ATTENTION!
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"Hear you Him."
Matthew 17:5.

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured, there came a voice from the bright, overshadowing cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear you Him." It was the voice of the Father concerning His Son—a testimony to His person, a notification of His office, an announcement of His authority to teach and to legislate. You can understand how imperative it then was for those who heard it to heed Him. But now He is gone up from us. He has entered into the excellent glory—He no more teaches in our streets, yet still, as though present with us, He speaks to us. By the written Word, His sayings are handed down to us infallibly. Often times, when the Holy Spirit rests upon God's servants, they become as the voice of Christ to us, and when that same blessed Spirit, as the Comforter, brings to our remembrance the things of Christ, does it not seem as though Jesus, Himself, spoke to our souls? The admonition is not out of date—it has not lost its telling point or its vital force. Still does the Father say to us concerning His well-beloved Son, "Hear you Him."

Let us proceed to meditate on this sacred charge. The three little words may give rise to four short questions. *Why? What? How? When?*

I. WHY SHOULD WE HEAR HIM?

It might serve for a sufficient answer, had we no other reply, because God, Himself, commands us! This injunction comes of the Father, "Hear you Him." Over and over again are we enjoined to listen to the voice of Christ. Every messenger from God ought to have our respectful attention—how much more the greatest of all messengers—that messenger of the covenant, the Messiah, the sent One, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession? Did not Jehovah, Himself, say, "This is My Son"? It seemed reasonable that the Son should receive more reverence than any of the servants. If senators and patriots, counselors and prophets, had been stoned and cast out of the vineyard, deference might yet be paid to the Son! If their perverseness had refused Him homage, their scruples might have sheltered Him from indignity. Surely they would not go so far as to cast out the Son, Himself! There is a willfulness, a defection of heart, an enormity of sin in refusing to hear the Christ of God, for which it is difficult to find terms. Appointed, anointed,

commissioned of the Father to speak to us, to confer with us, to make known among us the mind and will of our great and gracious Sovereign, it becomes treason and blasphemy of the highest order and the deepest dye for us to refuse to heed His presence or listen to His words!

Why hear Him? do you ask? *Does not our lord Jesus Christ, Himself, deserve to be heard?* Peerless among the princes of heaven, is He not very God of very God? And immaculate among the children of men, is He not man of the substance of His mother? Here is a double claim upon our attention. Beaming with divinity, instinct with humanity, He speaks as never man spoke, clothing the highest oracles in the most familiar parables. And will you not hear what this God-man has to say? Is He not perfect in wisdom, pure in motive and undeviating in truthfulness? To whom should we listen, if we turn away from Him? He has all those high sanctions which should claim our allegiance and all those sweet traits of character which should attract our regard. If we will not listen to such an one as Jesus of Nazareth, the gentle, and meek, and lowly, yet the truthful, the honest, and the brave—to whom will we ever lend an attentive ear? O sons of men, there was never mentor or orator so worthy of your regard as Jesus Christ! Never philosopher who had such maxims to deliver, or such mysteries to unfold as this man—the Son of God—the Incarnate Wisdom!

Why will you not hear Him, when *the message He has come to communicate concerns yourselves*, your present and future welfare, your most solemn interests? The tidings He brings are, indeed, laden with ten thousand blessings for us, if we will but incline our ears and listen to them. He comes to redress our grievances, to retrieve our disasters, to redeem our souls, to secure our prosperity, to effect our salvation! As an ambassador from God, He comes, not to treat upon small matters, to settle petty disputes, or to advise upon local or temporary affairs, but with supreme authority to show how sinful man may be reconciled to his Maker, how the foul stains of transgression may be washed away and scarlet sins become white as snow! He comes to tell us how we may escape the impending doom of hell and how we may attain an inheritance in heaven! To fit us for that high estate, and that blessed society, He comes to cleanse us from our corruptions and to endow us with a nature that is divine, and faculties that are suited to the celestial glory! Such a message as this should enamor our very selfishness and compel our ambition to regard it with favor. Hear you Him! O you sick and wounded, will you not listen to the physician? O you bankrupt debtors, will you not listen to the jubilee trumpet that proclaims your debts paid and your forfeited rights restored? O you outcasts, wandering all forlorn, in climates uncongenial to your health, your peace, your homely joys—will you not heed the voice of a guide who comes to conduct you in safety to your fatherland? O you despairing souls, He sets before you an open door! You famished poor, He invites you to a banquet—a banquet richly provisioned with all the dainties of eternal

love! With such words upon His lips, such blessed news to bring to such needy creatures, our Lord Jesus Christ may well claim to be heard!

There is a further argument which ought to have thrilling force among full many of you, my hearers. *With what zest should we, who profess to be His disciples, hear Him.* Years ago some of us took His easy yoke upon our shoulders and we bless His name it has never galled us—neither are we weary of the load. He is our Master and our Lord, and if He is so, surely our proper place is at His feet. It is an ill thing of us, and untruthful, if we call Him Master, and yet will not believe what He teaches! If we say to Him, "Rabboni," and yet turn aside to hail some fellow creature—be he a noted saint long since dead, or a party leader who still survives among us, as our captain and commander-in-chief. If Peter is our master, let us call him so! If Calvin is our master, let us call him so! And if Wesley is our master, let us call him so—but if we are disciples of Jesus, then let us follow Jesus—and follow Him with other men only so far as we perceive they followed Christ! Hear you Him, O you disciples, if you are His disciples. Will you enlist as His soldiers and shrink from His lead? Will you engage to be His servants and yet violate His orders? Will you who declare that He is your chief and wear His uniform, cede your homage to other masters? No, by all that is honest and just, pure and comely, and of good report, the shame would fester in every believer's conscience! You call Him, "Master and Lord," and you say well, for so He is—but prove yourselves to be truly His disciples by listening to Him!

To the rest—(I am grieved at heart that I should have to speak of the rest, but we know there is such a remnant here)—to those who are not His disciples, there is an argument that if it counts not now, will count hereafter. You must hear Him in the day of grace, or else *you shall hear Him in that day of judgment,* and perish forever! Do you refuse to hear Christ? There are not any tidings of mercy to be heard elsewhere. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him that speaks from heaven." O sinners, hear you the Savior's voice! O wanderers, hear your Shepherd's voice! O you dying, hear your Physician's voice! I will add, O you dead, hear you the voice of the great quickener, for the time is come that they who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man—and they that hear Him shall live! "Do you Hear Him?" Thus with general arguments suitable to all and with special arguments suitable for those who have believed—and for those who have not believed—we leave with you a few of the reasons why. Our second catch-word is—

II. WHAT?

What are we to hear? "Hear you *Him."* There is much to hear concerning the person of Christ, the actions of Christ, the sufferings of Christ and the offices of Christ—but the fullness of all revelation is

embodied in Him. Greater than the greatest sermon that was ever preached in the world, is the Word made flesh! He is the manifestation of God, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. Would you know God, you must know Christ. "He that has seen Me" (it is His own testimony) "has seen the Father." In the character of Jesus, the character of God is reflected with ineffable purity! The invisible God is in Him, made visible to men as far as the sense of faith can behold Him—infinitely farther than the natural senses can discern. The infinite can never be brought down to the level of our puny intelligence so as to be comprehended by us, yet in the presence of Christ we are conscious of the infinite. It is palpable to us as a mountain that cannot be scaled, but under whose shadow we can find shelter. And when we look to Christ, and listen to His voice, we are as those who gaze on the vast ocean in which, to our poor minds, the infinite is mirrored forth, for, as far as the vision can stretch, there is no bound, no shore beyond—and His Words sound on and on like the mighty sea through time that knows no limit, and through eternity that has no end! He is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Hear Him, then! Hear Him! Let His voice break on your ears as the music of the main, in that melodious anthem, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or in that thrilling utterance, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Hear *Him*, I say, hear *Him*! As the sound of many waters, as the chorus of the waves, hear this—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

View Christ as a child who must be about His Father's business and as a man who must work the works of His Father while it is day! Know Him as a teacher and a guide—mark His zeal to minister and His devotedness to suffer! Then let poets sing of "Nature," if they please. Let them call it "the thin veil which half conceals and half reveals the face and lineaments of God," as some of them have done. But let Christians bear me witness that the simple tale of Christ living among men, with which we delight to make ourselves more and more familiar, unveils the attributes of God in words and deeds of mercy and compassion, of patience and long-suffering, of sweet mindfulness and great marvel in such clearness as days of sunshine and moonlight nights could never teach you, though more than three-score and ten of these revolving seasons should pass over your head! But especially read God in the death of Jesus! Behold the divine justice gleaming there, for He wakens His sword that He may sheath it in the heart of the great shepherd, so that the sheep may escape its keen edge! See there the love of God, who spared not His own Son! See all the divine attributes marvelously blended on the cross in the bleeding person of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father. Hear Him! And now do you hear tell of Him as He goes beyond the stars and enters the pearl gate to take possession of His well-earned crown? Let us hear Him there and understand that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing

He ever lives to make intercession for us. Hear the voice of His ascension as it proclaims the justification of those for whom He died and rose again—and the assurance of the eternal perfection of all those for whom His blood was shed—"for this man has perfected forever them that are set apart by the one sacrifice that He has offered." Hear Him! His very person and everything connected with Him speaks with trumpet tongue! Hear what God says to you by Him! Oh, I wish that we were more attentive to the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am afraid many of us are very superficial in our considerations of our Savior. We do not labor "to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths." God speaks to dull ears. Though His accents are far sweeter than music when He speaks by Jesus Christ, yet a very large part of what God has thus said to us, many of you have not understood.

Let me remind you, dear friends, that the Lord Jesus has many forms of speaking—many varieties of utterance. Sometimes *He instructs*. He is a skillful teacher and He has spoken by the mouth of His apostles, as well as with His own lips. The truths that were uttered in His name, like the miracles that were worked in His name, have the impress of His sovereign authority. Hence that summary of Christian doctrine which Paul was inspired of the Holy Spirit to open up, was the plain result of the life of Jesus—a key to interpret what He said and did. Did you read in the gospels how He obeyed the Father? In the Epistles you read of that obedience as righteousness imputed to all who believe. Do you find in the gospels a minute account of the Lord Jesus—the Epistles will tell you that His death was a propitiation for our sins. Do the gospels furnish you with proofs of His rising from the dead? The Epistles will assure you that He was raised for our justification! Do you learn from the gospels that He ascended up into heaven? The Epistles will teach you that He always lives to make intercession for us! We are bound to take our theology from the entire Scriptures.

Where, and when, and by whomever Christ speaks to us, let us hear Him! The well of undefiled theology is the Word of God. We err when we pin our profession to creeds of human devising. Creeds are exceedingly useful and I hope they will never be discarded. In fact, they never can be, for every man has a creed, whether he likes to think so or not. He has a consistent or an inconsistent one. But our creed must not be the dogmas of general councils, or the opinions of learned men, much less must it be the reflection of "modern thought," which is full of infidelity—it must be the truths which we have received directly from the Word of God! And surely, after reading controversies upon theology, one has often said, like David, "Oh, that one would give me a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate! Oh, that I could get a drink of the water from the wellhead from Scripture itself!" And you do well, my brothers and sisters, if your only doctor of divinity is Christ—and if He is your only body of divinity, for, indeed, was there ever any other body of

divinity under heaven except Jesus Christ? Let my doctrine be what Christ taught! Let my reason for believing it be that He said it! Let me sit at His feet and learn of Him, and let Him be my authority. I shall need no better argument, if I gather my reason from the fact that He has declared it!

