think—*He disposed of death* first of all. He slept in the tomb. When the morning came, the prison door was opened and He rose, the first-born from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep and the harvest sheaf of all who shall come henceforth from the sepulcher! And so now the tomb is no more a prison, a place of ruin! The big imprisoning stone is rolled away. "He that lives and believes in Christ shall never die, and he that believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Over yonder cemetery with its holy memories and long lamented departed, I

hear a voice ringing, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yes, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” And in another case, beloved, “I am the resurrection and the life; death is dead.” Jesus Christ has accomplished this and the Father has glorified Him!

And now He has also vanquished, once and for all, for His people, *all the hosts of hell*. Satan is a cruel enemy to the Lord’s people. He molests them, he worries whom he cannot devour. But here is our consolation, that he has an invincible enemy. Christ gave Satan every advantage. He met him, as an old divine says, “on his own dunghill.” He bearded the lion in his den—no, He bearded him on his own hill. “This is your own hour,” He said—Satan’s own hour, and the hour of darkness—but Jesus triumphed, triumphed when the whole artillery of hell was discharged against Him—when all the floods out of the mouth of the dragon were vented forth upon Him! He vanquished all the hosts, and bears the banner of a glorious triumph this day, “having led captivity captive, and ascended up on high.”

To tell of all the wonders of the cross of Calvary would take far longer than the time we can allot to it now, but we may sum it all up in the words of the text, “He has glorified You.” The Father has put many crowns upon the head of Him that wore the crown of thorns!

I wish to ask a minute’s attention to the next, namely, that the Father has glorified Christ *in His present power.* The Father sustains Him in the highest heavens among the saints. It is no small glory that Christ should sit at the right hand of the Father, as He does. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but now is crowned with glory, honor and the loftiest created beings delight to do His commands! He reigns in heaven with scepter undisputed. He says to this one, “Go, and he goes! To another, come, and he comes!” His intercession in heaven is part of the glory He has received. As He pleads there like a high priest, He pleads with authority, with a power that is always felt. The blood of Jesus Christ speaks to the heart of God, and no desire of Christ’s is ungranted when heard. A case put into Christ’s hands always speeds—if we ask the Father in Christ’s name, He will do it for us. I am sure very few of us know this, that if we ask in Christ’s name, we ask for Christ’s sake, and that is right and good, and that is as far as we get. But do you know the difference? If you go to a man and say, “Give me such-and-such for the sake of such a friend, he deserves it of you,” that is a good plea. But suppose that friend arms you with this power, and he says, “Now you may go and ask for it in my name—say I sent you—use my name,” why, that is more powerful by far! And when each Christian becomes clothed, as it were, with that power from Christ, so that he asks God in Christ’s name as though Christ asked, what power is there! And it is part of the glory of Christ that His intercession should thus be so powerful for His people this day.

And, brothers and sisters, think how the Father has exalted Christ in that at this time *He is receiving every hour some of the purchase of His blood*. I have sometimes tried to picture in my eyes the delight of Christ, the gleaming of His eyes of love, as His blood-bought ones come home one by one. You know it is His prayer, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." Here they come, one after another! Some from this church—one yesterday—usually two or three a week they go up into the bosom of Christ! You know how the farmer rejoices as he sees the loaded wagons coming, one by one, to the barn—but he has sowed, not with blood, though he may have sowed with tears. You know how you and I rejoice as we think we have been the means of the conversion of someone—but what is the joy of Christ as He sees the perfection of His goodness? Christ is exalted, fresh crowns are laid at His feet—the eternal Spirit, as He brings and conducts the chosen spirit up to Christ, glorifies Him! And here, below, brothers and sisters, let us add, as we leave this point, Jesus Christ is glorified *in the power which He possesses in the conversion of souls*. Wherever His name is preached, it becomes like ointment poured forth. I have no belief in the preaching of Christ unsuccessfully. I think a dear brother may preach the gospel for years and see no conversions and, perhaps, there may be none just then, but they will come! I won't say this to myself to comfort myself. I would be afraid I was on the wrong tack if I did not see them, and I would say to those who preach the Master's word faithfully, "It shall not return unto Him void." Christ is greatly glorified when His gospel becomes a heart-breaker, like a hammer when it dashes the rock in pieces and becomes like a fire. Christ is glorified when a harlot gives up her evil trade, when the thief casts down the tools of his infamy, when the drunk lifts his last dram to his lips, when the blasphemer washes out his mouth and resolves to drink no more of the wine of cursing! God grant us that we may always pray that God will glorify Christ in marvelous and manifest conversions of extraordinary sinners being snatched from between the teeth of the old lion and made to dedicate the rest of their days to King Jesus! Now to close—

IV. GOD HAS GLORIFIED CHRIST IN HIS KINGDOM.

We have already said that Christ is glorified in His spiritual kingdom in the midst of Zion. One is tempted to enlarge on that. The King is always glorious when he rules his people by good laws, when he has a happy and prosperous people. And our Lord Jesus Christ rules us with the best of laws, and happy are the citizens of the new Jerusalem—

"The King is glorious,
When in war He is victorious."

And when He is beloved of His subjects, He certainly is victorious in war. The spoils belong to Him. All the virgins love Him and the saintly sons consecrate their purest affections to Him. Jesus Christ is exalted in His Church, then, as a King upon His throne—and there God gives Him glory for the present among the nations. Christ's glory is not revealed as we

desire it, though He rules by moral influence and the government is upon His shoulders. Perhaps if our eyes were opened, we would see in the progress of civilization and the various changes which have taken place in this world, much more of the influences of Christianity and certainly more of the power of Christ than we have been able to perceive at all times. Perhaps God is now writing and has been, during this last 6,000 years, a wonderful drama at the clearing up of which it will be seen from the first stroke of His pen to the last, God has glorified Christ! It may be so that the shaking of the nations, the revolutions and even the bloody wars shall all be compassed, and the one great whole of which it might be said at the commencement, as Virgil does in song—

"Arms and the man I sing."

It may be that He has written a great epic concerning the warfare of the righteous against evil, and the conquest of the mighty men. He has yet to restore this world and make it brighter than it was before and, beloved, that *God will exalt Christ in the latter days*, let us never doubt that for a moment! And though men prophesy, making a profit by their prophecies and are always muddling and unsettling weak minds by their silly predictions, let us still hold to it that this world belongs to Christ, who bought it with His precious blood! And He will have it, every inch, and there is not a corner where the dark places of cruelty shall remain, not a spot where an idol shall hold its throne, not a hill or valley where superstition shall be permitted to linger! We have but to wait. Maybe we shall be gathered to our Father to wait in serener places than this, for it is ordained and none shall stay its coming, when Christ shall reign upon earth with His ancient glory, and the whole earth, once an Augean stable, shall be cleansed by its Hercules, who shall make the stream of His blood to run through it, and make it pure, glorified and consecrated! And in that day the scepters shall be gathered with them who remain and crowns of kings shall be joyfully laid at His feet—and we shall understand the full meaning of the title, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Oh, how we will salute Him in that day when we shall rise to participate in the splendors with those who are alive and remain! Dear friends, those who are asleep shall rise to participate in all the splendor of that blessed land of King Jesus! My Father has exalted You! To You, Your Master's children bow! The sun and the moon bow down before You! You shall reign and we shall reign with You—our reign being to behold Your reign—our glory being to participate in Your Glory! We shall be like You, for we shall see You as You are! May God grant us Grace to have our share in that blessed advent and He shall be blessed!

But now just one more word. God will glorify Christ, mark you, as He has done. Are we prepared to do the same, my dear brothers and sisters? Let us aim to glorify Christ—and shall I tell you how you may do it, for there are many small ways of doing it, not small in themselves, but only small comparatively? You can glorify Christ by your holy living, by your

labors for His kingdom, by your generosity, or, if you want to do the greatest work to glorify Christ, you know what it is! Why, it is to trust Him altogether with all your concerns! Nothing glorifies Christ more than that. Now just lean your whole weight on Him and, with a faith that does not stagger, rely on the efficacy of His blood, the power of His arm, the love of His heart, the immutability of His affections and the divinity of His presence! Lean on Him! Rest on Him! A poor dependent creature cannot glorify God any better than by trusting Him! This is the work of God, you know—this is a Hebraism, for the greatest work of all, this is *the* work of God, the God-like work, the work! But what a mercy it is that there is such a way for poor creatures like we are, of glorifying Christ by trusting Him—

"The best return for one like I,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more."

One other remark, and that is, if you don't glorify Jesus Christ willingly and cheerfully by such a trust, He will be glorified even in your condemnation! In the day of His appearing, you that have heard the gospel—for I speak to you, only, if you reject Him, you will have yet to minister to His honor. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way if His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." But if you trust Him not, here is the alternative—"He shall break the nations with a rod of iron, He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." How stands it with you? Will you be able to endure that iron rod? Will you be able to endure the breaking, when first the body shall be broken, and then the soul to shivers, like a potter's vessel? Be wise, therefore, oh you kings and you men, sons of the earth! Be wise, bow before Him, accept Him as your King! God will thus be glorified by the work of Christ, and if it is not so, He will be glorified by the aid of justice, which may the Lord forbid in the case of any one of us! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 53.

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* The prophet seems to speak in the name of all the prophets, lamenting the general unbelief concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The report concerning Him is very clear. It comes from God—it is for our salvation—and yet how many disbelieve it! In fact, all do until the arm of the Lord is revealed—until He works upon the hearts of men and they are led to believe in Jesus. And here is the difficulty of belief.

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* There was nothing

about Jesus Christ to attract the attention of those who look for pomp and splendor. His religion is all simplicity. It is the plain truth of God—there is nothing about it that is gorgeous to attract those who look after ritualistic vanities. To the most of men there is no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* It was so with Jesus when He was here. He was the greatest of all sufferers—there were few that followed Him—some of those who did, betrayed Him. There were few who would stand up for Him. He met everywhere with a repulse, and yet He came on an errand of love. He needed not to have come at all. Heaven surely was large enough for Him, but such was His pity for the dying sons of men that He must strip off His royal robes and put on the robes of our mortal flesh!

4, 5. *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* He had not a pang to suffer on His own account, nothing to cause Him grief in anything He had done—

"For sins not His own, He died to atone—
Was love or was sorrow like this ever known?"

Scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet, perhaps, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

6. *All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned, everyone, to his own way and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* Taken the full load of sin, the whole mass of human guilt, and placed it upon Him! He was perfectly innocent, and yet was the sin of man heaped upon Him. He was our substitute, standing in our place—a wondrous truth of God is this!

7. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.* And you know right well that our Master would not speak when He was charged before Pilate and Herod. He was eloquent—more eloquent in His silence than if He had used His ordinary language, which was amazing, for, "never man spoke like this man," and yet never man was silent as He for our sake.