But the Word of the Lord is not always the voice of instruction—it is sometimes spoken in peremptory tones, *commanding us*. The Lord Jesus Christ has given many absolute injunctions to His people. Some there are among us—we grieve to confess it—who are not so fond of His precepts as of His doctrines. They will hear the preaching that sets forth the precious doctrines of grace and the sweet promises of the covenant with very great delight, as I hope we all do, but at the mention of the precepts and practical obligations, they are offended and afraid that there is more of a legal twang than of a gospel tone in the sermon! Perhaps such fears have too often been justified. At the same time, brothers and sisters, we should always be ready to suffer the word of exhortation and be as content to do for Christ that which He enjoins, as to get from Christ that which He freely bestows! That saying of the mother of Jesus to those who waited at the feast of Cana is good advice for us all. She said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Does Christ command separation from the world—separate yourselves and come out! Does Christ command bearing your cross and going outside the camp? Take up your cross cheerfully and follow Him outside the camp! Does Christ command integrity of character and holiness of life—oh, that we might be blameless in the one and exemplary in the other! Does He command love, a kindly affection for the brothers and sisters and a practical benevolence towards all mankind—let us diligently cherish both! Does He command us to forgive injuries, to show a peaceable disposition—then let us bear and forbear in advance of all the maxims of society, stimulated by the noble example of our Lord and obedient to the law of His mouth! Do you call the blessed Jesus your Lord and Master? "Hear you Him." Heed His precepts, as well as listen to His doctrine! Often, too, by way of direction, does our Lord speak to us. How wisely would our lives be ordered, did we simply and sincerely follow Christ's guidance! We often make glaring mistakes in trivial matters because we fancy ourselves able to direct our own steps in plain, common paths. Many a man has gone straight through an intricate course because he has prayed earnestly—and in answer to prayer he has found out the narrow channel between the quicksands and the rocks—yet on other occasions that same man has committed folly in Israel because he thought it was fair sailing, and he did not want to take the divine pilot on board. Let us, in all things, great or small, ask counsel of Christ! And when once we know His will, let us never have a second thought! It is not ours to reason or to question, but it is ours to suffer loss and endure reproach, if necessary, when we have His orders. The Christian's, like the soldier's duty is to obey. Be it to do or to die, it is

imperative that he lay his judgment at the feet of his commander. His judgment is never sounder than when he defers to his chief, demurs to nothing, and decides at the spur of prescript or prohibition. With His charge for your chart, be ready to hear His direction!

Nor is there any lack in another particular. Full often, blessed be His name, Christ gives us the *word of consolation*. Unhappy are those disciples who turn a deaf ear to these sweet refreshments. We know some who are so sickly and depressed in spirit, that "their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death." "My soul refuses to be comforted," says the Psalmist, and there are persons in that pitiable condition. But, dear friends, when Jesus deigns to comfort, surely it is wise to obey the injunction, "Hear you Him." Why, if I could not believe the promise of my father, or the promise of my brother, yet must I believe the promise of my Savior! He cannot deceive! He would not speak flattering words! It were not possible for Him to buoy me up with specious consolations, showing me the bright side of the picture and veiling the darker shadows. Oh, no! He, Himself, has said, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He is perfectly ingenuous in what He says. He conceals nothing which is profitable for us to know! He is, Himself, transparent truth. When He says to me—to you—"Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God: believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions," shall we not dismiss our fears, renew our hearty confidence in Him, believe in the many mansions and look forward to them? And if He says to us (as He does), "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." If He declares, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands," should we not ground our full assurance on His simple assertion? Are we to question what He affirms because it seems too good to be true? May it not remind us of that famous speech of the Lord by the mouth of His servant Isaiah—"As the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Oh, bow your ear, you mournful one, disconsolate as you are! I marvel not that you refuse earthly sedatives, but I wonder much that you should deny yourself these heavenly restoratives! The oil and wine that Jesus brings is healing and healthful. The ointment that He puts upon you will not aggravate your sores, but will cure your malady! Yield yourself to His generous treatment! The spirit of Christ never comforts unwisely. Rejoice that He has given the Holy Spirit and still speaks by the Spirit unto the mourners in Zion.

I might linger over these and kindred reflections. When our Lord speaks by way of warning and bids you, "Flee from the wrath to come," hear you Him! When He speaks by way of exhortation, or of invitation, saying, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," then, "hear you Him!" If His tone should seem somewhat severe to your souls, and your flesh should revolt against it, yet, "Hear

you Him." His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh—always sweet smelling and healing like the myrrh. Oh, regard Him! Catch His faintest accents! Treasure His words. Take your tablets and write down what He says—but let your tablets be your heart's best flesh, made soft by the power of the regenerating Spirit! Pray the Holy Spirit to write upon your souls, to carve deeply upon your hearts, all that Jesus Christ may speak to you! This is what we would have you hear. "Hear you Him." The third word about which some remarks were to cluster was—

III. HOW?

How shall we hear Him? We have shown you that He speaks in the Word of Scripture, that He speaks through His sent servants, that He speaks by His Holy Spirit to the hearts of His people. How shall we hear Him, then? Undoubtedly it becomes us to listen with devout reverence. Let us revere every truth of Scripture for the sacred authority with which it comes to us. Every rightly constituted mind must feel shocked at the way in which certain parts of God's Word are treated by the thoughtless, as well as the profane! I believe, brothers and sisters, that the habit of trifling with the minutest detail of God's Word is very sinful. I know that it has led to much mischief in the Church of God. I remember hearing a minister speak of the controversy about baptism with palpable levity. It made me shudder when he said that for his part, he did not care two cents about baptism! Is there not a baptism of the Lord's commandment? Some sort of baptism there is, at any rate, which Christ has enjoined. God forbid that I should scoff at it! Where is your loyalty to the Son of God if you rudely snap your fingers at any ordinance He has appointed? You that hear may account it of no consequence, but He that declared it to us well knew its profound importance, for He said, "Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." You have coined a new proverb to supersede the old statutes.

"There are no sects in heaven," you inform us. Then, having forged a text, you supply us with a commentary. "These points are really nonessential," you tell us, "it would promote love and concord utterly to ignore them." No, sirs, but the points of which you speak so lightly are not mere specks on the horizon—they are more like lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night—let them be to you for signs and for seasons! "They are not essential for salvation," says one. Be it so, and yet they may be essential for approbation, I reply. As a servant, "Will you willfully offend because the penalty is to be reproved, not to be discharged? As a pupil in the school of Christ, will you violate His laws because you will only be put to the bottom of the class, and no one supposes you will be expelled from the school? Has it come to this with you, professing Christian, that to escape from hell is the only thing you care about? Are you of so mean, so beggarly a spirit, that, provided you get saved, it is all you are concerned about?" Dear friends, after we are saved, it is essential to the peace of our conscience that we search

the Word of God to know the will of Christ concerning us and that in every particular, as far as we are able, we endeavor to do His will! You may err through ignorance, not knowing that you are doing wrong. That is a sin, a sin concerning which Christ says that you shall be beaten with few stripes. But it is an aggravation of sin when a person does not wish to know His Lord's will—no, refuses to inquire, and thinks it quite unimportant—for such willfulness the servant, to use our Lord's own words, "shall be beaten with many stripes." God save us from the censure, as well as the penalty of that transgression! Never treat with levity any text of Scripture. Never suppose that because the truth is considered small by the men of your generation, that it is, therefore, inconsiderable in the eyes of Him who rules throughout all generations. The sweepings of the lapidary's shop, where diamonds are polished, are precious—how much more should each member of the whole church be jealous of every minute particle of the truth! Small errors are the seedlings from which gigantic heresies spring up. The more accord with the mind of Christ there is in the individual disciples of Jesus, the more concord there will be in the visible church. Unity is not promoted by endorsing one another's faults, but by conspiring with one another to maintain the Master's statutes!

Let us hear believingly. Some are troubled with doubts and, fears, and others foster them as if they were accessories to faith and proofs of a naive disposition! We have heard from the philosophic side that there is more faith in doubting than in crediting the revealed Word. Really, such cant I do not care to quote. The marvel is that it gets currency for an hour. The class of doubters we have abroad in the present day may well be always declaring that they are honest, since there is so much reason to suspect the honesty of their doubts. And then there are Christian people who think it a commendable humility and an excellent feature of experience, to entertain doubts, to make a profession of fears and to cast reflections on "the full assurance of faith," as though it were presumptuous and unbecoming! From the tone of their conversation you might infer that the promise of the gospel is to him that doubts and hesitates to show his allegiance, rather than to him that believes and is baptized, that he shall be saved! The new birth is a grave subject to their thinking. It fills them with terror, instead of inspiring them with hope. But their morbid views are all wrong, my brothers and sisters! What Christ has said is true, infallibly true! It is not to be lightly questioned, but implicitly relied on. Be it ours to accept from His lips whatever of teaching, of consolation, or promise He may utter. And let *us hear Him expectantly*, with the full assurance of hope, knowing that He is faithful who has promised. Especially in the matter of prayer, let us encourage the utmost confidence that He will hear us. Have you not caught yourselves sometimes telling of the remarkable answers you have obtained, as if it caused you the greatest possible surprise that you

should ask and receive? Meet and right it is, my dear brothers and sisters, that you should relate what God has done for you—but is it quite right for you to express astonishment that He has fulfilled His own engagements? Should it be accounted strange by God's own children that their Father keeps His word? Are His oracles so equivocal, that when they are literally fulfilled, we lift up our hands in blank amazement? Not so, beloved! Better far the saying of that aged Christian woman, who, when she heard a young disciple relate the answer he had got to the prayer he had offered, and finish up his story with the exclamation, "Wasn't it surprising?" replied, "No! it is just like Him." As it is His custom to keep His word, let us always hear Him expectantly!

And let me charge you, beloved friends, that you take heed by the power of God's Spirit always to hear Jesus Christ *obediently*. There is a way of hearing that is worse than not hearing at all. Who are so deaf as those that will not hear or hearing, will not obey? How often has the Lord called some of you—and yet you have not come to Him? Though He has taught you much, you have not learned anything. Though He has exhorted you many times, you have not stirred. Though He has frequently warned you, you have taken no heed. Oh, that we obeyed, instantly obeyed Him, scrupulously obeyed Him, universally obeyed Him! Oh that we inquired and ascertained His will with an eagerness to do His bidding! Gladly would I be like a cork upon the waters that feels every breath of the wind, and every rise of the wave—not like some great steam vessel that needs a storm to make it roll. Would to God we were delicately sensitive to the mind of Christ like the photographer's sensitive plate that catches the image as it passes and permanently retains the reflection, so that when Jesus Christ's perfect image comes before our soul, it might be there stamped upon us to abide evermore! Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, ponder this pensively. Pray over it privately. Ask yourselves personally, are we all thus hearing the Lord Jesus Christ? Come to close quarters—let us put it pointedly—are any of you living in habitual disregard of your Lord's will? If so, you are unhappy, I know you are! You cannot be happy until you come and yield yourself up to Him. What is the true posture of a servant but to wait his master's beck and bidding? Where can you expect to know the sweetness of Christ but in acknowledging Him as your Lord and yielding your souls in allegiance to Him? Cry to God, then, for cleansing from the errors of the past! Invoke His help to make your obedience complete, now and in days to come. We know we are not saved by *our* obedience—we are saved already by *His* obedience—but for the love we bear His name, what was our gain, we count our loss, and we desire to render ourselves as living sacrifices unto Him, which is but our reasonable service! Thus let us hear Him.

I beseech you, you who listen to me from Sabbath to Sabbath, never to take any of your beliefs from my sermons unless you can verify them from His sayings! I would cheerfully blot out from your recollection every dogma that has no authority but my own. I would urge you to give it like

chaff to the wind. Let your soul be established upon the truth as it is in Jesus! "Hear you Him." Whatever He says, accept beyond appeal. Let that be your beginning and your ultimatum, the beginning of your confidence, and the end of all your controversy! Should Christ's teaching take you out of our connection, or out of any association where you now are, never mind, follow it! Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads, follow His guidance! Don't be foolish enough to take up with impressions that are merely of the flesh. Don't be forever changing and shifting with the currents of opinion. Don't have windmills on the brain. Read well, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Having done so, if nobody in this world beside you professes to believe the truth that Christ has taught, believe it all the more intensely! Be concerned that dishonor should be done Him by so many being in ignorance or error, but be concerned to honor Him yourself by holding that truth firmly which others overlook or despise. "The Bible, and the Bible alone," said Chillingworth, in that oft quoted opinion of his, "is the religion of Protestants," but I am afraid it is hardly a fact. It ought to be true and it would be true, were we true to Christ. It is the professed religion of Christendom! The Word of God applied to the soul by the eternal Spirit becomes to us the voice of Christ, and we desire to hear it, God helps us to hear it! One more question remains to be answered.