8-10. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the*

pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Our blessed Lord and Master is to have a full reward for all His griefs—and an earnest of that reward is here tonight! He will receive, this very night, some born unto Him by the new birth, who shall henceforth be His children and who shall gladly say, "Here, Lord, I come myself to You, for You have bought me with Your precious blood." It is the joy of some of us that we belong altogether to Christ. We would not have another honor—we wish to live to Him, loving Him and serving Him as long as we have any being! And there are some here tonight who have not felt this, whom God, nevertheless, will make to feel it, for so runs the promise—

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* That is the way He justifies them—takes their iniquities upon Himself—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, when Christ takes our iniquities, they are gone and we are just in the sight of God! He takes the burden, and we are unloaded, blessed be His name! "He shall bear their iniquities."

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.* The dying Christ has risen again, and He is now a great conqueror and divides the spoil. Those spoils are human hearts, and the true love and deep devotion of those He has redeemed. He shall have this—

12. *Because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* And He is doing it now—pleading this very night that old prayer of His, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, let you and I be pardoned with that plea!

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FRIENDSHIP'S GUIDE
NO. 3437

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1914,
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"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."
John 15:14.

IT is very easy to understand how Jesus Christ is our friend. Did ever anyone deserve the name so well? Who can prove his friendship as Jesus proved it by laying down His life for those He calls His friends? But it is a mark of wonderful condescension on His part that He should call us His friends and it confers upon us the highest conceivable honor that such a Lord as He is, so infinitely superior to us, should condescend to enter into terms of friendship with us. My friend, O Jesus, You are, for You have redeemed my soul from death and hell—but that I should be Your *friend*—nothing but Your loving, condescending tenderness could ever have conceived of this! If you do put such a title as this upon me, teach me how I may act in conformity with it. Beloved, there is *a mutual friendship* between Christ and the believer. There cannot be friendship if it is all on one side. There is bounty, there is kindness and there may be some gratitude in return, but friendship is a reciprocal thing. In its fullest sense, it is between two, and the one heart must be as the other heart, or else there is no friendship. Now every believer is a friend to Jesus, and Jesus is a friend to him. They are friends because they have a mutual love for each other. The believer does not love His Lord as much as Jesus loves him, for his heart is little compared with Jesus' heart. But when the believer is in a right state, he loves Jesus with all his heart, soul and strength. He feels that there is none in the world that can have a place in his affections at all comparable with his Lord and Master. He can say—

"My Jesus I love You: I know You are mine,
For You, all the follies of sin I resign."

And if Jesus loves us, we also love Him. Friendship has in it *a mutual delight*. Two friends value each other. Now the delight of Jesus is with the sons of men. In those whom He has redeemed with His blood, He sees the satisfaction for the travail of His soul. He says of His Church that her name is Hephzibah—"My delight is in her"—and on the other hand, the believer's delight is in Christ. "He is all my salvation and all my desire," says the believer. "He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." None can be compared with Him. It is sweet to think of the saint looking on the Savior and the Savior looking on the saint—and the two, together, blending their love in mutual delight in each other. This love and this delight lead to mutual converse. Persons can hardly maintain friendship if they only see each other now and then. If there is

no communion by letter or in any other way, I should think friendship could scarcely be maintained. But oh, Jesus reveals Himself to His people and His people tell out their hearts to Jesus! Do not suppose that because He is not here, for He is risen, that therefore we have no conversation with Him. Our prayers speak into His ears, our tears fall into His heart. When we are wounded, His wounds bleed afresh. He is the head, and we the members and, however great the body, if you wound the body, the head feels it at once, so close is the communion. Yes, and we do converse with Him in meditation, in adoration, alone in our chambers. Though we have not seen Him with these eyes, which are, after all, poor things, we have seen Him with our soul's eyes, which are brighter eyes by far! And as we have beheld Him, our soul has melted for joy in the glance of His beauty.

Now to make friendship, there will be not only mutual love, delight, and conversation, but friends must have *harmony of thought*. I will not say identity, for man and man must always be two, and Christ and His people, though one in some respects, are two existences. But though two notes, though different, may be in perfect harmony, so is it with the heart of Christ and the heart of His renewed child. What Jesus loves, we love. what Jesus hates, we hate. What Jesus seeks, we seek—what Jesus shuns, we shun. This is true friendship when there is but one heart in two bodies, and when one heart in the two produces with undivided strength one objective. Now Christ's objective is His Father's glory. If you are Christ's friends, that objective is yours, too. His objective is to seek and save the lost—if you love Him, you also seek to save the lost in your way. He loves truth, holiness, righteousness. He delights in that which puts an end to misery, to evil, to cruelty, to wrong-doing. Do you delight in the same? If so, unity of design, harmony of thought will very greatly make up the friendship between you and Jesus. Oh, and we are going to the same great end! Where He is, there our hearts are drawn. We are living here for the same purpose that brought Him here—and when our work is done, the same reward that gladdened Him, shall also gladden us—we also shall enter into the joy of our Lord! Some of you do not know much about this—I am talking strange things to some of you. Jesus—yes, you read of Him. Jesus—you hear of Him. It is proper to receive His name, but oh, you have never spoken with Him! You have never known Him to be real nor conceived of Him as such! I pray that you may be made spiritual, may be born-again. Until you are, you cannot be a friend of Christ. But when you are, and may it come now, this very hour, may you discover that He is a great friend, and then, out of love to Him, may you become a friend of His!

Now we are not left in the dark as friends of Jesus as to the best way of showing our friendship. Two persons may be great friends and one may wish to serve the other, and say, "I hardly know what I can do to please my friend. I wish I knew his needs. I wish I knew his desires—I would strive to gratify them." Now you have, tonight, given to you as lovers of Jesus—you have the guide as to how you can prove yourselves His friends. "*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*" We

have, then, in the text, the guide for friendship, and I will say this about it—it contains seven things. The first is—

I. TRUE FRIENDS OF CHRIST, HIMSELF, DISTINCTLY ACKNOWLEDGE HIS TRUE POSITION TOWARDS THEMSELVES.

That position is contained in these words, "I command you." We are friends of Jesus, but Jesus must still be first—"I *command* you." The genuine friend of Christ does not command himself—he has taken Christ's yoke upon him and is now Christ's servant. He does not, now, follow his own whims in religion, nor does he think he is to be dictator to himself. In becoming Christ's friend, he agrees to subordinate his mind and will to the supremacy of Christ Jesus the Lord. Now then, friend of Jesus, note this! You are not your own—from now on not your own master, neither are you your own guide. I am often afraid when I hear persons talk of the glorious excellence of liberty of conscience, that they make a mistake as to what liberty of conscience is. What is liberty of conscience? Is it liberty to believe anything I like—liberty to hold any doctrine I please? No! It is such liberty with regard to the civil magistrate and with regard to my fellow man. Before my fellow man I have a right to believe what I will, and he may not call me to account—I am free there. But does such freedom exist before God? I think not! The friend of Jesus asks to have his conscience taught. He lays his judgment at the feet of the great teacher and all the liberty that he wants for his conscience is to have it purified and cleansed, that it may be a fit guide for him to follow—otherwise a distorted, perverted, dark, polluted conscience may as readily lead a man to hell as if he never had a conscience at all! It is not because I am conscientious that I am right. As I have often told you, a man may conscientiously drink arsenic or prussic acid and believe that it will do him good—but he would die for all that. Ah, and a man might conscientiously believe a lie, and he will reap the fruit of that lie! You are a friend of Jesus, to take your command from His lips and lay down at His feet, for He says, "I command you."

But mark, though Christ has to command His friends, *we are not to let anyone else command us*. Oh, shun the slavery of all who take their religion from men, be they who they may, whether called priests or presbyters, or from human creeds or books! Read them, gather what you can from them all, but, "One is your Master, even Christ," and all you are brethren. No Church may lord it over your minds, for the Church may err, but not so Christ. "Whatever I command you," says He. He is infallible—He will bid you do no ill! But a Church of fallible men is still fallible, and may slide aside, first a little, then more, then much, then monstrously—then utterly apostatize from the faith of God's elect! Therefore your guide, your leader, is no one but Jesus! "Do whatever I command you." There is too much among us of doing whatever our particular *religion* may command us. I charge you, brothers and sisters, do nothing of the sort! What are your councils? What are your assemblies? Nothing—less than nothing, I think! If they decree anything contrary to God's will, they are mischief makers. Christ is the head of the Church, and He has not vacated His high position in the midst of His

Israel. Yield to Him! Go to the fountainhead, the statute book that shows His will, and get it there. You have enough there, though all contradict you. You have enough there, and all the councils of the fathers, and all the Church will be less than the small dust in the balance if you find not the law to be Christ's! Whatever He says, the true friend of Jesus does—neither less nor more—for he knows that none can legislate in his realm but the King, Himself, and all that pretend to legislate do but err when they get away from the, "It is written," of the grand old Word of God!

Remember, too, all friends of Christ's, that *this doctrine of Christ's supremacy stands good always*. He is your Lord and He is to command you everywhere, not only in your religious thought, but at home, in the chamber, in the parlor, in the drawing room, outside, in the street, on the mart, on the Exchange, in your shop. His rule contained in His own life—His golden rule, "Do you to others as you would have them do to you"—His new commandment that you love one another—these are always binding! A soldier may have a furlough, but a Christian never does. You might plead that concerning such-and-such a law you were exempt before men—but to Christ you are never exempt, nor would you wish to be, for His service is freedom, and His law, O friend of Christ, has now become your delight! Grasp, then, that first thought, "You are My friends if I command you"—if you recognize Him as being the leader and the commander unto you, His people. You must recognize Christ in that capacity—and Him only—or you are not His friends!

But note, again, the text has in it a word which I may paraphrase in this way—

II. WE ARE TO RECOGNIZES OUR OWN PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS.

You are my friends if you do whatever I command *you*. The mass of mankind who pretend to be religious, suppose this Bible to be written to all sorts of good people, but not particularly to themselves. And there are they who think that the commands of Christ are very proper to be read, and to be heard, and to be proclaimed—but they do not look upon them as being binding on themselves. Friend of Jesus, Jesus has a right to your service and to your obedience! What He bids, He bids you—if to no other, yet to you. Then the zeal of some good men does not exempt me. If my minister is very useful, that is not myself. I am Christ's friend if I do whatever He commands me. Then the intense fervor of the Church does not permit me to recoil and say, "There is nothing for me to do." No, I am His friend if I do what He commands me. If, on the other hand, I dwell among a slumbering Church, if I see all around me the signs of sloth, yet I am not to judge the Church and excuse myself, and say, "I do as much as others—perhaps a little more. I am not so hardhearted as so-and-so." Oh, sirs, what have you to do with your brethren, with your fellow servants? To your own Master you must stand or fall, as they must—and you are Christ's friend if you do whatever He commands you! It does seem to be very difficult to get men to individualize themselves in the things of God. They do not count themselves rich because England is rich—they do not consider themselves to be getting rich because the bank interest rate is lower! They want to get the solid coins in their own

grasp and to their own banking account! But when I come to religion, men talk of this denomination and that church, and that other—anything but about themselves! But you, O friend of Christ, you must live before the Lord as though there were no other! "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." Now we will lay the force of our thought on another word. Observe here that—

III. THE TRUE FRIEND OF CHRIST OBSERVES CAREFULLY ALL THAT CHRIST SAYS.

It is not "You are My friends if you do *some* things that I command you." But, "You are My friends if you do *whatever* I command you"—*whatever*. Are there public duties? Do they require courage? I must perform them. Are there private duties? Are they unseen of men? They are as much incumbent upon me—I must discharge them. Are there commands of precept by way of ordinance? I must keep them. Are there commands by way of morals? I must obey them, however hard or stern they may seem. *Whatever* Christ commands is the law to His people. O England, England, when will the day come back when this book which is said to be the only religion of Protestants shall be truly so? The Bible, and the Bible, only, is the religion of Protestants—so they say, but it is not so! There are many things practiced by so-called Protestants that are not here! Where are your holy baptisms? Where are your confirmations? Where are half the ceremonies, if not all, of the Church of England and many other bodies? They are inventions of man, and man only, having not so much as a shred or trace of foundation in God's own book! You have made another book—your bishops have made another book—and laid it on the top of God's own book, and these are your Bible—not the Bible, and the Bible only, but the Book of Common Prayer! And with other denominations—dissenting denominations—there is too much of the same sort of thing. "What said John Calvin?" What care I what he said, or did not say? "What said John Wesley?" What care I what John Wesley said, or did not say? The Master—the MASTER—let us do whatever *HE* commands us! These were His good servants, as I believe, both of them, John Wesley and John Calvin—and if they did better than I, which I know they did, therein will I rejoice and bless God, and wherein they followed the Master, I, with unequal footsteps, would seek to follow, too—but to say that I will do this because John this or John that taught it—shame on the Christian that dares to bow his head to such a yoke as that! Let every Christian contend for this—that he is to do whatever Christ commands! Does it kick over the conventionalities of the Church? Let them go over! Does it burn the tag rags you thought so much of—your venerable things that you laid up as holy relics? Burn every one of them! What right have they to stand in contradiction to the law of Christ? No, whatever He commands—not more, not less—this is to be our religion and our law, and to it let every Christian stand! Happy day shall it be for the Church and for the world when this is true! Once more, it is clear from one word, that—

IV. THE TEXT IS VERY PRACTICAL.

"You are My friends if you *do* whatever I command you"—not "if you do some things." Not, "if you talk about it," for lip service is hypocrisy! Not, "if you tell others to do it"—there is a great deal of religion that is very much like charity, and you know what charity is! A sees B is very badly off and he writes a letter at once to C to help B. So is it with religion—A sees it a duty that such a thing should be done and tells B that he is very wrong not to do it. That is what is called religion. But as I understand religion, it is this—A sees B needing help and gives it to him! A sees a duty and does it, himself, and after he has done it, himself, then he may talk to B about it—but not till then! "You are My friends if you *do* whatever I command you." Well, some of you have been thinking about it a long while—it is time for you to *do* it! He commands you to love your brother—you have been talking about that—well, do it! Don't grumble and complain, and criticize any longer. You know He commands you to forgive any who offend you. Do not *know* it any longer, but go and *do* it! Some of you believe that you ought to be baptized and make a profession of your faith. What is the good of thinking of it? Go and do it! Go and do it! It is in the keeping of His commandments that there is great reward! He does not do the will of God who says, "Well, I am turning it over, and one of these days I suppose I shall be moved to do it." What do you need to move you but this—that you owe everything to Christ—and that Christ commands you? A soldier in the day of battle only needs the command, and on he marches—and a true friend of Jesus pays to Him as perfect an obedience as a soldier to his captain, or at least he desires to do it. A lift of Jesus' finger and away he goes! One look from Jesus' eyes shall cause him to stop, or make a rapid advance, just as the word may be!

V. THIS COMMAND IS VERY SIMPLE.

I shall close by commending this text to you because it is so. You are My friends if you acknowledge Me your Master in everything—your own personal Master—and then do what I tell you. Now how plain is this? There is no mistake about it. It is obedience Christ asks for! "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams." And what a blessing it is that this text gives us such a very simple thing to do! Suppose Jesus Christ were to say, "That man is My friend who will support a minister, who will build a place of worship, who will go out abroad for a missionary." Oh, there are some of you who would weep and say, "I can do none of those things! I wish I could! It would be my greatest pleasure if I could." My dear friends, the poorest man, the poorest woman here who is a true friend of Christ can do this—you can do whatever He commands you! By the power of His blessed Spirit who has made you love Him, you can watch earnestly to be holy, to be loving as Jesus was. The notion with a great many is, "I need to show that I am Christ's friend—now I must shut myself up and get away from everybody." That is not what Christ says! He says, "Do whatever I command you"—not run away from the battle, but fight through and win it. "No, but," says another, "what can I do to praise my Savior? I must speak about Him." Yet, perhaps, that dear friend could not put three words together consecutively. Dear brother, if God has not given you that

gift, you need not cry that you have not got it! Go and do whatever He commands you—that will be better than sacrifice. I know some persons who are very attentive to sermons. I am glad they are. They wish to get out on weeknights, and I am glad they are. I wish all were able to. But many a mother will be serving God much better by keeping the house clean, and the garments mended, than by coming to hear a sermon! You must do *whatever* He commands you, and what He commands you as a wife, is to discharge a wife's duty.

When I sometimes see a religious serving man, a great talker, who does not groom his employer's horses well, and who, if he can get an excuse for leaving work, will, I think, "That man might do more good in minding his employer's business than in running here and there to make a show of religion." I believe plain, holy, godly living is more needed—a great deal more—than fine preaching! And if my preaching does not, by God's grace, produce in you a finer character than that, then I am preaching for nothing! I heard of a man the other day who could preach with his feet, and I know a great many who do. That is, preaching with living and daily walk and conversation. It is, after all, to be upright in business, to be affectionate in the family, to make those around you happy, to *live* Christ—that is, after all, true friendship with Christ! No big words of ready talkers, no polished periods, no gift of prayer will ever be so acceptable to the Lord Jesus Christ as the simple piety that graces the fireside, that adorns the private and the public life of the believer. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." Practically to prove that Jesus Christ is your Lord is the highest service that you can, any of you, render to Him! May God help you to render it from this time forth with undeviating correctness! And with the help of His Spirit may you yet do it more and more. Let me conclude by observing that though this seems a very simple thing, yet after all—

VI. IT IS A MOST USEFUL AND NECESSARY THING.

It is not possible that a rebel should be a friend to Christ. If a man says of any law of Christ, "I do not mean to keep that," then, sir, you have virtually said, "I do not mean to have Christ for my Lord," and that means that you cannot have Him as your Savior. If you do not know a thing to be Christ's, well, I believe you are still sinful, for you ought to know it. The laws of our country never excuse a person for breaking the law because he says he did not know the law. It is presumed that everybody ought to know it. And the Bible is not such a book as they cannot understand if they try. Any person can find out Christ's will if he likes. But suppose you know it is Christ's will, and do not choose to do it—if you put your foot down and say, "I shall not do it," then there is an end of all friendship! Obedience, then, is an essential of true friendship to Christ, for those who make a profession of friendship and don't do what He commands are the worst enemies He has! No city that is besieged need fear so much the enemy outside, as treachery inside. If there is known to be treachery inside, then the stress of war becomes severe. So if inside the Church there are persons who deliberately say, "We are disciples of Christ, but we will not be obedient to His will," there

is sedition and treason inside the camp! And these are they of whom Paul said, "I have told you even weeping—that they are the enemies, the special enemies, of the cross of Christ." And let me say this keeping of the law of Christ is, after all—

VII. THE BEST WAY OF SERVING HIM AS A MATTER OF USEFULNESS.

Sermons preached at home are the best sermons. Sermons at sick beds by holy women, sermons to drunk husbands by the patient godliness of the much-suffering wife, sermons by holy fathers and mothers in their loving anxiety for wayward sons and daughters, sermons by servants in the rectitude of their conduct to their employers, sermons by Christian tradesmen preached in their bills and in their trade by strict attention to everything upright—these are sermons that the world must hear! These are things that will glorify Christ! These are the most friendly actions that you can do for Jesus. You raise His name in the market, you make men think the better of His religion by the holiness and consistency of your conduct. You are His friend!

I dismiss you with this upon your minds. If you are His friends, obey His command, imitate His example and seek to have this not in theory, but as a matter of fact of daily life. The day will come, my hearers, when to be a friend of Christ will be the grandest thing beneath the heavens. He is an exiled Prince in regard to this world, now, and men despise Him, but He is coming to His crown before long! And when He shall appear in the clouds of heaven, as He shortly shall, all those who were His friends on earth, who stood in the pillory with Him and suffered for Him—these shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of His Father! Oh, it will then be a grand day, a brave day, for those who died for Him, for those who were made poor for conscience sake, for those who left kindred and friends for His name. I think I hear the King say, "Make way, angels! Make way, cherubim and seraphim! These poor men and women were friends of Mine! When I was in exile, they suffered with Me. They were willing to bear reproach for Me—let them come! They shall be courtiers round My throne. They were friends of Mine in My humiliation—they shall be friends with Me in My glory. "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." And oh, how will all men who were *not* His friends—how they will hide their heads and wish they had never been born to continue at enmity with Him! They did not know who it was they were despising when they laughed at His people. They did not know what it was they trampled on when they put their profane feet upon the cross of Christ. They did not know who they insulted when they broke the Sabbath and lived godless, Christless lives—but they will know it then, when they see the King on His throne, for their cry will be—their bitter lament shall be—"Fall on us, you mountains! Cover us, you rocks, and hide us—hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne." What? Can you not face Him? You used to jeer at His people! You used to say, "It is all nonsense, this religion." Cannot you face Him? Cannot you face Him? He has not spoken yet! No thunderbolts are in His hand. Can you not face Him? No,

they are ashamed—they dare not look, they dare not gaze on such heavenly beauty! They seek shelter—they hold their hands before their eyes. They ask the mountains to afford them a hiding place, for could they be such fools as to despise Him who died for His enemies, to despise the Christ of God, to despise the everlasting creator who out of mighty love, gave up His life for men? Before He speaks a word, before He pronounces a sentence, this shame shall begin their Hell, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

God bless you, dear friends, save you by His great mercy, richly bless every one of you and make you Christ's friends. Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:37-50; ISAIAH 6.

Verse 37. *But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him.* They had an opportunity of seeing with their eyes what the Christ could do. He had even raised the dead in the midst of them—and yet this is the sorrowful statement.

38-40. *That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts and be converted, and I should heal them.* This passage is very frequently quoted in the Old Testament—it was so exceedingly appropriate to the condition of the unbelieving Jews. They were willfully blinded. They could see it. They were forced to hear it. There was much that even touched their hearts, but they hardened their hearts against it, and to this day they remain the same!

41-43. *These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. 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.* And this is a common disease to this day. There are many who know the truths of God who, nevertheless, keep very quiet about it. They do not like to be despised. They cannot endure to seem to be separate from their fellow men—it is not respectable to be decided for Christ and to come out from among them—so they love the praise of men more than the praise of God!

44. *Jesus cried and said, He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me.* Faith in Christ is faith in God—he that trusts the Son has accepted the witness of the Father!