IV. WHEN?

When shall we hear Him? The reply must be, *Evermore!* Hear Him when you begin your Christian career. "Hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is the hearing of Him that quickens the soul. "Incline your ear," He says, "and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live." Nor are we to give up hearing Christ after we have found life in Him—we are to continue still learning of Him. We shall never grow so wise that we do not need Him for a teacher. We shall never be so experienced that we can find our own way, and no longer need Him as a guide. We shall have to keep on hearing Him when our locks are gray and our age is reverend. When we are on the banks of Jordan, and our feet almost tread the hallowed soil of the border land—even then, brothers and sisters, we must still hear Him! And then across the river His voice will greet us. We shall forever hear Him in the upper skies. The great matter, however—great because it presses so heavily on our present interest and our future destiny—is that we hear Him now! "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years." May we have grace to hear Him now. If we do not hear Him now, speaking with the voice of mercy, tomorrow we may hear Him say, "I never knew you." It would be a terrible hearing that, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity!" The thunder of those dreadful words will be everlasting! May God, of His infinite grace, save us from hearing the

dreary sentence of the Judge by enabling us to now hear the cheery welcome of the Savior!

And do you not think, dear friends, it would be well that believers should have a special time for hearing Christ every day? Might you not mark off a quarter of an hour in the day for hearing what God the Lord shall speak? In the middle of London, amidst all the din of traffic, the sweetest chimes cannot be heard—they are drowned. But that same music, when other sounds are hushed, will be extremely pleasant. We have the rush and crash of the world in our ears nearly all day. If we want to hear Christ's voice, we must sometimes get alone and sit in silence. It is the best commerce a man can engage in—it brings in the richest treasure! He will be poor who does not set apart some time in which He can listen to the voice of Christ by searching the Scriptures, by drawing near to God, by watching and prayer. Even the public Prayer Meetings should be second to private intercessions. "This ought you to have done," I would say of the prayer meeting, "not to have left the other undone." Both should be regarded, for oftentimes in the morning, if one can get a text of Scripture and put it under the tongue, it will keep the mouth sweet, the breath sweet and the heart sweet all day long! And at night, when one is weary, it gives calmness to our slumbers and even makes our dreams pleasant, if we can get a kiss from the lips of the spouse in some joyful promise, some precious portion of the Word of God! "Hear you Him," my brothers and sisters! "Hear you Him." The Lord unstop your ears to hear, O you that have never heard Him! And you that have heard Him often, may you hear Him yet more frequently and more familiarly till He shall say unto you, "Come up here," and you shall finally enter into His joy! God bless each one of us richly for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOD'S MEMORIAL OF HIS PEOPLE
NO. 3441

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands."
Isaiah 49:16.

A LITTLE more than eight years ago, I remember addressing you from these very words. You will find the sermon in the printed series [See Sermon #512, Volume 9—A PRECIOUS DROP OF HONEY—Read/download the entire 63 volumes of CHS sermons, plus 574 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.] But such a text as this is to be preached hundreds of times! It is quite impossible to exhaust it, and if we should run over the same circle of thought in some measure, the thought suggested is of itself so precious, it were well to have our pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance.

The apprehension that God might forget us would be very horrible to a child of God. As to the ungodly, they care not whether God thinks of them or not. He is nothing to them and they care not whether they are anything to Him. To the Christian, it is far otherwise. He could imagine no greater calamity than for him to be forgotten of his God. He knows there are many reasons in him why he should be forgotten, and though those reasons are all met by the promises of God, yet there are times when those reasons exercise great effect upon his mind. As, for instance, the Christian knows how insignificant he is. It is always a wonder to him that God did ever think of him. Like David, when he considers the heavens, the works of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which God has ordained, he says, "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" The ungodly man has large ideas of himself, but the Christian has very humbling notions of his own condition and he marvels, therefore, that God ever should have remembered him—and he fears, sometimes, lest he should be forgotten. So, too, the Christian is aware of his own unworthiness. He knows something of his natural depravity. He remembers somewhat of things done in his youth, his former transgressions—he sees that even now he is not clear from sin in his daily life—and he says within himself at times, "If the Lord were to deal with me according to my desert, He would certainly appoint me a portion with the unbeliever, discountenance me and cast me away." Yes, and when he thinks of his unthankfulness to God for His many mercies, and remembers what a sting there is in ingratitude, and how it cuts sharp the person who is wronged by it, he sometimes wonders that God has not turned against His ungrateful servant and said, "You are not mindful of My goodness. You make such a slight return for it, that I will henceforth no more remember you! The streams of My mercy shall be dried up and the sunlight of My favor shall

be taken away forever." Oh, what would we do if God did forget us for any of these reasons, my brothers and sisters? We could bear, it might be, to be forgotten by the dearest heart that beats in the fondest bosom of our nearest relative—bitter, indeed, would be such an affliction, to find a Judas where we hoped we had a friend—but let all creature friendships go sooner than God should forget us! It would be a calamity if death should visit our habitations, or if sickness should come and lay us low, if some calamity should strip us of our earthly comforts. But let them all go without reservation, let us be reduced to Job's extremity and sit upon a dunghill and scrape ourselves with a potsherd, sooner than God should forget us! That would be hell itself! Oh, may we rejoice in heart by faith that this calamity cannot occur to us! And let this text help to remove any fear that any believer here has ever had, that he may be forgotten of God! The text was meant to meet that case, for so it runs, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." And here is the reason given, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands."

We come, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the help of God's Spirit, to consider this divine memorial—"I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." Then very briefly let us trace out the result of this memorial of God. And let us close with a personal reflection upon the object of this divine remembrance—"I have engraved YOU upon the palms of My hands."

I. THE DIVINE MEMORIAL.

We have here a metaphorical speech to set forth the impossibility of God's forgetting us. "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." I will give a catchword to each particular explanation of this metaphor. The first word is present. When we have a thing fresh in our minds and we need to make others know that we have it close to our memory, we say we have it at our fingertips. I say to such an one, "I shall not forget you. I constantly remember you. Your name, your business and your circumstances are at my fingertips." Everyone understands what is meant by the expression. It is a present memorial, but the figure of speech here used is more beautiful than that. "I have you as near to Me as if I had you always in the palms of My hands." That by which I remember you is most near to Me. A dear friend told me that when traveling in the East, he frequently saw persons who had the portraits of their friends printed on the palms of their hands. I said to him, "But did not they wear out?" Yes, sometimes," he said, "but very frequently they were tattooed, marked right into the hand, and then, as long as the hand was there, there was the image of the friend, roughly drawn, of course." Oriental art is not very perfect, but there it was, drawn on the palms of the hands, so that it could be always seen. A person had never to say, "Run and fetch the portrait. Run and bring me the memorial"—he always had it present with him! So the Lord Jesus always has His people present with him at all times. He is the head, they are the members. The members are never far off from the head. He is the Shepherd, they are

the sheep and the careful shepherd, in time of danger, is never far from his sheep. Christ is not far from any of His people and, therefore, His recollections of them are not difficult to be maintained. He keeps the memorial of them in His hands present with Him. There is no fear, therefore, that He will forget them.

The next thought that arises from the metaphor may be remembered by the catchword of permanent. As I have already said, the impression made upon the hands, as intended in this figure, was permanent—so long as the person lived, there it was. You engrave your friend's name upon a sapphire and you may lose it. You may write it upon a rock and the rock may crumble. You may get to yourself the most precious and lasting form of matter and stamp the impression of your friend upon it, and by-and-by it may fade away. But when Christ says that He writes His people's names upon His hands, unless He, Himself, can perish, their memorial must abide as long as Jesus lives, He must bear with Him the memories of His people. It is inconceivable that Christ should be without a hand—and what is deeply engraved on those palms, never to be erased, must abide near to Him forever and forever! Oh, think, Christian, you are never forgotten by God! Never in your darkest night of sorrow, never in your most wayward moment of personal doubt and wandering, never forgotten—and you never shall be! If you live to the decrepitude of old age, He will bear and carry you! If you lie long upon a lonely pallet, where few shall observe your suffering, He will not forget you! If you are drifted to some remote part of the world, far from all you love, He will be just as near. Time shall roll on and come to its close, but Christ will not forget you, then, and in the eternity that comes amidst the burning of the world and the judging of mankind, the engraving on His hands shall be as permanent as ever! You shall still be remembered of the Lord, who loved you before the earth was! Present and permanent, then, is the memorial which Christ cherishes of His people.

We have lately seen an unusual number of rainbows, and I must confess that nothing gives me greater joy than to see a rainbow. It is the memorial of the covenant. I like to look upon it. But there is something more cherishing to me than looking on it myself—it is the thought of that text where God says, "The bow shall be in the clouds and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant." It comforts me that I can look on the sign of God's faithfulness, but it comforts me much more that God looks at it—that His eyes are on it! Had I been an Israelite, I think it would have given me much pleasure to see the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of my house. I would have known I was secure. But there is something better than that. You remember the text, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is God's sight of the blood that saved you! So here it is Christ that looks at the palms of His own hands—that sees the memorial—always looks there and has not to look far, for His hands are not far removed from Himself—they are part of Himself. It is on Himself He bears the memory—the permanent memory of all whom He has bought with blood! Therefore, be you comforted, and think not that you are overlooked.

The third word shall be personal—present, perpetual, and personal. "I have engraved you not in the book of record, but I have engraved you upon Myself, upon the palms of My hands." It means this—I will put it in one short, compact sentence—that Christ could as soon forget Himself us He could forget His people! He has stamped them into Himself! Yes, more—He has taken them into such vital, indelible union with His own person, that to forget one soul that He has bought with blood would be to forget Himself! The mother does not forget her child because there is an intimate connection between them. The head cannot forget the members because there is a still more intimate connection there. My finger does not need to tell my head that it suffers, and when a limb is full of pain and agony, it does not need to send express messengers up to the brain to say to the head, "Think of me, for I am full of grief." No, the head feels that the limb is a part of itself, knit to itself! And Christ has a personal interest and a personal union with all His people. Oh, precious thought! You are dearer to Christ than any treasure could be to Him because you are of His flesh and of His bones. This is the reason—this is one reason that is given in Scripture—for conjugal love, because the woman was taken out of the man, and she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—and when our blessed Second Adam fell asleep in death, God took His Church out of His side, and the Church is bone of Christ's bone and flesh of His flesh. He cannot forget her! He looks upon her with a love that can never change and can never be indifferent.

The next word I shall give you after this one of personal is painful. "I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." I may be permitted to illustrate this by our Savior's hands. What are these wounds in Your hands, these sacred stigmata, these ensigns of suffering? The engraver's tool was the nail, backed by the hammer. He must be fastened to the cross, that His people might be truly engraved on the palms of His hands. There is much consolation here. We know that what a man has won with great pain, he will keep with great tenacity. Old Jacob valued much that portion which he took out of the hand of the Amorite with the sword and with the bow, and so truly does Christ value that which He has conquered at great expense! Child of God, you cost Christ too much for Him to forget you! He recollects every pang He suffered in Gethsemane, and every groan that He uttered for you upon the cross. The engraving upon His hands brings to His recollection the redemption price which He paid down that you might be set free! Oh, what better ground can you have for believing that Christ remembers you than this—that He loved you and gave Himself for you? Treasure up that thought.

The other word is practical. "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." As much as if God would say, "I can do nothing without remembering My people." If He creates the world, it is with the hand that has His people engraved on it. If He puts forth His hand to uphold all things, that upholding hand upholds His saints. With His left hand He smites the wicked. But He cannot smite His people, for He sees them in the palm of that very hand! All that God does has an eye to His people. When He divided the nations, He divided them according to the number

of the children of Israel. The world stands for their sake—'tis but a stage for the display of His grace to them. And when the number of His elect is accomplished, He will take it all down and put it away. O child of God, the Lord has given you the richest consolation when He tells you He can do nothing without remembering you, for on the hand with which He works, He has stamped your name! Note before I leave this, that it does not say, "I have engraved you on the palm of My hand," but "on the palms of My hands," as if there was a double memorial before the Lord forever. With His right hand He blesses, and His people have a share in that. With His left hand He deals out vengeance, but He sees His people there, and gives no vengeance to them. "His left hand," the hand of His angry power, "is under my head," says the spouse, "and His right hand, the hand of His beneficent love, does embrace me." A left-handed or a right-handed God, He altogether loves us and remembers us on the right hand and on the left. By both His hands, by all His power, He pledges Himself never to forget one of His saints! Oh, this is a rich text! And we trust we shall so handle it as to bring out the juice from the luscious sentences, throw it in the winepress and tread it again and again with active feet—and it shall always yield fresh sweetness—and give forth yet more and more luscious draughts to slake your thirst, if you know but how to use it. Dear, abiding, precious memorial of our crucified Lord, you do charm away our fears! He never can forget us. And now, briefly, not for lack of matter, but for lack of time—

II. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF OUR BEING THUS DAILY REMEMBERED?

Children of God, God remembers you to make you joyful. How runs the text? "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth." The Lord, who thinks of you, will sometimes give you heydays and holidays. You shall not always be in the dark. Do you recollect how John Bunyan describes it, that after Giant Despair's head had been cut off, Mr. Ready-to-halt, Miss Much-afraid, and Miss Despondency, all of them, had a feast? And they had a dance, too, and Mr. Ready-to-halt leaped on his crutches! The very weakest and most limping among God's saints sometimes have their seasons of joys and rejoicing, and so shall you! You daughters of depression, you sons of sorrow, God has engraved you upon the palms of His hands! You have had your evenings, you shall have your mornings—you have had your droughts, you shall have your floods. If God remembers us, we may rest assured that He will provide for all our needs. If the shepherd remembers the sheep, the sheep shall not starve. If the farmer remembers the plant, it will be cared for. God, who is the great husbandman, remembering the plants of His garden, says, "I will water them every moment." If the mother remembers her baby, it is to give it all it needs and lull its griefs to rest. God will give us all we need. Sons of need, you who feel your need, be of good comfort—you are engraved on the palms of Jehovah's hands! We shall not want any good thing if He remembers us, so let us reflect that we shall get chastened some time. A child forgotten of its parent, never feels the rod. I have been comforted sometimes when I have been smarting, to think I was not quite

cast off. The goldsmith will not put a common stone into the furnace—he sets some value on that which he spends his coals upon. If the Lord afflicts you, O heir of heaven, He has not cast you away, be sure of that! The refining that you are undergoing proves that He sets a price upon you. He has taken trouble and care with you. By the furnace, maybe, He will deliver you from your dross and your sin. Oh, to be remembered, even if it is with a blow, is better than to be forgotten and to be left to riot in this world's pleasures! Let me be, my God, only able to know I am Yours by Your rod, sooner than have to live in doubt and fear as to whether I am Yours or not. If God thus remembers us, and we get chastened, we may also know that we shall have consolation in chastening and be delivered in due time out of the trial. If you are engraved on the palms of God's hands, though you should have to lie long and pine on that couch of suffering, He will not forget you!

Oh, my dear young friends, whose pale faces often grieve me when I see you sad, let us look up to God for comfort! Though you are marked for death, He does not forget you! He will cheer those days of growing weakness, and as you get nearer to the grave, you will also get nearer to heaven! Many a poor woman lying in a lone cottage, or dying in a workhouse, has had more joy than some of the princes of earth in all their wealth and pride. Christ never leaves those who are His in the world, but to them He reveals Himself more sweetly than to others! I would like to say to every child of God here, because God remembers you, all that you lose between here and heaven, He will be sure to give you. All you ask for that is right, you shall have, and a great deal you never thought of asking for! You shall have as much sweet and as much bitter. You shall have as much of everything that is good for you, as shall be best, and afterwards you shall have the fullness, you shall have the glory, for, being engraved on the palms of God's hands, He will not forget to bring you home to the place where He is and to appoint you a mansion among His chosen! I wish I could speak more at large on this, but we have hurried over it. Only take it home—chew the cud upon this. It is worth it. Here are subjects for meditation that any thoughtful mind may bring out. If God remembers me, it is all I need. You know that verse we sometimes sing that ends, "This my Father knows; this my Father knows." Oh, yes, your needs, He sees them all! Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things. There is nothing more required to comfort your hearts. If He knows it is good for you, you shall have it! And now to close. Who is it that is—

III. THE OBJECT OF THIS REMEMBRANCE

"I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." "You"—pass it round. Let each one before God, as though he saw Christ upon the judgment throne, ask himself, "Am I engraved upon the palms of Jesus' hands—am I?" It is nothing that His whole Church is there—His Zion. He is immediately thinking of His truly blood-bought, regenerate people—there they are—all there. He has in His eyes the circumstances as He has on His hands the names of many that are greatly afflicted. Notice the connection of the text—it is to the afflicted that He is there speaking. He

says, "The Lord will have mercy on His afflicted"—and He says that their names are on His hands! Don't say, then, that you are not the Lord's because you are afflicted! Because you are low in circumstances, or sick in body, don't conclude, therefore, that you are not in Christ, but rather pray more earnestly than ever that these trials may be greatly sanctified to you! Nor, beloved, don't conclude that you are not Christ's because you feel you are sinful. Observe how the connection runs, "He will have mercy on His afflicted." Now mercy is for sinners. I may be a sinner, but yet engraved on the hands of Christ, for, indeed, all whose names are written there are, by nature, guilty, but they have obtained mercy! The greatness of my past guilt does not prove that I have no interest in Christ. If I have faith in Him; if I come and put my trust in Him, then is my name written on the palms of His hands! But is it so, dear reader? Is it so? Have you trusted Christ or not? Answer, I say again, as though Christ were here upon the throne of His judgment seat. Answer now! Do you rest your soul alone on Jesus Christ? If you do, all that is implied in having yourself imprinted upon the hands of Christ is yours! Take it—enjoy it—be glad. What consolation should this Scripture itself afford! But if you have not believed, touch not these sweet things, but rather say, "Lord, help me to believe tonight!" To believe is but to trust—to rest yourself upon Christ. Watts calls it falling—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind hands I fall."

Here I am leaning on this rail. If this that I lean upon, fails me, down I must go! I have no other support. Lean just like this on Christ! You have seen a fainting person at last throw himself back on another. Do that to Christ—faint away into Christ! Relax all your own power—let it all go. That sham power you think you have, and that merit you think you have, and all the hopes you ever had—let them all go and now drop into Christ's arms! I have heard it said that if a man would only lie still when he falls into the water—lie on his back—he would float. But the tendency is to struggle. Don't struggle, sinner, after righteousness in your own strength—fall back and rest on the infinite love of God in Christ Jesus! 'Tis all you have to do—to leave off doing and let Christ do everything! And when Christ has done that everything, then you shall begin doing again on quite another principle—not with a view to merit, but out of gratitude to Him who saved you! I do pray that some may be saved tonight in this house. Before they go down yonder steps, may some of you look to Jesus. There is life in a look! I cannot help bringing out these simple truths of God often and often, but they are constantly forgotten. Those that were bitten by the serpent in the wilderness had not anything to say, had not anything to feel, had not anything to think of—all they had to do was just to look to the serpent lifted on the pole! And you have nothing to do, or feel, or be, in and of yourself—all you have to do is to look straight away to Christ! There is not any good thing in you. Know that to begin with. You say, "But I am bad." I know you are—you are ten thousand times worse than you think you are! You are bad as you may conceive yourself to be—but worse than that by fifty thousand times! But

your goodness is in Jesus, your hope is in Jesus. Look straight away now to those dear wounds of Jesus! Look straight to Him! And if you perish trusting in Christ, you will be the first sinner that ever perished there! It will be a novelty in hell, and the news will be spread on earth, and even in heaven, that there was a sinner that trusted Christ and then perished! Farewell to the gospel, then! Put away the Bible. We have done with Christ, Himself, if that could be true. But it never can be! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Look, man! Look, woman! Look, child! Whoever you may be, there is life in a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for you! Look, sinner! Look unto Him and be saved! Look unto Jesus, who died on the cross! May God bless you all for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 42:1-17; 43:18-25; ROMANS 10:1-19.

ISAIAH 42:1-17

This book might well be called "the gospel according to Isaiah," for it is full of evangelical truth.

Verse 1. Behold My Servant, whom I uphold: My Elect One, in whom My soul delights: I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Of whom speaks the prophet this, but of the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth? He was upheld by the mighty power of God. He was the Lord's chosen. The Spirit of God rested upon Him and this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears, for He has brought forth righteousness to the Gentiles.

2. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. He shall be no clamorous seeker after applause. He shall not shout as those that seek for the mastery. Now the Savior was quiet, gentle, meek, humble. When He lifted up His voice, it was for God and for the sons of men—not for Himself. He was meek and lowly of heart.

3. A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He will bring forth justice for truth. How exactly these words describe the Lord Jesus! He was so gentle that He did not break or break off the bruised reeds. We read that He did not answer the Scribes and Pharisees. They were so powerless—such bruised reeds in His esteem—such worthless, smoking flax—that He left them alone until, by-and-by, He came to bring forth judgment unto victory. And now the weak, the feeble, the gentle, the poor in spirit shall never find Christ to deal harshly with them. "The bruised reed He will not break: the smoking flax He will not quench."

4. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth and the coastlands shall wait for His law. Oh, what a blessed thing it is that we have a Savior to trust to, who will not fail! And He is one who will never be discouraged. He will carry out the salvation of His people and never give it up as a hopeless case. Poor sinner, if He begins with you, He will not fail nor be discouraged—nor will He even with the

whole earth. He will not take back His hand till surely all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord. He who has undertaken man's redemption is not feeble of spirit and easily baffled. He shall not fail or be discouraged!

5, 6. Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those that walk on it: I, the LORD have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You, and give You for a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles. See what God has made His Son, Jesus Christ? If you want to get a Christ in the covenant of grace, you have only to lay hold on Christ, for Christ is given as a covenant to the people. He is the embodiment of the covenant—the sum and substance of it—the seal of it—the surety of it. He is, indeed, the covenant, itself! And if you want light, you have only to get Christ. He is the light of the world, and here we are told that God has given Him for a light to the Gentiles.

7. To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. Hear this, you melancholy ones, you that are desponding, you that cannot get out of the prison of bad habits, or shake off the chains of sin! Behold a liberator has come—one whose very business it is to open the fast closed cells of sin and set the captives of Satan free!

8, 9. I am the LORD, that is My name: And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them. One great proof of the truth of the deity of Jehovah is that He can foresee and foretell, so that long before events happen, He makes them known. Now Isaiah, by God's Spirit, told the Israelites concerning Christ, hundreds of years before Christ came—and yet the terms are so express that one might almost think that they were written after the event. But does not God know? And is not He God who sees through the mists of ages and looks upon the things that are to be as though they were? Verily He is God!

10, 11. Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it; You coastlands and inhabitants of them! Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains. For the coming of Christ is the coming of music into the world! When He hung upon the cross, there were lighted up new stars to cheer earth's night. No, what if I say that the sun, itself, had risen then to chase away the darkness once and for all? O Lamb of God! Creation made the angels sing, but redemption makes us fallen men sing, for it lifts us up to sit among the angels through Your most precious blood!

12. Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare His praise in the coastlands. Now for His enemies. While God is thus graciously dealing with men, He determines to make an end of the powers of evil.

13. The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war: He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail

against His enemies. Do not imagine that the gods of the heathen will always sit on their thrones or that the powers of anti-Christ will always darken the earth. Ah! no. God will bestir Himself before long.

14. I have held My peace for a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself, Now I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once. Oh, what a time will that be when God comes forth in the splendor of His power to put down all the hosts of evil!

15. I will lay waste the mountains and hills, And dry up all their vegetation; I will make the rivers coastlands, And I will dry up the pools. What a terrible God He is! When He once puts forth His hand for deeds of justice and of vengeance, who can stand before Him? But yet how His mercy walks arm-in-arm with His justice!

16. I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them. Oh, the condescension of God, that even when His right arm is bared for war, and thunder girds His cloudy car, yet still He stoops out of the chariot of wrath to look after poor, blind, helpless souls, and lead them in the way of peace and mercy. But as for His enemies—

17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, who trust in carved images, who say to the molten images, You are our gods.

ISAIAH 43:18-25.