45. *And He that sees Me sees Him that sent Me.* Wonderful expression! Perhaps we never fully realize it. Christ is seeable. God is not—but when we see the Christ, we do virtually see all of God that we may desire to see! The invisible has made Himself visible in Christ—in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

46. *I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not abide in darkness.* True faith in Christ sheds light on everything concerning which light is desirable. You shall understand things when you have come unto the right standpoint, when you have gotten to believe in Christ. I wonder not that those who doubt concerning Him, doubt about everything—if they will not have this light, how shall they see?

47. *And if any man hears My words and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.* Under this present dispensation, it is not the time of judgment. The Lord leaves you that are unbelievers to yourselves. He does not come as yet, to judge you—there is a second coming when He will be both judge and witness—and condemner of those who have rejected Him! But at present it is a dispensation of pure mercy. "He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has One that judges Him." There is a great God above who reckons this to be among the greatest of all human crimes—that they reject His Son. We speak of unbelief very lightly, and there are some who trifle with it as if it had no moral quality at all—but God does not!

48. *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.* Look, you, to that—the gospel which you refuse will judge you at the last day! We know that the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the world, says Paul, "according to my gospel," and he that sins against the gospel of love will certainly involve himself in the most solemn condemnation! He perishes that sins against the law—he dies without mercy at the mouth of one or two witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who sins against love and rejects the Savior?

49. *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.* God at the back of Christ. Omnipotence supporting love. The expostulations of Christ, not left to our will to do as we like with them, but solemnly sanctioned by the royalties of God, so that to refute them is treason against the majesty of heaven!

50. *And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.* The eternal authority of God is at the back of the testimony of Christ. Oh, that men would not be so unwise as to reject it! Now in our reading at the 41st verse we met with these words— "These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory and spoke of Him." Now let us read the passage which gives us an account of Isaiah's seeing the Glory of Christ.

ISAIAH 6.

Verse 1. *In the year King Uzziah died.* You remember him, that leprous king, that king who had thrust himself into the priests' office and was struck with leprosy, and shut up in a separate house during the rest of his life. In the year that he died, Isaiah saw a greater King, whom no defilement can ever touch, a King that reigns and lives forever, though Uzziah dies.

1. *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.* Whenever you read in the Old Testament that any man saw the Lord—understand it is the second person of the Divine Trinity—the Lord Jesus Christ! He makes Himself, as we have said, visible to men, and God in Him.

2. *Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly.* There are the spirits that dwell in the presence of God, nearest to Him, and as He is a consuming fire, they come to be like He, for the seraphim are burning ones, consumers, burning and shining lights who wait upon God who is light of life. Notice how humble they are in that presence—they cover themselves before that infinite majesty!

3, 4. *And one cried upon another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.* And if even the voice of a seraph moved the very foundations of the temple, what will the voice of *God* do when He shall speak once more? According to that word, He shall shake not only earth, but also heaven! What awe and trembling should be upon us when we wait upon God, if even the posts of the doors move! "Then said I, woe is me!" All God's saints do this when they get a view of Him. There was never a boastful thought in any man's mind in the presence of God. They that talk of their own purity have not known God, neither seen Him. How could they? This is the cry of all the purified when they come into the presence of God—"Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." What made him think of lips, but the voice of the seraphim as responsively they cried to one another, "Holy, holy, holy"? *Then* Isaiah thought of his own lips! Oh, brothers and sisters, what impurity comes out of our lips! Perhaps more, there, than anywhere else is the impurity of the heart discovered in our idle words, our evil words.

5-7. *Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.* Just where Isaiah felt the impurity, there he felt the expiation! His lips were unclean, but now a touch of the altar coal, a communication from the great sacrifice, has taken all his iniquity away and his sin is buried!

8. *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I: send me.* Observe the unity and the plurality, "Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?" Upon what theory, but that of the doctrine of the Trinity, can we explain so singular a change from the singular to the plural? "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I: send me." This man, now so lowly, so purified with the vision of God, just seen by Him, how cheerfully does he spring forward at the word of invitation! "Here am I:

send me." Now see what a sorrowful mission, God, in these next verses, assured Isaiah that his ministry so far as the conversion of the Jews were concerned, would be altogether fruitless! They would not receive his testimony.

9, 10. *And He said Go, and tell this people, Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.* What a ministry—dark with insufferable light! So bright, so clear, that men should have willfully to harden their hearts and shut their eyes if they did not understand and receive it!

11, 12. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities are wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land is utterly desolate. And the LORD has removed men far away and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land.* So it happened, as you know—the people were carried away captive. They still refused—they would not believe even when Christ came! And then the destruction of Jerusalem and the sweeping clear of their country was the final stroke of God. "But yet in it shall be a tenth." There is always a gleam of light from God's Grace in the thickest darkness of His justice. God has His tithe.

13. *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.* And, therefore, the Jewish nation is not destroyed, but still exists—and the Church of God is not destroyed, despite all that happens to it. There is a substance in it, according to the election of Grace, for which may God be praised!

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THE COMPASSION OF JESUS
NO. 3438

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1914,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He was moved with compassion."
Matthew 9:36.

THIS is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek. It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the evangelists, themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose and, therefore, they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion—a striving of the heart—a yearning of the innermost nature with pity. As the dictionaries tell us—*Ex intimis visceribus misericordia commoveor*. I suppose that when our Savior looked upon certain sights, those who watched Him closely perceived that His internal agitation was very great, His emotions were very deep and then His face betrayed it—His eyes gushed like fountains with tears and you saw that His big heart was ready to burst with pity for the sorrow upon which His eyes were gazing. He was moved with compassion. His whole nature was agitated with commiseration for the sufferers before Him.

Now, although this word is not used many times even by the evangelists, yet it may be taken as a clue to the Savior's whole life—and I intend thus to apply it to Him. If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, "He was moved with compassion." Upon this one point we shall try to insist, now, and may God grant that good practical results may come of it. First, I shall lead your meditations *to the great transactions of our Savior's life;* secondly, *to the special instances in which this expression is used by the evangelists;* thirdly, *to the forethought which He took on our behalf* and, fourthly, to *the personal testimony which one's own recollections can furnish*. Let us take a rapid survey of—

I. THE GREAT LIFE OF CHRIST, just touching, as with a swallow's wing, the evidence it bears from the beginning. Before ever the earth was framed. Before the foundations of the everlasting hills were laid. When as yet the stars had not begun their shining, it was known to God that His creature, man, would sin—that the whole race would fall from its pure original state in the first Adam, the covenant head as well as the common parent of the entire human family, and that in consequence of that one man's disobedience every soul born of his lineage would become

a sinner. Then, as the Creator knew that His creatures would rebel against Him, He saw that it would become necessary, eventually, to avenge His injured law. Therefore, it was purposed, in the eternal plan, before the stream of time had commenced its course, or ages had begun to accumulate their voluminous records, that there should be an interposer—one ordained to come and re-head the race, to be the second Adam, a federal chief to restore the breach, and repair the mischief of the first Adam—to be a surety to answer for the sons of men on whom God's love did light, that their sins should be laid upon Him—and that He should save them with an everlasting salvation. No angel could venture to intrude into those divine counsels and decrees, or to offer himself as the surety and sponsor for that new covenant. Yet there was one—and He none other than Jehovah's self—of whom He said, Let all the angels of God worship Him, the Son, the well beloved of the Father, of whom it is written in the Word, "When He prepared the heavens I was there. When He set a compass upon the face of the depth, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep" then, "I was by Him as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and My delights were with the sons of men." He it is of whom the Apostle John speaks as the Lord who was God, and was in the beginning with God. Was He not moved with compassion when He entered into a covenant with His Father on our behalf, even on the behalf of all His chosen—a covenant in which He was to be the sufferer and they the gainers—in which He was to bear the shame that He might bring them into His own glory?

Yes, verily, He was even then moved with compassion for His delights, even then, were with the sons of men! Nor did His compassion peer forth in the prospect of an emergency presently to diminish and disappear as the rebellion took a more active form, and the ruin assumed more palpable proportions. It was no transient feeling. He still continued to pity men. He saw the fall of man. He marked the subtle serpent's mortal sting. He watched the trail as the slime of the serpent passed over the fair glades of Eden. He observed man in his evil progress, adding sin to sin through generation after generation, fouling every page of history until God's patience had been tried to the uttermost! And then, according as it was written in the volume of the book that He must appear—Jesus Christ came, Himself, into this stricken world! Came how? O, be astonished, you angels, that you were witnesses of it, and you men that you beheld it! The infinite came down to earth in the form of an infant! He who spans the heavens and holds the ocean in the hollow of His hand, condescended to hang upon a woman's breast—the eternal King became a little child! Let Bethlehem tell that He had compassion! There was no way of saving us but by stooping to us! To bring earth up to heaven, He must bring heaven down to earth! Therefore, in the incarnation, He had compassion, for He took upon Himself our

infirmities and was made like unto ourselves. Matchless pity, indeed, was this!

Then, while He tarried *in the world, a man among men*, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, He was constantly moved with compassion, for He felt all the griefs of mankind in Himself. He took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows. He proved Himself a true brother, with quick, human sensibilities. A tear brought a tear into His eyes, a cry made Him pause to ask what help He could render. So generous was His soul that He gave all He had for the help of those who had not. The fox had its hole, and the bird its nest, but He had no dwelling place. Stripped even of His garments, He hung upon the cross to die. Never one so indigent in death as He, without a friend, without even a tomb, except such as a loan could find Him. He gave up all the comforts of life—He gave His life, itself—He gave His very Self to prove that He was moved with compassion! Most of all do we see how He was moved with compassion *in His terrible death*. Oft and oft again have I told this story, yet these lips shall be dumb before they cease to reiterate the old, old tidings. God must punish sin, or else He would relinquish the government of the universe. He could not let iniquity go unchastened without compromising the purity of His administration. Therefore, the law must be honored, justice must be vindicated, righteousness must be upheld, crime must be expiated by suffering! Who, then, shall endure the penance or make the reparation? Shall the dread sentence fall upon all mankind? How far shall vengeance proceed before equity is satisfied? After what manner shall the sword do homage to the scepter? Must the elect of God be condemned for their sins? No! Jesus is moved with compassion. He steps in, He takes upon Himself the uplifted lash and His shoulders run with gore! He bares His bosom to the furbished sword and it smites the shepherd that the sheep may escape! "He looked, and there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, His arm brought salvation." He trod the winepress alone, and "bore, that we might never bear, His Father's righteous ire."

Are you asked what does the crucifixion of a perfect man upon a felon's cross, mean? You may reply, "He was moved with compassion." "He saved others. Himself He could not save." He was so moved with compassion, that compassion, as it were, did eat Him up! He could save nothing from the general conflagration—He was utterly consumed with love and died in the flame of ardent love towards the sons of men! And after He had died and slept a little while in the grave, He rose again! He has gone into His glory! He is living *at the right hand of the Father*! But this is just as true of Him—"He is moved with compassion." Is proof needed? Let faith pass within the veil and let your spirits, for a moment, stand upon that sea of glass mingled with fire where the harpers stand tuning their never ceasing melodies! What? Do you see there, conspicuous in the very midst of heaven, one who looks like a lamb that

has been slain, and still wears His priesthood? What is His occupation there in heaven? He has no bloody sacrifice to offer, for He has perfected forever those that were set apart! That work is done, but what is He doing now? He is pleading for His people! He is their perpetual advocate, their continual intercessor! He never rests until they come to their rest! He never holds His peace for them, but pleads the merit of His blood, and will do so till all whom the Father gave Him shall be with Him where He is! Well, indeed, does our hymn express it—

"Now, though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great!
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor will His saints forget."

His tender heart pities all the griefs of His dear people. There is not a pang they have but the head feels it, feels it for all the members! Still does He look upon their imperfections and their infirmities, yet not with anger, not with loss of patience, but with gentleness and sympathy, "He is moved with compassion." Having thus briefly sketched the life of Christ, I want you to turn to—

II. THOSE PASSAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHICH THEY TESTIFY THAT HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION.

You will find one case in Matthew 20:31—"Two blind men sat by the wayside begging, and when they heard that Jesus passed by, they said, "O Lord, You Son of David, have mercy on us." Jesus stood still, called them, questioned them and they seem to have had full conviction that He could and would restore their sight, so Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes and immediately they received sight!

Yes, and what a lesson this is for any here present who have a like conviction! Do you believe that Christ can heal you? Do you believe that He is willing to heal you? Then let me assure you that a channel of communication is opened between Him and you, for He is moved with compassion towards you, and already I hear Him command you to come to Him. He is ready to heal you now! The sad condition of a blind man should always move pity in the breast of the humane, but a glance at these two poor men—I do not know that there was anything strange or uncommon about their appearance—touched the Savior's sensibility. And when He heard them say that they believed He could heal them, He seemed to perceive that they had inward sight—and to account it a pity that they should not have outward sight too! So at once He put His fingers on their eyes, and they received the power of seeing. O soul, if you believe "Christ can save you, and if you will now trust in Him to save you, be of good cheer, you are saved! That faith of yours has saved you. The very fact that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, and rely upon Him, may stand as evidence to you that you are forgiven, that you are saved! There is no let or bar to your full redemption! Go your way and rejoice in your Lord! He has compassion on you.

The next case I shall cite is that of the leper, Mark 1:41. This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease when he said to Jesus, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." He had full faith in Christ's ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ's willingness. Our Savior looked at him, and though He might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt His willingness, He merely said, "I will, be you clean," and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague! If there is in this assembly one grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, see the leprosy upon yourself and do you say, "I believe He could save me if He would"? Have you some lingering doubt about the Savior's willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, "Lord, I believe, I believe Your power. Help You my unbelief which lingers round Your willingness." Then little as your faith is, it shall save you! Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even your unbelief and accept what is faith and forgive what is unbelief. That is a second instance.

The third I will give you is from Mark 5:19. It was the demoniac. There met Christ a man so possessed with a devil as to be mad! And instead of belief in Christ or asking for healing, this spirit within the man compelled him to say, "Will You torment us before the time?"—and rather to stand against Christ healing him than to ask for it. But Christ was moved with compassion and He bade the evil spirit come out of the evil man. Oh, I am so glad of this instance of His being moved with compassion! I do not so much wonder that He has pity on those that believe in Him, neither do I so much marvel that He has pity, even, on weak faith—but here was a case in which there was no faith, no desire, nor anything that could commend him to our Lord's sympathy! Is there no such case among the crowds gathered together here? You do not know why you have come into this assembly. You scarcely feel at home in this place. Though you have led a very sad life, you do not want to be converted—not you! You almost shun the thought! Yet it is written, "He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." Well, we have known it in this house, and I hope we shall know it again and again that the Lord has laid violent hands of love upon unprepared souls! They have been struck down with repentance, renewed in heart and saved from their sins! Saul of Tarsus had no thought that he would ever be an apostle of Christ, but the Lord stopped the persecutor and changed him into a preacher—so that ever afterwards he propagated the faith which once he destroyed! May the Lord have compassion on you tonight! Well may we offer that prayer, for what will be your fate if you die as you are? What will be your eternal doom if you pass out of this world as soon you must, without being sprinkled with the blood of Christ and forgiven your iniquities? Jesus knows the terrors of the world to come! He describes the torments of hell. He sees your danger. He warns you. He pities you—He sends His messengers to counsel you. He bids me say to the very chief of sinners, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." "Only return unto Me and

confess your iniquity, and I will have mercy upon you," says the Lord. May God grant that the compassion of Christ may be seen in your case!

As I turned over the Greek concordance to find out where this word is repeated again and again, I found one instance in Luke 7:13. It refers to the widow at the gates of Nain. Her son was being carried out—her only son. He was dead and she was desolate. The widow's only son was to her, her sole stay—the succor as well as the solace of her old age. He was dead and laid upon the bier, and when Jesus saw the disconsolate mother, He was moved with compassion and He restored her son. Oh, is there not refreshment here for you mothers that are weeping for your boys? You that have ungodly sons, unconverted daughters, the Lord Jesus sees your tears! You weep alone, sometimes, and when you are sitting and enjoying the Word, you think, "Oh, that my Absalom were renewed! Oh, that Ishmael might live before You." Jesus knows about it. He was always tender to His own mother, and He will be so to you. And you that are mourning over those that have been lately taken from you, Jesus pities you. Jesus wept, He sympathizes with your tears. He will dry them and give you consolation. "He was moved with compassion."

Still the occasions on which we find this expression most frequently used in the evangelists are when crowds of people were assembled. At the sight of the great congregations that gathered to hear Him, our Lord was often moved with compassion. Sometimes it was because they were hungry and faint, and in the fullness of His sympathy, He multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed them. At the same time He showed His disciples that it is a good work to feed the poor. Jesus would not have them so spiritually-minded as to forget that the poor have flesh and blood that require sustenance—and they need to eat and to drink, to be housed and clothed—the Christian's charity must not lie in words only, but in deeds! Our Lord was moved with compassion, it is said, when He saw the number of sick people in the throng, for they made a hospital of His preaching place. Wherever He paused or even passed by, they laid the sick in the streets! He could not stand or walk without the spectacle of their pallets to harrow His feelings. And He healed their impotent folk, as if to show that the Christian does well to minister to the sick—that the patient watcher by the bedside may be serving the Lord and following His example, as well as the most diligent teacher or the most earnest preacher of the glorious gospel! All means that can be used to mitigate human suffering are Christ-like, and they ought to be carried out in His name, and carried to the utmost perfection possible. Christ is the patron of the hospital—He is the president of all places where men's bodies are cared for. But we are also told that the multitude excited His compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He taught them as a guide that showed the path by leading the way—and He looked after their welfare as a shepherd who regarded the health of their bodies as well as the good estate of their souls! Surely, brothers and sisters, if you love Him, and wish to be like He, you cannot look on this congregation

without pity. You cannot go out into the streets of London and stand in the high roads among the surging masses for half an hour without saying, "Where are these souls going? Which road are they traveling? Will they all meet in heaven?" What? You live in London, you move about in this great metropolis and do you never have the heartache, never feel your soul ready to burst with pity? Then shame on you! Ask yourself whether you have the spirit of Christ at all! In this congregation, were we all moved with pity as we should be, I should not have to complain, as I sometimes must, that persons come in and out of here in need of someone to speak with them, to condole, to console, or to commune with them in their loneliness, and they find no helper! Time was when such a thing never occurred, but, in conversing with inquirers lately, I have met with several cases in which persons in a distressed state of mind have said that they would have given anything for half an hour's conversation with any Christian to whom they might have opened their hearts. They came from the country, attended the Tabernacle, and no one spoke to them! I am sorry it should be so. You used to watch for souls, most of you. Very careful were you to speak to those whom you saw again and again. I do pray you mend that matter. If you have a heart of mercy, you should be looking out for opportunities to do good! Oh, never let a poor wounded soul faint for want of the balm! You know the balm. It has healed yourselves. Use it wherever the arrows of God have smitten a soul.

Enough. I must leave this point. I have given you, I think, every case in which it is said that Jesus was moved with compassion. Very briefly let me notice—

III. SOME OF THE FORESIGHTS OF HIS COMPASSION.

The Lord has gone from us, but as He knew what would happen while He was away, He has, with blessed forethought, provided for our needs. Well, He knew that we should never be able to preserve the truth of God pure by tradition. That is a stream that always muddies and defiles everything. So, in tender forethought, He has given us the consolidated testimony, *the unchangeable truths of God in His own book*, for He was moved with compassion. He knew the priests would not preach the gospel. He knew that no order of men could be trusted to hold fast sound doctrine from generation to generation, He knew there would be hirelings that dare not be faithful to their conscience lest they should lose their pay—while there would be others who love to tickle men's ears and flatter their vanity rather than to tell plainly and distinctly the whole counsel of God. Therefore, He has put it here, so that if you live where there is no preacher of the gospel, you have the old book to go to. He is moved with compassion for you. For where a man cannot go, the book can go, and where in silence no voice is heard, the still clear voice of this blessed book can reach the heart. Because He knew the people would require this sacred teaching and could not have it, otherwise, He was moved with

compassion towards us all and gave us the blessed book of inspired God-breathed Scripture!

But then, since He knew that some would not read the Bible, and others might read and not understand it, He has sent His ministers forth to do *the work of evangelists*. He raises up men, themselves saved from great sin, trophies of redeeming grace, who feel a sympathy with their fellow men who are reveling in sin, reckless of their danger. These servants of His, the Lord enables to preach His truth, some with more, some with less ability than others. Still, there are, thank God, throughout this happy realm and in other favored lands, men everywhere, who, because sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, go after them and persuade them, plead with them and entreat them to believe and turn to the Lord. This comes of Christ's tender gentleness. He was moved with compassion and, therefore, He sent His servants to call sinners to repentance.

But since the minister, though He may call as he may, will not bring souls to Christ of himself, the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, has *sent His Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is here. We have not to say—

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove."