Verses 18, 19. Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. Do not imagine that what God has done in the past will never be repeated! It will be excelled—He will do yet greater things. Of all the mercy and love which God has shown, we may say that these are only prophecies of what He yet will reveal. There are now things yet to come wherein the splendor of His mercy shall be yet more clearly seen than in all the former things!

20, 21. The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. This people have I formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise. However barren may your soul be and however all your surroundings may seem to be stamped with death, God can come and make you happy and blessed and surround you with delights! And He will do it in order that in you, whom He has formed for Himself, His praise may be seen!

22. But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; Prayer has been neglected. Praise has been suspended. There has been an ungracious negligence in the service of God. "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

22. And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. "You thought the service long—thought the time for prayer came around too soon—refused to give to My cause and said it was a tax. You have been weary of Me, O Israel."

23. You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices; I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. "I have not taxed you. I have not drawn upon your resources heavily."

24. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; "I left you to give or not to give, that your free will might be seen in all your deeds of love, but nothing has come of it. On the contrary"

24. But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities. A solemn charge, this, which God lays against His people. Now see the next verse and read it with wondering eyes!

25. I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. He has pointed out the fault. He has shown that He is not forgetful of it. And then He pronounces absolution! The transgression is put away! Blessed be His name! Now let us turn to the New Testament and read in the Epistle to the Romans, the 10th chapter, and we shall there see the way in which pardon is brought home to the soul.

ROMANS 10:1-19.

Verses 1-3. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. A fault—a pitiable and grievous fault—that men should be in earnest and very zealous, and yet nothing should come of it because they spend that zeal in a wrong direction! Men would make themselves righteous. They would come before God in the apparel of their own works, whereas God has already made a righteousness which He freely gives! And for us to try and produce another is to enter into rivalry with God—to insult His Son and do dishonor to His name! May God grant that any here who are very zealous in a wrong direction may receive light and knowledge, and turn their thoughts in the right way.

4, 5. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes of the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." That is the righteousness of the law of God. We are not under that covenant now. We shall never attain to righteousness that way.

6-9. But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'who shall ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "'Who shall descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; (that is, the word of faith, which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. How very simple! No climbing, no diving, no imagining, no long reckoning of the understanding, no strangling of the mental faculties. It

is just believe God's testimony concerning His Son and you shall 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 will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, [Gentile] in this matter.

12, 13. For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This was the old prophecy of Joel. The Jews knew it. It is the new teaching of the gospel. The Gentiles know it. Oh, who would not wish to be in that broad "whoever," that he might find salvation?

14, 15. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? 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, unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" So that, rightly looked upon, the humblest preacher of the gospel stands in the most solemn relationship towards mankind. His Master sends him. He tells His message. Men hear it, believe it and by it are saved! Happy is the messenger! Well may his heart rejoice, even when his soul is heavy, because he has such work to do in his Master's name!

16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" And what Isaiah says, many and many a preacher since has had to say. "Woe, woe to us for this."

17-19. So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." But I say, did Israel not know? Did not the Jewish people have a time of hearing and instruction? Certainly they knew—and they also knew that the gospel was not to be confined to them. They had a warning that it would even be taken from them and sent to other nations.

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"THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS"
NO. 3442

A SERMON
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"And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts."
Haggai 2:7.

THE second temple was never intended to be as magnificent as the first. The first was to be the embodiment of the full glory of the dispensation of symbols and types—and was soon to pass away. This comparative feebleness had been proved by the idolatry and apostasy of the people, Israel. And when they returned to Jerusalem they were to have a structure that would be sufficient for the purposes of their worship, but they were not again to be indulged with the splendors of the former house which God had erected by the hand of Solomon. Had it been God's Providence that a temple equally magnificent as the first should be erected, it might have been very readily accomplished. Cyrus appears to have been obedient to the divine will and to have been a great friend of the Jews, but he expressly, by edict, diminished the length of the walls and gave express command that the walls should never be erected as high as before. We have also evidence that a like decree was made by Darius, an equally great friend of the Jews, who could, with the lifting of his finger, have outdone the glory of Solomon's temple! But in God's Providence it was not arranged that it should be so and, though Herod, not a Jew, and only a Jew by religious pretense to suit his own particular purpose, lavished a good deal of treasure upon the second temple for the pleasure of the nation he ruled, and to gain some favor from them, yet he rather profaned than adorned the temple, since he did not follow the prescribed architecture by which it ought to have been built, and he had not the divine approval upon his labors. No prophet ever commanded, and no prophet ever sanctioned the labors of such a horrible wretch as that Herod! The reason seems to me to be this—in the second temple, during the time it should stand, the dispensation of Christ was softly melted into the light of spiritual truth. The outward worship was to cease there. It seems right that it should cease in a temple that had not the external glory of the first. God intended there to light up the first beams of the spiritual splendor of the second temple, namely, His true temple, the Church, and he would put a sign of decay on the outward and visible in the temple of the first. Yet He declares by His servant, Haggai, that the glory of the second temple should be greater than the first.

It certainly was not so as in respect of gold, or silver, or size, or excellence of architecture—and yet it truly was so, for the glory of the

presence of Christ was greater than all the glory of the old temple's wealth! And the glory of having the gospel preached in it, the glory of having the gospel miracles worked in its porches by the apostles and by the Master was far greater than any hecatombs of bullocks and he-goats—the glory of being, as it were, the cradle of the Christian Church—the nest out of which should fly the messengers of peace, who, like doves, should bear the olive branch throughout the world. I take it that the decadence of the old system of symbols was a most fitting preparation for the incoming of the system of grace and truth in the person of Jesus Christ! And the second temple has this glory which excels—that while the first was the glory of the moon in its entire splendor, the second is the moon going down—the sun is rising beyond her, gilding the horizon with the first beams at the morning!

I intend to speak to you at this time about *the true spiritual temple;* the true second temple, the spiritual temple, which, I think, is here spoken of—although the second temple, literally, is also intended—*the true spiritual temple built up, according to the text, as the desire of all nations.*

I find this passage a very difficult one in the original—it bears several meanings in itself. The first meaning that I give you, though it runs contrary to the great majority of Christian expositors, is the most accurate explanation of the original. We shall bring in the other explanations by-and-by. Reading it thus, "I will shake all nations," and the desire—the desirable persons, the best part, or as the Septuagint reads it, the *elect* of all nations—shall come. They shall come—the true temple of God, and they shall be the living stones that shall compose it, or, as others read it, "The desirable *things* of all nations shall come," which is, no doubt, the meaning, because the eighth verse gives the key—"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the LORD of hosts." The desirable things of all nations are to be brought in as voluntary offerings to this true second temple, this spiritual living temple.

Let us begin, then, and take that sense, first. And in this case we are told, in the text concerning this second temple, what these living stones are—

I. THE HISTORICAL DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME.

The choice men, the pick, the best of all men shall come and constitute the true temple of God. Not the kings and princes, not the great and noble after the flesh—these are but the choice of men after the manner of man's choice—but not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen and called! But still, those whom God chooses must be the choice ones of mankind. They will not claim to be so by nature—on the contrary, they will repudiate any idea of any natural goodness in themselves. But God sees them as what they are to be, as what He intends them to be, as what He makes them to be and in this respect they are the desire, they are the choice of all nations! To God, His people are His royal treasure, His secret jewels, the treasury of kings—they are very precious in His sight. Their very death is precious. He keeps record of their bones and will raise their dust at the last day. If the nation did but know it, the saints in a nation are the aristocrats of that nation. Those who fear God are the very soul, marrow, and backbone of a nation.

For their sakes God has preserved many a nation. For their sakes He gives unnumbered blessings. "You are the salt of the earth"—the earth were putrid without them. "You are the light of the world"—the world would be dark without them. They are the desire, I say, though often the world treats them with contempt and would cast them out. It has always been thus with the blind world—to treat its best friends worst—and its worst enemies often receive the most royal entertainment. Now what a joy it is to us to think that God has been pleased to make unto Himself a people according to His own sovereign will and good pleasure and that He has made these to be the desirable ones out of all nations—that with these choice and elect ones He will build up His Church!

But the text not only tells us of the stones, but of the remarkable mode of architecture. "The desire of all nations shall come"—*they shall be brought together*. Human means shall be used to bring each one to its place, to excavate each one from its quarry. And while it is God who speaks, He speaks like God, for He uses "shalls" and "wills" most freely, and according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus, before the earth was, so shall the fulfillment be. We who preach the gospel may preach with devout assurance of success. The desire of all nations *shall* come! Out of this congregation the truly desirable ones shall come to Christ. Out of the soil in which the sower sowed—the honest and good ground—is brought forth the harvest. Out of the nations, though they reject Christ and continue in their idolatry, yet there are some choice spirits who come—some whom the Lord looks upon with great delight—and these *shall* come. We do not labor in vain; neither do we spend our strength for nothing. We fall back upon the doctrine of divine working and divine choice for consolation—certainly not for an excuse for indolence, but for consolation when we have done our best, that God is glorified in the end, "the desire of all nations shall come."

And if you will notice in the whole text, it appears that *they do not come without much shaking*. In one sense, no man comes to God with compulsion. And in another sense, no man comes without compulsion. You see two boxes opened. There are two ways of opening them. You see one box wrenched— evidently there has been used rough means. Who opened it? A thief. God never opens men's hearts in that way! You see another box open—no sign of damage, no sign of any particular labor. Who opened it? The person who had the key—probably the owner. Hearts belong to God and He has the keys and opens them—sweetly opens them. And yet, though no force is used, that puts aside the positive, free agency of man which God interferes not with, yet there is a spiritual force which may well be described as a shaking. It is only when the tree of the nation has a thorough shaking, that at last the prime, ripe fruit will drop down into the great Master's lap! He shakes by Providence, by the movement of the human conscience. He shakes by the impulses of His Holy Spirit. He shakes the spirit and as the result, the desirable persons out of all the nations are brought to Himself. Stones that He would have come at last out of the quarry, and He builds them up into a temple.

And now observe that these persons, according to another rendering of the text, *when they come to build up the Church they always bring their desire with them*—they bring with them the most desirable thing. The desirable things of all nations shall give the silver, and the gold, and so on. He that comes to Christ brings with him all he has—and he who has left his true substance behind him has not come to Christ. What, now, is the desire of all the nations when hearts are renewed? Well, silver and gold will always be desirable, and men who give their hearts to Christ will bring what they have of that to Christ. But the most desirable things of manhood are not metals—are they dirt, mere dross, hard materialisms? No, the desirable things of manhood are things of the soul, the heart, the spirit! And into the temple, the great second temple, there shall come, not merely masses of gold and silver that can adorn with outward splendor, but also love, and faith, and holy virtue—more priceless than gems, far richer in value than rarest mines! Oh, what a sight the Church of God is when holy angels look upon it! We hear of some of the first Spanish invaders going into the temple of Peru and seeing floors, roofs and walls made of slabs of gold—and standing astonished! But oh, in the Church there are slabs of faith on the floor of that great temple, and walls of love of Christian self-sacrifice, and roofs of holy joy and Christian consolation! It is a temple that makes spiritual eyes flash with gladness! What care they for the splendor of kings and princess? But they care much for the true, desirable things of nations—holy emotions, holy desires, ascriptions of gratitude and devout acts of service for the Lord God! Oh, how glorious is the second temple, then, when the desirable men come to it and bring with them all the desirable things to make it glorious in the sight of God!