He is here! He dwells in His Church and He moves over the congregation and He touches men's hearts, and He subtly inclines them to believe in Christ. Oh, this is great mercy when a prince spreads a feast and gives an invitation! That is all you can expect him to do. But if he keeps a host of footmen and says, "Go and fetch them, one by one, till they do come," that is more gracious, still! But if He goes Himself and with sacred violence compels them to come in—oh, this is more than we could have thought He would have done—but He is moved with compassion and He does that! Furthermore, brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus knew that after we were saved from the damning power of sin, we would always be full of needs and, therefore, He was moved with compassion, and He sets up *the throne of grace*, the mercy-seat, to which we may always come, and from which we may always obtain divine grace to help in time of need. Helped by His Spirit, we can bring what petitions we will, and they shall be heard! And then, since He knew we could not pray as we ought, He was moved with compassion when He sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us how to pray! Now I do not know a single infirmity that I have or that you have, my Christian brothers and sisters, but what Christ Jesus has been moved with compassion about it and has provided for it! He has not left one single weak point of which we have to say, "There I shall fail, because He will not help there." But He has looked us over and over from head to foot, and said, "You will have an infirmity there—I will provide for it. You will have a weakness there—I will provide for it." And oh, how *His promises meet every case*! Did you ever get into a corner where there was not a promise in the corner, too? Had you ever to pass through a river but there was a promise about His being in the river with you? Were you ever on the sick bed without a promise like this, "I

will make your bed in your sickness"? In the midst of pestilence have you not found a promise that, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust"? The Lord's great compassion has met the needs of all His servants to the end! If our children should ever need as much patience to be exercised towards them as Christ needs to exercise towards us, I am sure there would be none of us able to bear the house. They have their infirmities and they full often vex and grieve us, it may be, but oh, we ought to have much compassion for the infirmities of our children—yes, and of our brothers and sisters, and neighbors—for what compassion has the Lord had with us? I do believe none but God could bear with such unruly children as we ourselves are. He sees our faults, you know, when we do not see them, and He knows what those faults are more thoroughly than we do. Yet, still, He never smites in anger. He cuts us not off, but He still continues to show us abounding mercies! Oh, what a guardian Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and how we ought to bless His name at all times, and how His praise should be continually in our mouth. One thought strikes me that I must put in here—He knew that we should be very forgetful—and He was moved with compassion with our forgetfulness when He instituted the blessed Supper, and we can sit around the table and break bread, and pour forth the wine in remembrance of Him. Surely this is another instance of how He is moved with compassion—not with indignation towards our weaknesses! And now let me close with—

IV. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

I shall only recall my own experience in order to stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, my brothers and sisters. I do well remember when I was *under conviction of sin* and smarted bitterly under the rod of God—that when I was most heavy and depressed, there would sometimes come something like hope across my spirit. I knew what it was to say, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life," yet when I was at the lowest ebb and most ready to despair, though I could not quite lay hold of Christ, I used to get a touch of the promise, now and then, till I half hoped that, after all, I might prove to be God's prisoner and He might yet set me free! I do remember well, when my sins compassed me about like bees, and I thought it was all over with me, and I must be destroyed by them, it was at that moment when Jesus revealed Himself to me. Had He waited a little longer, I had died of despair, but that was no desire of His! On swift wings of love He came and manifested His dear wounded self to my heart. I looked to Him and was lightened, and my peace flowed like a river! I rejoiced in Him! Yes, He was moved with compassion. He would not let the pangs of conviction be too severe—neither would He allow them to be protracted so long for the spirit of man to fail before Him. It is not His practice to break a leaf that is driven by the tempest. "He will not quench the smoking flax." Yes, and I remember since I first saw Him and began to love Him, many *sharp and*

severe troubles, dark and heavy trials, yet have I noted this, that they have never reached that pitch of severity which I was unable to bear. When all gates seemed closed, there has still been with the trial, a way of escape, and I have noted again that in deeper depressions of spirits through which I have passed, and horrible despondencies that have crushed me down, I have had some gleams of love, and hope, and faith at that last moment, for He was moved with compassion! If He withdrew His face, it was only till my heart broke for Him, and then He showed me the light of His countenance again. If He laid the rod upon me, yet when my soul cried under His chastening, He could not bear it, but He put back the rod and He said, "My child, I will comfort you." Oh, the comforts that He gives on a sick bed! Oh, the consolations of Christ when you are very low! If there is anything dainty to the taste in the Word of God, you get it then! If there are any hearts of mercy, you hear them sounding for you then. When you are in the saddest plight, Christ comes to your aid with the sweetest manifestations, for He is moved with compassion!

How frequently have I noticed, and I tell it to His praise, for though it shows my weakness, it proves His compassion, that sometimes, after preaching the gospel, I have been so filled with self-reproach that I could hardly sleep through the night because I had not preached as I desired. I have sat down and cried over some sermons, as though I knew that I had missed the mark and lost the opportunity. Not once nor twice, but many a time has it happened, that within a few days someone has come to tell me that he or she found the Lord through that very sermon, the shortcoming of which I had deplored! Glory be to Jesus—it was His gentleness that did it! He did not want His servant to be too much bowed down with a sense of infirmity, and so He had compassion on him and comforted him! Have not you noticed, some of you, that after doing your best to serve the Lord, when somebody has sneered at you, or you have met with such a rebuff as made you half-inclined to give up the work, an unexpected success has been given you, so that you have not played the Jonah and ran away to Tarshish, but kept to your work? Ah, how many times in your life, if you could read it all, you would have to stop and write between the lines, "He was moved with compassion." Many and many a time, when no other compassion could help, when all the sympathy of friends would be unavailing, He has been moved with compassion towards us, has said to us, "Be of good cheer," banished our fears with the magic of His voice and filled our souls to overflowing with gratitude! When we have been misrepresented, maligned and slandered, we have found in the sympathy of Christ our richest support, till we could sing with rapture the verse I cannot help quoting, now, though I have often quoted it before—

"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
Since You remember me."

The compassion of the Master making up for all the abuses of His enemies! And, believe me, there is nothing sweeter to a forlorn and broken spirit than the fact that Jesus has compassion. Are any of you sad and lonely? Have any of you been cruelly wronged? Have you lost the goodwill of some you esteemed? Do you seem as if you had the cold shoulder even from good people? Do not say, in the anguish of your spirit, "I am lost," and give up. He has compassion on you! No, poor fallen woman, seek not the dark river and the cold stream—He has compassion! He who looks down with the bright eyes of yonder stars and watches you is your friend! He yet can help you! Though you have gone so far from the path of virtue, throw not yourself away in blank despair, for He has compassion! And you, broken down in health and broken down in fortune, scarcely with shoes for your feet, you are welcome in the house of God, welcome as the most honored guest in the assembly of the saints! Let not the weighty grief that hangs over your soul tempt you to think that hopelessness and darkness have settled your fate and foreclosed your doom! Though your sin may have beggared you, Christ can enrich you with better riches. He has compassion! "Ah," you say, "they will pass me on the stairs. They will give me a broad pathway and if they see me in the street they will not speak to me—even His disciples will not." Be it so, but better than His disciples, tenderer by far, is Jesus! Is there a man here whom to associate with were a scandal from which the pure and pious would shrink? The holy, harmless, undefiled One will not disdain even him—for this man receives sinners—He is a friend of publicans and sinners! He is never happier than when He is relieving and retrieving the forlorn, the abject and the outcast! He despises not any that confess their sins and seek His mercy. No pride nestles in His dear heart, no sarcastic word rolls off His gracious tongue, no bitter expression falls from His blessed lips. He still receives the guilty. Pray to Him now! Now let the silent prayer go up, "My Savior, have pity upon me! Be moved with compassion towards me, for if misery is any qualification for mercy, I am a fit object for Your compassion. Oh, save me for Your mercy's sake!" Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:27-38.

Verses 27, 28. *And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, Son of David, have mercy on us. And when He was come into the house.* I suppose the house at Capernaum, where he was known to stay.

28. *The blind men came to Him.* Forced their way in. They must be attended to. Hunger breaks through stone walls, they say, and an earnest heart will follow after what it seeks.

28, 29. *And Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you.* That is, "If you do not believe, you shall not see, but if there is faith in you, behold, you shall have sight."

30-32. *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus at once 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.* Here we have had the dead, those that were bleeding to death, the blind and the dumb, and the possessed of a devil.

33. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.* No, but Jesus does wonders! Something off the common, and altogether out of the ordinary way, His work of grace must be!

34. *But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.* There is always somebody or other who has got an ugly word to put in. It matters not how much God may bless the gospel, there is no stopping the sneers and objections—but the mercy is that it does not matter much. Our Lord was not hurt and the work went on, notwithstanding all the quibbling of the Pharisees.

35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* That was the answer to the Pharisees. Christian activity and fervent devotion to the cause of God is the best answer that can be given to quibblers of any sort or every sort! In your work hold on, my brother, and those who quibble at you, now, may come to honor you one of these days.

36-37. *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.* We are all loiterers, but where are the laborers? Where are they with the sharp sickle that can cut down the wheat and, with a ready hand, can bind it and, with a strong shoulder, carry it? Alas, in this great city the harvest is truly plenteous, but the laborers are few!

38. *Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.*

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MAN TRANSIENT—GOD'S WORD ETERNAL
NO. 3439

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1914,
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"The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever." Isaiah 40:8.

A FEW thoughts, first, upon *the things that wither;* then a word or two upon *that word which endures;* and then the lessons which the *contrast will suggest.*

I. THE THINGS WHICH WITHER.

The things which wither—grass and its flower; man and all that comes of man; the creature and all that springs from the creature. We are apt to think man a long-lived creature, and as we look upon races and nations, we regard the history of mankind as though it were of considerable length. If we could form any idea of eternity, we should ridicule ourselves for thinking a thousand years or six thousand years to be anything at all. They are but as a watch in the night in comparison with the endless ages of the life of God! They are no sooner come than they have gone! We look upon the grass as a short-lived thing, and talk about the frailty as well as the loveliness of the flowers—but is there so great a difference? They have their seasons—we have ours—and the seasons differ not so much after all. What if they last a month, and we last 70 years? Yet when both are withered, what does it signify? He that died but yesterday is as much dead as he that died a thousand years ago! And when the season is over, it comes to pretty much the same thing, whether we count that season by years or count it by hours. After all, the short-lived thing and we are cousins—and, looked at in the light of eternity, we and the insects are things which are and are not, floating for a while in the sunbeam, and then are gone from the land of the living. The voice that cried in the wilderness warned all mankind of that familiar truth, that all men, being but flesh, will as surely pass away as all the grass! Grass, being but grass, will surely, in its season, come to the scythe, or wither where it stands!

But the meaning of the text, as opened by the context, is not only that man is frail and must die, but that everything connected with man is so—everything that man can do, all his surroundings, especially everything in which man glories, as the grass may glory in its flower—everything of which man boasts about, which he measures and esteems

himself, shall also pass away. And I shall remind you of this, dear friends, that if you are rejoicing in anything which belongs to time and sense, you may decrease what the poet calls, "this brainless ardor," and may set your affections upon something more worthy of an immortal spirit! Remember that *all the hopes of man that have to do with man are but as the flower of grass*.

You are setting *your hopes*, perhaps, upon that dear boy when he shall have grown up and come to maturity. What a comfort and a stay he will be! Or your hope is resting upon that speculation which you trust will turn out successfully, or more solidly, perhaps, upon the gains of perseverance which, if slow, are sure. Set not your hopes on any of these things, for if you do, they may end in disappointment as you grasp them, like the apples of Sodom, which are fair to look upon, but which turn to ashes in the mouth! These hopes may be eggs that never shall be hatched, phantoms that have no reality in them. If your hopes are fixed on God's Word—the Word that endures—be as optimistic as you will, for you shall never be deceived! But if your hopes are earth-born, hear the cry of the prophet—"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field"—your hope will wither as flowers do.