And then *this temple, thus built and thus adorned, will continue*. The text implies that, "I will shake all nations." The apostle says that this signifies the things that can be shaken—that the things that cannot be shaken will remain—and that the desire of all nations must be put down as a thing that cannot be shaken. The Church, then, shall never be shaken, and the precious things that the Church gives to her God shall not be shaken! Time will change many things. Great princes will be considered mere beggars, by-and-by, in the esteem of men who know how to judge by character. Great men will shrivel into very small things—when they come to be tried, even by posterity. And the judgment day—ah, how will that try the great ones of this earth! But the Christian Church—the very gates of hell shall not prevail against her! Time shall not be able so much as to chip one of her polished stones. Her treasures of faith, and what not, the rich things that God has given her—these things shall never be stolen—they can never be shaken! And then the crown of all is, "I will fill this house with My glory, says the Lord." This is the reason, the great charm of it all! God Himself dwells, as He dwells nowhere else, in His glory. The Church, which we think two, and call militant and triumphant, is but one, after all, and God dwells in it! Oh, if we had but eyes to see it, the glory of God on earth is not much less than the glory of God in heaven, for the glory of a king in peace is one thing, but the glory of a conqueror in war is another thing, though I know

which I prefer. Yet if I transfer the figure, I have no preference between the glory of the God of peace in the midst of His obedient servants in His ivory palaces, and the glory of the Lord of Hosts in the thick of this heavenly war, as He conflicts with human evil and brings forth glory to His saints out of all the mischief that Satan seeks to do to His throne and to His scepter. God is known in the Jerusalem below, as well as in the Jerusalem above. "The Lord is in the midst of her." Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. God is in the midst of her—she shall not be moved. And though the kings gather together for her destruction, yet His presence is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God! Yes, glorious things may well be spoken of Zion when we have such stones as precious men, such gifts as precious graces, such abiding character as God gives, and such a presence as the presence of God Himself! But now, in the next place, if we take the other rendering of the text—

II. THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL SECOND TEMPLE IS ACTUALLY THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

"I will shake all nations," and He who is the desire of all nations shall come—a rendering which is not incorrect, and is established by a great mass of theologians, though, according to some of the ablest critics, a rendering scarcely to be sustained by the original. He who is the desire of all nations shall come, and that shall be the glory of the second spiritual temple! Jesus Christ, then, is the desire of all nations, if so we read the text, and this is doubtless true. *All nations have a dark and dim desire for Him*. I say a *dark* desire, for without that adjective I could scarcely speak the truth. Most interesting chapters have been written by students of the history of mankind upon the preparedness of men's hearts for the coming of Christ at His incarnation. It is very certain that almost all nations have a tradition of the coming one. The Jews, of course, expected the Messiah. There were persons instructed according to the culture of various nations, which, though they do not expect the Messiah quite as clearly as the Jews, had almost as shrewd a guess as to what He might be and do as the mere ritualistic and Pharisaic Jews had. There was a notion all over the world at that time of Christ's coming, that some great one was to descend from heaven and to come into this world for this world's good. He was in that respect darkly and dimly the desire of all nations. But in all nations there have been some persons more instructed to whom Christ has really been the object of desire with much more intelligence. Job was a Gentile and a fearer of God. We have no reason to believe that Job was a solitary specimen of enlightened persons—we have reason, rather, to hope that in all countries all over the world God has had a chosen people who have known and feared Him, who have not had all the light of God which has been given to us, but who better used what light they had and were guided by His secret Spirit to much more of light, perhaps, than we think it right, with our little knowledge, to credit them with!

These, then, as representatives of all the nations, were desiring the coming of the great Deliverer, the incarnate God; and in this sense,

representatively, the whole of the world was desiring Christ in that higher sense—and He was the desire of all nations. But, my brothers and sisters, does this mean, or does it not mean, that Christ is exactly what all the nations need? If they did but know, if they could but understand Him, He is just what they would desire and should desire! Were their reason taught rightly, and were their minds instructed by the Spirit to desire the best in all the world, Christ is just what they need! *The entire world desires a way to God.* Hence men set up priests and anoint them with oil, and smear them with I know not what, only that *they* may be mediators between them and God! They must have something to come between their guilt and God's glorious holiness. Oh, if they knew it, what they need is Christ! You need no other priest, but the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession!" You need no mediator with God, but the one Mediator, the man, Christ Jesus, who is also equal with God. Oh, world, why will you go about to seek this priest and that other deceiver, when He whom you need is appointed by the Most High? He whom Jacob saw in his dream as the ladder which reached from earth to heaven is the only means—the Son of Man and yet the Son of God! *The world wants a peacemaker*. Oh, how badly it wants it now! I seem, as I walk my garden, as I go to my pulpit, as I go to my bed, to hear the distant cries and moans of wounded and dying men. We are so familiarized each day with horrible details of slaughter, that if we give our minds to the thought, I am sure we must feel a nausea, a perpetual sickness creeping over us! The reek and steam of those murderous fields, the smell of the warm blood of men flowing out on the soil must come to us and vex our spirits. Earth needs a peacemaker and it is He, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, and the friend of Gentiles, the Prince of Peace, who will make war to cease unto the ends of the earth!

Man needs a purifier. Very many nations feel, somehow or other, that political affairs do not go as one could wish. There are great excellences in personal government, but great disadvantages. There are great excellences in republican government, but remarkable difficulties, too. There are supreme excellences, as we think, in our own form of government, but a great many things to be amended, for all that. And this world is altogether out of joint—it is a crazy old concern, and does not seem as if it could be amended with all the tinkering of our reformers in the lapse of years. The fact is, it needs the Maker, who made it, to come in and make it right! It needs the Hercules that is to turn the stream right through the Augean stable. It needs the Christ of God to turn the stream of His atoning sacrifice right through the whole earth, to sweep away the whole filth of ages! And it never will be done unless He does it. He is the one, the true Reformer, the true rectifier of all wrong and, in this respect, the desire of all nations! Oh, if the world could gather up all her right desires. If she could condense in one cry all her wild wishes. If all true lovers of mankind could condense their theories and extract the true wine of wisdom from them, it would just come to this—we need an Incarnate God and we have got the Incarnate God! Oh, nations, but you know it not! You, in the dark, are groping after Him and know not that He is there!

Brothers and sisters, I may add Christ is certainly the desire of all nations in this respect, that *we desire Him for all nations*. Oh, that the world were encompassed in His gospel! Would God the sacred fire would run along the ground that the little handful of corn on the top of the mountains would soon make its fruit to shake like Lebanon. Oh, when will it come, when will it come that all the nations shall know Him? Let us pray for it! Let us labor for it!

And one other meaning I may give to this—He is the desirable one of all nations, bringing back the former translation of this text. *He is the choice one of all nations*. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. He, whom we love, is such an one that He can never be matched by another. His rival could not be found among the sons of men. There is none like He! There is none like He among the angels of light! There is none that can stand in comparison with Him. The desire, the one that ought to be desired, the most desirable of all the nations is Jesus Christ, and it is the glory of the Christian Church, which is the second temple, that Christ is in her, her head, her Lord! It is never her glory that she condescends to make an iniquitous union with the State. It is her glory that Christ is her sole King. It is her glory that He is her sole Prophet, He is her sole Priest, and that He then gives to all His people to be kings and priests with Him, Himself the center and source of all their glory and their power!

I cannot stay longer, though the theme tempts me, but must just give you the last word, which is this, *the visible glory of the true second temple will be Christ's second coming.* He, Himself, is her glory, whether at His first coming, or at His second coming. The Church will be no more glorious at the second coming than now. "What?" you ask, "no more glorious?" No, but more *apparently* glorious. Christ is as glorious on the cross as He is on the throne—it is only the appearance that shall alter. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, but they evermore are brightness, itself, in the person of Jesus Christ." Now, brothers and sisters, we are to expect, as long as this world lasts that all things will shake that are to be moved. They will go on shaking. We call the world sometimes "terra firma"—it is not this world, surely, that deserves such a name as that—there is nothing stable beneath the stars! All things else will shake, and as the shaking goes on, Jesus Christ will, to those who know Him, become more and more their desire! I suppose if the world went on, in some things mending and improving, and were to go up to a point, we would not want Christ to come in a hurry, we would rather that things should be perpetuated—but the shaking will make Christ more and more the desire of the nations. "The whole creation groans," is groaning up to now, but it will groan more and more "in pain together travailing"—the apostle says—"even until now." The travailing pains grow worse and worse, and worse, and it will be so with this world—it will travail till, at last, it must come to the consummation of her desire! The Church will say, "Come, Lord Jesus." She will say it with gathering earnestness. She will continue to say it, though there are intervals in which she will forget her Lord, but

still her heart's desire will be that He will come. And at last *He will surely come and bring to this world not only Himself, the desire of all nations, but all that can be desired*, for those days of His, when He appears, shall be to His people as the days of heaven upon earth, the days of their honor, the days of their rest—the day in which the kingdoms shall belong unto Christ!

Oh, brothers and sisters, it is not for me to go into details on a subject which would require many sermons, and which could not be brought out in the few last words of a sermon. But here is the great hope of that splendid building, the Church, which is desired. Her glory essentially lies in the Incarnate God who has come into her midst. Her glory manifestly will lie in the second coming of that Incarnate God, when He shall be revealed from heaven to those that look and are waiting for the coming of the Son of God—looking for Him with gladsome expectation! And this is the joy of the Church. He has gone, but He has left word, "I will come again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, you may be also." Remember the words that were spoken by the angels to the Church, "You men of Galilee, why stand you here, gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is gone up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go up into heaven." In *propria persona*—in very deed and truth, He shall come!—

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

Then shall come the adoption, the raising of the body, the reception of a glory to that body reunited to the soul, such as we have not dreamed of, for eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them who love Him! Though He has revealed them unto us by His Holy Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God, yet have our ears heard but little thereof, and we have not received the full discovery of the things that shall be hereafter. The Lord bless you! May you all be parts of His Church, have a share in His glory, and a share in the manifestation of that glory at the last.

Dear hearer, I would send you away with this one query in your ear—Is Christ your desire? Could you say, with David, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire"? Could you gather up your feet in the bed, with dying Jacob, and say, "I have waited for Your will, O God"? By your desire shall you be known! The desire of the righteous shall be granted! Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desire of your heart!

But the desire of many is a groveling desire! It is a sinful desire! It is a disgraceful desire—a desire which, if it is attained, the attainment of it will afford very brief pleasure. Oh, sinner let your desires go after Christ! Remember if you would have Him, you have not to *earn* Him—not to fight for Him—not to win Him—*He is to be had for the asking!* "Lay hold," says the apostle, "on eternal life." As if it would be ours, if we did but grip it! God give us grace to lay hold on eternal life, for Jesus from the cross is saying, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!" And from His throne of glory He is still saying, "Come unto Me," exalted on

high, "to give repentance and remission of sin," and He will give them both to those who seek Him. Seek Him, then, this night! God grant it for His Son's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HAGGAI 1-2:1-9; HEBREWS 7:15-28.

The subject is the building of the second temple. The people had been busily employed in building their own houses—some of them had gone to great expense and much labor upon these houses, but they had not built the temple of God. The prophet Haggai was sent to incite them to holy labor.

Verse 1, 2. *In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, This people says, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.* A bad excuse is thought to be better than none. These people would not object to the building of the Lord's house, but they were willing to postpone so expensive a matter. There are always some persons who will not say that they decline self-sacrifice for Christ—that were more honest than it were reasonable to expect from them, and honesty might cost their feelings too much, but they have some other reason or pretense of reason—"The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built." Men are generally quick enough for anything that is for their own interest. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." We must catch time by the forelock. Oh, if we had the same desire in the work and service of God—if we had the same desire—we should have the same promptitude to do our task. "The time is not come"—the time that the Lord's house should be built.

3, 4. *Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your paneled houses, and this house to lie waste?* They had wainscoted their houses with cedar and odoriferous wood, decorated them with carvings, whereas the plainest edifices would have sufficed. God will allow them to build their own house for necessary dwelling, but next to that should certainty come His house, before they took to decorating their own. "Is it time for you to do this?" And, indeed, it may well be said to many a wealthy man, "It does not appear to you to be time to aid foreign missions, but it does seem to you to be time to put another thousand pounds in bonds. It does not seem time for you to help the Bible Society, but it seems to be time to make another investment, and purchase another estate that adjoins your own." "Is it time for you, oh, you, to dwell in your paneled houses?"

5, 6. *Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourself, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes.* Those people did not prosper—they were very prudent after a

worldly sort, but somehow they did not get on. No, it is not what we do so much as God's prospering us that will make us really succeed! It is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. God must give us prosperity and He often withholds this where He sees it is not right. A man will not trust a bad steward, and though God has trusted many and many a bad steward for wise reasons, yet among His own people He often gives chastisements and deprives them of worldly comfort when they use not what they have for His service. I think I have heard some people say that ministers never ought to talk about money in the pulpit. The prophet Haggai did, however, and it is because ministers say so little about the consecration of their substance to God's cause that this most important part of true piety is often treated with levity—and with some even by disgust! No, brothers and sisters, we must speak often. The great sin of the Christian Church is withholding from God. Now is it the same sin as in the days of Haggai! "Thus says the LORD of hosts, consider your ways." If you considered your ways, you would see that you have been losers by your attempts to gain. Consider your ways practically by changing them!