Equally so will it be with *the joys you have already attained*. It may not be altogether hoping with you. You have passed the early morning of life and you have realized something. You are content and that is to be rich. You are thankful that God has smiled upon you in providence and that He has blessed you in many respects. Yes, but still even contentment may be a sin if it is an *earthly* contentment which checks your aspirations for the skies. If you are content enough to say with the rich man, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years," then remember that of all the attainments of this world, by way of pleasure, satisfaction and wealth, it may be said, "The goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." You will die and leave these things—and then what pleasure will you have in your garden, in your home, your well-stored chambers and your money? What can all yield you when your eyes shall be glazed in death? Or, before you depart from them, these things may depart from you, for riches have wings and oftentimes but one clap of the hand of providence and all these birds have flown to nests somewhere else!

But if this is true of common hopes and ordinary attainments, you must not think it is not *true of higher matters*, for in these it is equally the case. Suppose we have been seeking after mental acquisitions, have been great students, have read many books, have tried to be learned? Now, there is something in this far more elevating than in seeking to gather together so many coins of the realm, but still, all the learning that comes of man and that comes in man, is but as the flower of the field that withers! You shall find, friends, that, "much study is a weariness of

the flesh, and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow unto himself." The more you know, the more you shall discover of your own ignorance—and as you attain unto what you think to be the light, you shall find the very excess of light causes you a greater sense of the surrounding darkness! And when you come to die, if you have neglected the knowledge of God, how will it avail you to have measured the stars, to have counted those mighty orbs, to have fathomed the depths of oceans, or have soared the heights of the hills? Where are all the philosophies of the man in hell? Where is all the wisdom of yon corpse that slumbers in the sepulcher, while the spirit is driven from the presence of God? All such comeliness is but as a withered flower.

Perhaps, however, you are accumulating around you love, which is the richest of treasures, and the best of wisdom. You are living in the affections of your household, and you are grateful to do so—and I honor you for having thought it better to win the love of others than to selfishly amass anything to yourself. But yet, dear friend, remember that even this must go! There is not a child in the household that is immortal. The fondest object of your affections must certainly, before long, succumb beneath the arrows of death. Insatiable archer! You carry many arrows and you spare no human hearts! All of woman born must be targets for your shafts! Set not, then, your heart's choice, to be chief affections on those dear ones here, but upon another Husband, another Father, another Brother, another Friend! Let these aspirations of your heart become immortal, lest in the bitterness of your spirit, you find of all these that "the flower thereof fades away."

Going a step higher, there is *a kind of spiritual life*, so called, which is not of God, and even this, coming entirely of man, is just as fading as everything else that is human. Beloved, if you and I should seek to obtain a righteousness by exact obedience to the law of God, by patience under suffering, by zeal in the service of our Master—if we were to be successful in this righteousness and, year after year, by consistency of character and excellence of conduct, should win the esteem of our fellow men and deserve it, yet, mark you—even that righteousness, if not worked in us by the Holy Spirit, but only the fruit of our own resolution, would be only as the flower of grass, and in due time it would wither away! Do you remember when your righteousness did wither? Some of us will never forget when ours did. We prided ourselves much. We supposed—and we were probably not wrong in the supposition—that we were about as good as our neighbors, and we were satisfied with this belief. Indeed, we had some degree of generosity, good feeling and good desire towards God, of a sort, and in all this we wrapped ourselves up and we said, "Surely this will suffice! I may safely venture into eternity with such a preparation as this!" But oh, when the Sun of Righteousness began to shine into our souls, though He brought healing under His

wings to everything that was good within us, He brought death to all this proud righteousness of ours! And how it began to droop, decay and wither—just like a lily that is snapped when the heat of the sun begins to pour on it. Surely, brothers and sisters, the best that man can do for himself, with all his diligence and all his care, is but as a fading flower! And when he sits himself down at ease in his contentment and says, "I shall see no sorrow. I have served my Maker. I thank God that I am not as other men," even then is he naked, and poor and blind and miserable—a blighted, blasted, withered flower, though he thinks "himself to be as a rose of Sharon, or a lily of the valley."

So, brothers and sisters, it is equally true of *everything in the child of God that does not come from God*. Not only is our own righteousness a conceit of righteousness, but all our attainments in the divine life which are made in our own strength will all wither. Oh, what holy frames of mind we sometimes think we have, and how we are getting on in spirituality! We half believe in attaining to perfection—we mean to get to within an inch or two of it, at any rate. We think the old Adam is dead, and if the devil is not dead, yet we think, at any rate, he is busy somewhere else and he is going to leave us alone. If we are not quite past temptation, yet we think we are such experienced Christians that if temptation shall come, we shall be aware of Satan's devices and be able to escape. But in a moment all this melts away. Some new temptation comes, we are smitten in a place for which we are not provided with any armor—we are wounded and fall down. Oh, the quantity of confectionery sanctification that some of us have made—such gilt gingerbread confectionery, all molded into the most delicate shapes, but somehow or other the stand on which we place these things slips aside and there is such a breaking! There is discovered such foulness and abomination lurking within our hearts that we could not have believed that we could have been such as we turn out to be! We would have said, if we had been told, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?"—but such dogs we, after all, turn out to be! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid of my good frames! I am afraid of my graces! I am afraid of anything that I begin to think is good in myself, for although sins are dangerous and to be abhorred, yet we generally know what they are, and we watch against them, but under the cover of that which is supposed to be good and excellent, pride creeps in, as does self-sufficiency and carnal security, and so we get many a deadly stab! Believer, remember when you work yourself up into devotedness, when you think you have got a divine grace and have not got it, but have only got that which you gave yourself—this is but the flower of the grass and it will wither—it cannot stand.

So do I believe it is *in all religious exercises*. Everything which is got up and worked for by man always comes to an end. Those excitements which some delight in, I do not think come of the Spirit of God. At least

they may come of His work as much as the dust in the road has to do with the progress of a carriage. It is a nuisance that somehow or other is tied to a good thing, but the excitement some people seem to think is the progress, is just as the fly, as he sat on the carriage, thought that he made it roll along the road. But it is not so! It is not so at all! How many churches have been revived into perpetual barrenness! The bladder has been blown till it burst. There has been a pumping and a heaving, and a trusting in the artificial, instead of waiting quietly upon God. People have been driven pretty nearly mad, and this has been thought to be spirituality and the work of the grace of God! Brother and sisters, it is only the flower of grass—a very pretty flower—oftentimes a most tempting and fascinating flower—but it will all fail, for nothing will stand but the work of the Holy Spirit! Nothing will endure even the test of time, but the Spirit's own work upon the heart and conscience! Anything that comes of man, and not of God, will as surely disappear as the smoke of the chimney when the wind blows it away, or as the hoar frost of the morning when the sun has fully risen with his fervent heat. Take this, then, as the first truth of God that everything in us, or which we glory in, or trust to, or rejoice in, will as certainly pass away as does the grass from the field and the flower which springs of it. But now, in the second place, we have a much more comfortable subject of reflection in the next sentence—

II. THE WORD THAT ENDURES.

"But the Word of our God stands forever." What "Word" is this? I think the term applies to the Word of God in five different ways. First, it *is the Word of His purpose*. The Word of our God. Has He said it and shall He not do it? Has He purposed and shall it not come to pass? God has, from all eternity, a wondrous plan by which He will manifest all His attributes in the salvation of His people. Now from His plan He will never vary, and in the details of it He will never change. Whatever He has decreed shall most certainly come to pass! And as for the salvation of His elect, all the powers of evil, both of earth and hell, shall never be able to thwart the eternal mind as to the salvation of any of those whom He has predestinated unto eternal life. We do not find ministers often preaching about this eternal purpose, but we do find the Apostle Paul often writing about it. And the saints of old were accustomed to dwell upon it with very much delight. Oh, beloved friends, there is a purpose concerning His people, even their eternal salvation—and that purpose will as surely be fulfilled as God is God—yes, though before conversion they plunge into sin! Yes, and though during their conversion they resist the Spirit of God! Yes, and though after conversion they go astray like lost sheep, yet shall the wondrous power of sovereign grace is more than a match for the waywardness of nature—and the will of God shall sweetly lead in divine captivity the will of man, and though the man resolves on his own

destruction—God, who ordains salvation, shall accomplish His own purpose, earth and hell notwithstanding! Oh, precious truth of God, on which the child of God may fall back in his darkest moments! The grass withers, but the Word of the divine purpose stands forever!

This "Word" also refers to *His Word of promise*. Every Word which God has spoken to His people by way of promise is as true today as when it was first uttered by the prophet who was originally sent with it. And if this world should exist through tens of thousands of years, every promise will still have the raven locks of its youth about it. No promise will grow stale! No Word of God will cease to be of effect. It may have been fulfilled ten thousand times ten thousand times, but it will still be fulfilled. The promise shall be forever a well flowing for thirsty souls to drink of. It shall be a granary forever stored for the hunger of the Lord's people to be supplied from. What a mercy it is for us that the promise cannot be made to fail! Though we believe not, yet He abides faithful. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not a jot or tittle of the promise shall fail—

"His every word of grace is strong,
As that which built the skies—
The voice that rolls the stars along,
Spoke all the promises."

The words spoken to nature by God when He bade seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, never cease, have all been kept! The promise that the rainbow should be seen in the cloud in the day of rain has not been forgotten—nor shall any one of the promises of the covenant ordered in all things and sure be forgotten by the God of grace! Oh, Christian, how you may go, tonight, to your Bible and read out the promise and find it as new to you and as true to you as if an angel came from heaven to bring it in fresh language from the divine throne! You have lost your child. Your husband is gone. Your property has melted. Your health declines. You draw near to death, but the promise, the promise is still yours, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "As your days so shall your strength be." "I am God, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed." The Words of purpose and the Words of promise stand forever!

So, brothers and sisters, especially is it *with the Incarnate Word*. We are in the habit of calling the Bible, "the Word of God." I suppose that is accurate enough, but *the* Word of God is not the Bible—it is Jesus Christ. His name shall be called, "The Word of God." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Well now, of this incarnate Word, this everlasting logos, we may say that He stands forever. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." When I, a trembling sinner, went to the great High Priest and looked up to Him who wore the miter and the many-jeweled breastplate, looked up to His wounds, saw the blood marks, trusted Him, fell at His feet and

heard Him say, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities," how dear He was to my soul that day, how fairer than the sons of men! And *this* day, though years have passed since then, He is the same, and to Him I may come again, tonight, as I did then, and find that He has still the fountain filled with blood and that its efficacy has in no degree been diminished! And so, should I live till gray old age, I shall find that He abides still the same. That precious blood of His—

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

Oh, to have a faithful, an unchanging friend, one that never departs—this is comfort, indeed, regardless of what trouble may come. The Word of our God, Christ Jesus, stands forever!