7, 8. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountains, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the LORD.* That should be the great objective that we should aim at in all we do—that God may be glorified—that God may take pleasure in it! It does not matter who we please if God is not pleased, nor who gets honor from what we give, if God is not glorified thereby.

9. *You looked for much, and, lo it came to little.* It vanished—the breeze was so strong that the unconsecrated substance went away like chaff.

9-11. *I did blow upon it. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because of My house that is waste, and you run, every man, unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands.* Men make an inventory—itemize so many cattle, itemize so much corn, itemize so much wine. God can itemize, too, and He can curse all our blessings, one by one! This catalog looks like it. If they have saved in all these, robbing God, God will take care that they shall get nothing by their doing!

12. *Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.* There is good bottom in those men who are led to duty when they are reminded of neglect—and it is blessed work preaching where there is a conscience quick to accede to the admonition. I do not suppose it was so with all the people of Jerusalem, but it was with some of them, and those the leading men. Where high priests and men of authority lead the way, others, if not so prompt, are often guided by the principle of imitation—and they follow the leader.

13. *Then spoke Haggai, the LORD'S messenger, the LORD'S message unto the people, saying. I am with you, says the LORD.* Here was the best cheer for them. They had engaged in God's business and God would be with them!

14, 15. *And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work on the house of the LORD of hosts their God. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.* Notice that date—the 24th day of the sixth month.

HAGGAI 2:1-9.

Verse 1. *In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month.*— Not very long after.

2, 3. *Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?* It appears that the spirit of idleness had broken out again. As the walls began to rise, the older men wept at the recollection of what an inferior structure it would be, compared with the former building of Solomon, and the idlers, ready enough to use any excuse, are ready enough to cease work. Therefore God's prophet is at it again! If the fire begins to die out, the bellows must be used again! The zeal of the Christian is very much like the zeal of these men of Jerusalem—very apt to flag—and the zeal of God's messenger must come to stir them up again.

5, 6. *According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you: fear you not. For thus says the LORD of hosts, Once more, (it is a little while)*—Though as some read it, it is "but a little structure," but our reading is, perhaps, better—it is a little while.

6-9. *And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the LORD of hosts.* Clearly encouraging them to proceed with their work.

HEBREWS 7:15-28.

15-18. *And it is yet far more evident, if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For He testifies, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.* The old Levitical law is disannulled—it became

weak and unprofitable—and now a higher and better dispensation is ushered in with a greater and undying priesthood.

19. *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw near unto God.* That is all the law did—it was a steppingstone towards something better. "By which we draw near unto God." "The Lord has sworn and will not repent."

20-24. *And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, the LORD swore and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek). By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better Testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.* I think they reckoned that there were 83 high priests in regular succession from Aaron to the death of Phineas, the last high priest at the siege of Jerusalem. One succeeded another, but this one goes on continually, He forever has an untransferable priesthood. That word, "untransferable," is nearer to the meaning than this, "unchangeable." If any of you have old Bibles with the margin, you will see, "has a priesthood which cannot be passed from one hand to another," and the margin happens, in this case, to have the true rendering, "This man has an untransferable priesthood."

25. *Therefore He is also able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.* We need just that high priest who would live on forever throughout all the ages to sustain His people, and do for them all they should need to have done for them, until time should be no more.

26-28. *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who needs not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: but this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law makes men high priests which have weaknesses; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, makes the Son, who is consecrated forevermore.* There is our joy!

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SEEING JESUS
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"Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me."
John 14:19.

WHATEVER religious privileges men of the world may have, they will lose them. It was a great favor to see Christ in the flesh. Kings and prophets had desired to see His day and had died disappointed because He had not come, but that sight of Him which the generation in which Christ lived enjoyed was taken from them. They were none the better and, in some respects, they were all the worse for having seen Him, whose blood was on them and on their children. So, as a general truth, all the outward religious privileges which any of you may enjoy, if you do not become *spiritual* men and are not, indeed, Christ's disciples, will be taken from you, speedily taken from you, leaving no blessing behind, but rather a curse! You are hearers of the gospel today, some of you, though unconverted—but you shall not always hear it. There is a land where Sabbath bells never ring, where the joyful feet of the messengers of mercy are never seen, and where no loving expostulations and no affectionate entreaties will be addressed to you! Now you join in song with God's people but you will not do so soon—another sound, more strange and full of trembling—will be in your ears! Some of you, it may be, unconverted as you are, even venture to touch the ordinances and have been baptized and have come to the Lord's Table. There will be another baptism for you and you will eat bread at a far different table from that of the Lord, by-and-by, for unless you are converted, these, instead of being means of grace, shall be swift messengers against you to your condemnation! It is a very sorrowful case when a man is so bad that that which is good becomes bad to him, and a fearful proof of the fall of our race and the depravity of our unregenerate nature—that even the best religious privileges will only become a savor of death unto death unto us unless the grace of God shall change our hearts!

Note, then, that as the text says that the world which saw Christ should soon see Him no more, so it teaches us that there are many outward privileges in religion that even worldly people enjoy that they shall soon enjoy no more, for, as they would not have the inward spiritual grace, they shall not forever have the outward and visible sign to tread beneath their feet! As they would not receive the grace of God

into their hearts in the power of it, so shall the very offers of love and the outward ministrations of mercy be withdrawn from them!

With that black foil, the gem of our text may shine the brighter. "But you see Me"—you, My people; you that have believed; you who, by grace, have received the new nature. You who have passed from death unto life—when the world sees Christ no more, you shall see Him in His glory! And even now, while a blind world beholds Him not, you are enjoying a sight of Him. Our first word tonight, after this preface, shall be—

I. SPIRITUAL DIFFERENCES.

The world sees Him no more, but you see Him. The difference lies in the kind of sight. The world's sight of Christ, in the first place, *was only a sight to the eyes* and, consequently, the moment Christ was gone out of this world, the world saw Him no more. But when He was gone, there were others who had seen Him with a different sight, which was not affected by His corporeal absence—they continued to see because their seeing had been something other than the sight of the eyes. Now, when Jesus Christ was here upon earth, all that an ungodly man saw of Christ was His outward form—as some think incomparably beautiful, and so I suppose it was at the first. So perfect a spirit must surely have been enshrined within a matchless, outward form! I can conceive Him to have been full of grace, even in the common sense of that term, as well as in its higher meaning. But in later years, such were the griefs of His heart that we know that He appeared to be older than He was, for the Jews said, "You are not yet fifty years old," when He was but a little more than thirty. Such was the decay, probably, such the emaciation that grief brought upon Him that He had no form or comeliness, and when men looked upon Him they saw Him as the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief. Whatever the outward form may have been, it was certainly all that the ungodly man saw, all that the Pharisee saw, all that Pilate saw, all that Herod saw—just that outward form. They did not, therefore, see the real Christ of God at all, and in proof that they did not see Him, we find that some of them could only see in Him an impostor, who pretended to be what He was not. Others could only see in Him an ordinary prophet, a remarkable man, but still one of the common of prophets, and no more. They could not see in Him what His disciples saw, namely, His glorious inward character, and the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Now, you do not know a man because you happen to know the color of his eyes, the peculiar curl of his hair, or what kind of features he may possess. You know a man better when you have lived with him, when you know his spirit, when you have traced his virtues, when you have read his secrets. That is the man. The spirit is the man. The body is, after all, but the shrine in which the spirit dwells. The world saw Christ only as to His outward form—and when He was gone they saw Him no more in that respect. But His disciples had seen His inward nature. Some of them had seen what flesh and blood could not reveal to them—

they had been made to see, by having their eyes spiritually anointed with heavenly eye-salves and, consequently, when Christ was gone from their natural sight, they continued to see—and I venture to say they saw more clearly than they had done before, for now, when He was taken up from them, they began to read what He had said to them with greater understanding! They began to see some of His actions in a different light—and much that they did not understand at one time when He was with them, because they could not bear it, they began to understand now that He was gone because His Spirit revealed it—their understandings being capable of receiving the deeper truth. They saw the better for His absence, while the world saw not at all!

Beloved friend, I shall ask you, before I pass on—have you ever had such a sight of Jesus Christ? No, I do not mean, did you ever *dream* you saw Him? I do not mean, did you ever think you saw a vision? I do not care whether you have or have not. If you saw the devil, that would not send you to hell—and if you saw Christ, it would not send you to heaven. But have you ever had that *spiritual* sight of Him which has made you to understand His character? Have you ever seen Him as the Christ of God, the God-man, the Only Begotten, the Well-beloved, the Savior, the King of your spirit? Have you so seen Him as to be subdued by the sight and to be at once enlisted in His service? Oh! this is the sight which He gives to His own people, the sight which saves, the sight of which He speaks when He says, "The world sees Me no more, but you see Me"—the difference between the sight of the eyes and the sight of the inner man!

We have a sight of Christ, further, which not only lasts when Christ is gone, *but which lasts when our eyes are gone*. The world can only see while the eye endures. If the eye should by any means be filmed, or if especially the eye and all the powers of the body should be smitten by death, then there would be to the world no sight of Christ. But in our case our sight of Jesus Christ is one which has been known to be even brightened by the eyes being quenched—a sight which grows more and more clear as the flesh decays, a sight which will be clearest of all when we have done with eyes altogether, when we shall be in the disembodied and spiritual state—then shall we see the King in His beauty to perfection and though, after a while there shall be added to that sight a corporeal sight, when the body shall rise again from the grave, yet meanwhile our sight is such that if our eyes were taken away from us, we thank God it would not dim our sight of Christ one bit! There are some in this place, tonight, whom I remember with affectionate regard, who have not seen the light of the sun for many years, and yet their eyes see the face of Christ almost always, for their love to Christ is so fervent and the communion they have with Christ is so constant that the loss of their eyes seems to be, in their case, almost a privilege! They see the better because that drop screen has crossed the optic glass and shut them out from the world. Yes, and if any of us should be overtaken by the gradual

closing of the eyes, heavy as such an affliction must be, we thank God we shall still be able to see Him! And when the eye-strings break in death, then, even then, shall we see Him! And while we lie pining there, and friends think us shut out from everything that is happy, we shall but consider ourselves shut in, waiting for the full appearing of the Lord our Savior! The sight, then, which God gives to His people, is a sight which is not dependent upon Christ's bodily Presence, and is not dependent, in the next place, upon our bodily eyes!

On this matter of spiritual differences we remark, next, that the sight which is here meant is *one which is an available thing when everything else goes to the contrary*. When everything prospers with a man of the world, even he sees, and says, "Perhaps God is here." If he is an outwardly religious man, though not inwardly so, if he mingles in a congregation where there is some degree of religious excitement, if his own mind is gratified, he will say he thinks Christ is there. But the child of God can see Jesus Christ where nobody else can, namely, in the midst of the storm and the tempest, where everything threatens present destruction! The believer hears Him say, "It is I," and sees Him walking upon the waves—sees Him not only in exciting religious meetings, but in the quiet of solitude. Worldlings in solitude see nothing, have no holy thoughts—but there the Christian perceives Jesus, and if that solitude is attended with much of trial, and temptation, and inward sorrow, and distress, yet faith is fully at work and the believer looks through every mist and cloud, and still sees Jesus, according to His promise—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is a poor faith that can only see Christ in the sunlight. It is a brave faith that sees Him at midnight. It is poor faith that believes that Jesus is there when all prospers, but it is right faith that knows He is there when nothing prospers except faith, which prospers most when tried. It is glorious to be able to read God's Word sometimes backwards—not to believe that His hard messages mean unkindness, but to understand that there is love in every stroke of the rod, eternal love in every hard word that falls from the Savior's lips. Faith, then, not only sees Jesus when He is corporeally absent, and sees Him without corporeal eyes, but sees Him when to sense it seems quite impossible that Jesus should be there! Note these differences, and let us pass on. Now we have here—

II. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

I shall ask you, brothers and sisters, now quietly to look into yourselves to see whether you have the spiritual discernment we shall now speak of. We see Him. We see Him, first, with a trust which hangs all its confidence upon Him. The world does not see Christ as the great foundation stone of its hope. It sees its own works. It hopes in ceremonies and in outward forms. But we see Him. Whenever our faith looks abroad, she sees nothing but Jesus. "No man, but Jesus only." On that dear cross my soul hangs all her confidence—not a rag anywhere else!—

"All my trust on You is stayed,
All my help from You I bring."