The fourth signification of the term must be surely *the word of the gospel*—the Word of gospel truth which we preach, for so says the apostle as he quotes this passage, "This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." That Word stands forever! Brothers and sisters, the old gospel of the apostles is the gospel of today! There has been a notion abroad about discoveries in theology, but recollect that everything that is new in preaching is not true—and everything that is true is not new! We may say, concerning the preaching of the gospel, "The old is better." Let us keep to the good old ways. You will never advance upon Peter and Paul! If you do, you will have to go back again. All the advances there are, are but running on a fool's errand, running before the clouds, running beyond the wisdom of God—and he who is wise beyond what is written will only find himself landed in folly. The gospel was to have been disproved years ago, according to the notion of some. Modern discoveries were to have proved this, that, and the other to have been all a mistake, and we were to have given up this dogma as being a delusion and that other teaching as being a superstition! But it is not so. The gospel has gone through the furnace and come out like silver, well refined! The gospel of Jesus Christ has not lost one iota of its glory and perfection. There is not a doctrine that has been disproved—not one of her truths has been broken, nor so much as one single pillar of the house been shaken, nor shall it be! There may be atheists and deists, philosophers and skeptics, but when they have done their best, or done their worst, the gospel shall bestir itself, like Samson, when he had been bound with green withes, and shall snap all their cords and send the Philistines in confusion, flying here and there! Believe in the power of the gospel, dear Christian friends, and never be afraid. Do not believe in the wisdom of those who are wiser than God, and do not tremble at all their boasts. Many men open their mouths widest when they have nothing to say, and so may it be with these. They would not brag and boast so much if they

felt secure, but feeling that they have not touched the vitality of our religion, they do but rage and rave.

And fifthly, this term, "The word of our God" refers *to the inner spiritual life of the Christian*, for remember, you are quickened by the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever—and that incorruptible seed is said to be the Word of God. Now, all other seed throughout the world, and that which comes from a mortal source, dies, but the seed of the divine truth, dropped by the Holy Spirit in the heart, is incorruptible and, therefore, it lives and abides forever! What a blessing it is to get the Word of God into the heart, because if God puts it in, none but God can take it out again. If you get a word into your heart from the lip of one man, the lip of another man may drive it out, but if you get living truth burned into your soul by God, the Holy Spirit, Himself, then you may defy the devil himself to remove the glorious work! Oh, beloved, remember the words of Jesus, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." "He that lives and believes in Me," says Christ, "though he were dead, yet shall he live." We do not find our Master speaking of this new life decaying, or of the fountain which He puts into the soul drying up, but He says, "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water." And, "I give unto My sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Men may die, but Christians shall not—I mean the natural life expires but the celestial life never dies! Death does not affect the principle which God implants at regeneration. No, it sets free that principle. It delivers it from the bondage of flesh and blood, from the slavery of corruption and introduces it into liberty, into a region where it can expand and develop, and come to all its glorious perfection! The grass withers, the flower thereof fades away, but the enduring word of our God neither withers nor fades, but stands fast forever! And now, to close—

III. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS WHICH THIS STRONG CONTRAST OUGHT TO TEACH US?

Everything of the creature dying, everything of the Creator living, everything of man withering, everything of God blooming in eternal youth—what should this say to us? Why, it should say to us, first—*Weave not a chaplet of flowers that shall surely fade for your brow!* Do you seek fame? Let it be the fame that comes from God! Do you seek wealth? Let it be a wealth that will be current in the skies. Do you seek love? Let it be a love which will exist where they marry not, neither are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God. Flowers? Yes, if you will, but gather them in paradise. Garlands? Yes, if you please, but let them be woven in the King's own gardens, in that land where—

"Everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers."

You are an immortal, trade for immortality! You shall never die, Christian—there is a new life within you—you shall exist forever! Equal with the life of God shall be your life. Oh, then, be not gathering trifles—things that melt. Let not your life be as a miser's dream, who dreams he gathers gold and wakes and it is gone. Be not like that foolish Roman Emperor who took his troops to Britain, landed them in full state, bade every man gather a handful of shells and then go back to Rome with great triumph! He had taken Britain, he said—here were the shells from the shore. Oh, never say, "I have conquered life—here is the money! I can say I have lived grandly—here is honor!" Oh, these things are but the broken shells upon the shore. Seek jewels and pearls that shall be jewels and pearls before God, that shall be looked upon by Him as being precious because they last and continue in eternity. Dear hearer, seek your *soul's* wealth. Seek to have your sins forgiven. Seek to wrap your soul in the righteousness of Christ—that garment which the moth cannot fret! Seek to be one with Jesus! There is nothing beneath the stars worth having if you have not these things! Trust in Him. All else shall be like a bubble on a wave and melt and fly before you, if you have not confidence in Jesus! There stands the first lesson. Since all of earth shall melt and fade away, build not your house with these shadows, but with substantial timbers and hewn stones that shall stand through the lapse of ages and last into eternity.

Another lesson. *If you are on God's side, never be afraid of the mightiest opponent.* What are they? What are they? Grass! Where is the mower? Then he comes, there is an end of them. And what are their boasts, and what are their railings? The flower of grass! Here comes a breeze—the sharp breath of winter, and they are gone! Some people are always afraid of the Pope, and some are dreadfully alarmed at Puseyism, some are shocked at the Broad Church movement. I do not know where we are not going to, brother and sisters, according to the accounts we are daily receiving from those who ought to know! We are in a dreadfully bad way and it seems that the Church of God is going to be broken up, sold for old timber, and put an end to! And there will be burnings in Smithfield again, and I do not know what besides! Ah, the Lord knows how to take care of His Church without the help of some of those gentlemen who are so very earnest in taking care of it just lately, and I am pretty sure that if He could not take care of it without them, He won't do much at it with them! But his truth of God will never shake nor be moved, come what may! You never need be alarmed. If all the kings, and emperors, and cardinals, and popes, and priests, and great men and mighty men, and merchants, and mobs, and crowds should rise against the Lord's truth and against the Lord's anointed, what would it matter? Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that is but a worm? The grass in the field—why, let it boast!

What cares the King with His army about the grass? "Why," He says, "the steeds of My cavalry shall eat the grass! It shall soon be gone." So God shall overthrow all their show of strength! In an hour, if so God willed it, He could convert the world! In a single hour, if so it pleased Him, dominant superstitions would be relinquished, and the old systems of idolatry would totter to their fall. Never think of the Church of God as if she were in danger. If you do, you will be like Uzza—you will put forth your hand to steady the ark and provoke the Lord to anger against you! If it were in danger, I tell you, you could not deliver it! If Christ cannot take care of His Church without you, you cannot do it. Be still, and know that He is God.

Who am I that I should begin to agitate myself about the safety of the empire of France and should go to Napoleon and should tell him that I was afraid the empire was insecure, and I was come to help him manage the government? I think I should be sent back about my business. And so, surely, when you begin to say, "The Church is in danger! The Church is in danger!" what is that to you? It stood before you were born—it will stand when you have become worm's meat! Do your duty. Keep in the path of obedience, and fear not. He who made the Church knew through what trials she would have to pass, and He made her so that she can endure the trials and become the richer for it. The enemy is but grass, the Word of the Lord endures forever!

And so, Beloved, *take heed, let each of us take heed that we keep to the enduring truth of God*. Never let us be tempted by the flash of novelty, or by the attractions of supposed intelligence, to turn aside from the Word of God. "To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." If our creed is partly made up of the Word of God, partly of the traditions of the fathers, partly of the speculations of thinkers, it will be like Nebuchadnezzar's image—part of gold, part of iron and part of clay—and the clay will fly and the iron will be melted. But if we can get a creed that is made up, as far as our poor fallible judgments can enable us, altogether of the Word of God, then we have a creed that we can take with us into eternity! The Word of the Lord endures forever. How I like to get my own thoughts and beliefs put through the fire every now and then. I do not think there is a single doctrine that I have not doubted. I am happy to have to say that now, painful as the process was. It has been such a blessed thing to have to go to the bottom of it, to get arguments for it, to dig up and see whether the roots were sound and healthy, and oh, what a deal of what we think we know goes to the dogs in the hour of trial! But that which comes to us through the Word, and concerning which we can give a, "Thus says the Lord," that, and only that, will stand with an honest man who subjects himself to a daily examination—and asks the Holy Spirit, like a refiner's fire, to go through and through his soul! I fear there are many who could

not abide the day of the coming of this work into their hearts. It acts like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. It burns up a thousand fancies! It washes away I do not know what of predilection and of prejudice. It might induce some here to give up some of their most cherished things! It might involve a solemn sacrifice for the future, but I beseech them to do it. Side not with the grass that must wither, for you must wither with it if you take it for your defense. But keep to this grand old book! Keep the Word of God, for this shall neither wither, nor shall you, if you abide in the living Spirit of God hard and fast by what this word teaches you.

God grant us this, and His be the praise forever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:153-174.

Verse 153. *Consider my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget Your law.* As much as if he said, "Lord, I do not forget You—do not forget me." Your grace has kept my memory—let your grace keep me altogether.

154-56. *Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Your word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes. Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgments.* Oh, how the saints need quickening. They know they do! They feel that they get dull, and they cannot endure it—they are not happy unless they possess vivid grace and true light!

157-58 *Many are my persecutors and my enemies: yet do I not decline from Your testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your word.* The very sight of them gave me sorrow. Even though they tried to be mirthful, I was not amused by them, and beheld them and was grieved, "Because they kept not Your word."

159. *Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.* My heart is right, I do love You, but I feel dull and heavy. Lord, come and quicken me, not according to my love to You, but according to Your loving kindness, come and quicken me. "Your Word is true from the beginning"—from the first page of the Book of Genesis to the very last—true about everything, true from the first moment it began with me! Every promise has been kept. There has not been a falsehood all the way through.

160. *Your word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever.* "Princes have persecuted me without a cause." David was a prince—and a man expects to be fairly dealt with by his peers—but it was not so in his case.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your word.* When we are in awe of God's Word, we shall not be in awe of princes. The fear of God is the best cure for the fear of men.

162. *I rejoice at Your word, as one that finds great spoil.* He had more joy in reading the Scriptures than in winning a great battle, or in being surprised at the finding of a great treasure!

163. *I hate and abhor lying: but Your law do I love.* Now the Orientals did not hate lying—they generally tried to be proficient at it. The only fault about lying with them is to be discovered—then they think they must have been very unskillful. David, therefore, was far ahead of his time—far ahead of his fellow countrymen.

164. *Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments.* He could not have enough of praise! He did it often, he did it perfectly—seven times a day—and if he praised God seven times a day because of His righteous judgments, how much more ought we to do it because of His abounding grace! Ah, there is a special cause for thanks.

165-66. *Great peace have they which love Your law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.* Two good things to put together—hope in God's mercy and obedience to God's will.

167-174. *My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You. Let my cry come near before You, O LORD: give me understanding according to Your word. Let my supplication come before You: deliver me according to Your word. My lips shall utter praise when You have taught me Your statutes. My tongue shall speak of Your word: for all Your commandments are righteousness. Let Your hand help me, for I have chosen Your precepts. I have longed for Your salvation, O LORD, and Your law is my delight.* Cannot we say that, dear friends, this evening? I hope we can—with all our failings and wandering, yet the law of God is our delight—and if we could have our wish, we would never again go beyond its restraints, nor fall short of its demands!

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END OF VOLUME 60