This is an essential mark of a Christian, that he sees Jesus with the simple faith that relies alone upon Him. Dear hearer, do you in this respect see Jesus? If so, rest assured that where He is in His glory, you shall shortly be! There is life in that look! There is more than life present—there is life eternal in a look at Him! I hope you are not among those who say, "I did look to Jesus once." No, we still see Him. The life of our faith dwells in a perpetual life-look at Christ! We do not say that we have seen Him and then we have withdrawn our glance, but we continue still to look. Our faith does not depend on something done in the past in us, but on that finished work which abides still for us, and to which we look day by day. We see Him with the look of a simple faith.

We see Him, next, *with the look of a reverent worship*. Where is He tonight, Christian, do you think? He is yonder as to His body—He is yonder at the right hand of the Father! I will not try to use my imagination to picture Him there in that supernal splendor which far outshines the lamps of heaven, otherwise we might so speak of Him that you might seem to hear Him pleading, now, for you, and see Him wearing your names engraved on the jewels of His breastplate, displayed before the Father's face for you at this hour. But though we will not thus picture Him, yet we see Him there by faith, and our soul bows and worships! All hail! All hail! Immanuel, Son of Mary and Son of God! Man and God, we worship You with all our hearts! Had we crowns, we would cast them at Your feet, but as these are not ours as yet, we bring You our songs, and our prayers, and our hearts' love. And here, tonight, in the assembly of Your saints, we look at You and we worship You!

Now, I am conscious in my own heart, tonight, of a clearer sight of Christ than the sight which I take of you sitting in your pews. As I see you in your pews, I do but glance upon the flesh in which you live. As for what you really may be, I cannot see you. Your thoughts and your feelings are all unseen of me. But when I look at Christ, tonight, though I cannot see His flesh, nor behold His scars, nor all the glory of His risen body, yet I can see Him, for I know what He is thinking of, I know what He is feeling, I know what He is looking for, I know what His heart is bent on. He is full of love to His people! He is thinking of their interests! He is pleading for us! He is working for us as an intercessor before the throne of God! We see Him with the glance of reverent adoration, then, and see Him clearly, too!

Again, we see the Lord Jesus Christ tonight—I trust we do—with the eye of sanctified obedience. We believe that He is here. We believe that when we go to our homes He will be with us in spirit. That when we go to our business or to our work tomorrow morning, He will still be with us. Now we could not sin in His presence as other men sin. We dare not plunge into the common customs of the world. We could not use the world's talk. We would not yield to its maxims, and why? Because Jesus

is there and a sense of His presence is always a check to us against temptation, and oftentimes it is not only a negative force, but a sense of His presence compels us to serve Him as best we may! I wish we saw Jesus more usually in this sense, and yet, my brothers and sisters, I hope some of us do, as a general rule, see Him daily thus, as though He were overshadowing us. I know I often do when I am sitting and thinking of what I shall say to you, and I start, as though I could look up and see Him looking down on me. And as I am walking by the way it often happens that I almost seem to check myself as though I heard His footsteps at my side. I know it cannot be, but I am conscious of His presence, conscious that He talks with me and I with Him. Is it so with you? I know it is with many of you. Oh, cherish this more! Some of us lose His presence by the week or the month together, and it is very sad, sorely sad, to be living in such a world as this, far off from Christ. Oh, sheep, you cannot afford to be so far off from the Shepherd when the wolf is so near! Child, you cannot afford to be so far away from your Elder Brother when the pestilence is walking in darkness and the arrows are flying by day, and none but He can shield you! Oh, try to get into the fullness of this thought—we see Him, not only up there, reverently to be worshiped, but here to be worshiped by our feeling the restraints and the constraints of His presence, feeling with regard to Him as Hagar did with regard to Jehovah in the wilderness when she said, "You God see me"—You Christ see me. You Crucified One, You are with me. You exalted Lord, I tread in Your footsteps. How can I consent to sin when You are so near me? Still we see Him!

We see Him further, dear friends, oftentimes with a trust which consoles us in hours of difficulty. Mark what I mean here. Oftentimes the servant of God, when he sees how ill things go in the world, and especially in the religious world, is apt to think that Jesus is not there. Indeed, it needs a great deal of faith to see Jesus when things are sluggish in the church, when there are ministers who do not seem to care about souls being saved, when there are churches that fall asleep, and when the world seems to grow more wicked, more lascivious in its amusements and more blatant in its atheistic blasphemy! But faith learns to know that Jesus is still here, that He cannot be away from the army. He is the Prince and He is concerned in the victory. He cannot be away. The whole of what goes on in the world is still under His direction and His control. Life has not put away the keys, blessed be His name! Nor has He left them to the devil, but they are at His belt. There they hang—the sovereign keys of death and hell, still entrusted to Him, alone! He has not left the chariot for some diabolic Jehu to drive, and bring confusion upon this world. The government shall be upon His shoulder! He shall be called the Wonderful, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Still—

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

When He allows, for a while, the powers of evil to have a longer tether than usual, it is that afterwards He may pull them in again and prove His power and lift them up to scorn by defeating then, even with all the advantages they seem to gain! Have confidence, child of God! The Church of God is safe! There is no danger to that. The pillars of that house no Samson shall ever remove! The house goes on building, stone by stone, both by night and by day, most surely and most certainly, and the top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, "Grace, grace unto Him." We see Him, then, with the eye of a confidence that consoles us greatly in the times of darkness and of despair!

And, brothers and sisters, I trust we see Christ oftentimes *with a joy which enlivens us*. Do you not think that a believer ought to be ashamed to be sad? "Oh," says one, "we have a great deal of trouble." Yes, I know we have, and what a mercy it is that we have! I have a great many things that God has given me that I much value, but of all the things I ever had, next to His dear Son, that which I value most is the cross that is the heaviest. I have got more good out of my affliction than out of all my prosperity! I would not be without a cross for the entire world! Blessed be God, one loves to learn to bear his sorrows, for one does not seem to need faith to see that it is good. One gets by experience to see how good it is and to love our Father's cup, out of which He gives us the gall every morning which is so bitter, but oh, it has done us so much good! Like the man subject to fever, walking through the malaria districts, he does not shudder to drink the quinine as the child does who thinks it is so bitter—the man feels the tonic effects of it, so that at last he comes to accept that cup with thankfulness—so, brothers and sisters, our afflictions ought not to make us sad! When they come to us we should remember that their ordinary tendency is sadness, but their extraordinary tendency, when they are rightly used, is to make us rather rejoice because our Father pleases to send us these things! An old German writer tells us of some birds which were in the house of a neighbor of his and which were being taught to sing. Some were bullfinches, I think, and they were teaching them to pipe, but there were some other birds—larks, and nightingales, and so on, and these were in the dark. It was very cruel—the poor little things were in the dark, and could see no light. But, he said, these were they that could sing the sweetest. And oftentimes the child of God, when he gets a sense of the Lord's presence, is one of the birds that can sing best in the dark. Why, when it is all light, you know, there are plenty of things to distract our attention. But when it is all dark and Christ comes in, and He is the only thing to be seen, why, then He is better than all the things we do not see and His light is brighter than all the stars that have been put out! And now we can sing more clearly about His presence than we could about all the world's gifts, and about all the outward joys that have been taken

away. Do but let a child of God know that Christ is with him, and his joy will be unspeakable and full of glory!—

"Since Christ is rich, while I am poor,
What can I need beside?

Since my Beloved is mine, and I am His, I will even sit down by Babel's stream and sing the Lord's song, for the land is not strange where He is. Even Kedar's tents are bright as the silken embroideries of Solomon when Jesus comes there, and Meshech is no longer a name of lamentation and of sorrow, but a name of joy and gladness when Jesus sojourns with us, a pilgrim and a stranger, as we also are! We see Jesus with the joy that enlivens us. And so once more, beloved, we have learned to see Jesus *with the hope that inspires us*, for, having seen Him once, here, we do not believe that He is teasing us. We cannot, we will not be led to imagine that if we have lived to see Him here as in a glass darkly, we shall be denied that for which we have been educated—even a face to face view of Him! No, beloved, the day is coming—every winged hour is bringing it nearer—when we shall see the King in His beauty for ourselves, and not another for us! Did you ever try to put yourselves into that happy condition when you shall see Him? I have sometimes been on the top of a Swiss mountain to see the sun rise. I must confess I was never successful. I have strained my eyes in watching to see when the sun should rise, but the clouds have generally concealed it. But a sunrise is always a glorious thing, and what will the everlasting sunrise be, when, from the top of Pisgah we shall see Him, when from the top of Nebo we shall see our Savior? Beloved, it is well that we shall not be in the body, then, for surely, that sight of Him would be too much for us! It is well that when this body shall see Him, it shall be a risen body, strengthened and accommodated to such an excess of bliss, for if He were to reveal Himself, now, to us, as He does to the saints in heaven, I suppose we would die with the excess of brightness! But do you ever try to picture to yourselves that you see Him? Christiana asked Mercy what made her laugh. "Did I laugh?" she asked. "Yes, last night you laughed in your sleep." Then Mercy told her dream, of how she had seen the land, had been within the gates of pearl, and seen the King. And Christiana said that well she might laugh. And have you never laughed at the thought that your eyes shall soon see the Christ of God, the Man that died for you, that these weeping eyes shall weep no more, but shall look full on Him? Oh! 'tis well worth the pilgrimage. When Godfrey had led his troops up to Jerusalem, they had not yet captured the city, but the very sight of it made their hearts leap for joy! But what will it be to see, not the new Jerusalem only, but the King of the new Jerusalem, to have Him forever as ours, and to lie in His embrace without fear of banishment, world without end? Come, you disconsolate, pluck up courage! Come over the thorny way, for the end is sweet and it will make amends for all the toil of the road! Oh! that we were but looking at Him now, and that the kisses of His mouth were ours forever and ever!—

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay,
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"

May we have such a sight as this, then, inflaming our hope, inspiring our desires and making us long for the bright day when we shall see Him face to face! I shall close these fragmentary thoughts with two or three—

III. WORDS OF SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT.

My brothers and sisters, some of you, perhaps, have been following me while I talked about a sight of Christ, and you said, "Yes. Well, I hope I know something about these things—not what I want, or what I wish, or what I hope I shall know—but still, I know something of them." Well, then, please remember that if you see Jesus, the Holy Spirit made you see Him. You would never have seen Jesus in that spiritual way by the power of human nature, or if you had been left to yourselves. Here is a clear mark, then, that the Holy Spirit has begun to work in your soul! Be grateful tonight, oh, be grateful that ever He should come to those bleary eyes of yours and open them! That ever He should come to that dead soul of yours and make it live! Tens of thousands who are wiser, greater and, perhaps, better than you in some respects, are left as blind as bats, while you, through sovereign grace, are made to see! Will you not praise Him? Have you no music for Him? Are there no good works that shall be like palm branches, with which you can strew His pathway in your joyful adoration of His grace to you tonight?

Please remember, too, *that if you have received this sight, this sight will lead you to other sights.* We see Him. Lay the stress there a moment. There are some here who do not see the doctrine of election. My dear brother, I wish you did, but if you can see *Him*, be glad for that. There are some who cannot see the mysterious doctrines of the Word of God. They are often puzzled with the higher mysteries which belong to men in Christ. My dear friends, you shall see all these, by-and-by, if you see Him! See Jesus first, and in Jesus, and through Jesus, you shall be led into all the truth! "What body of divinity," said someone to me the other day, "do you recommend?" I answered, "I have never heard of but one." "But there are several." No, there is only one—the only body that divinity ever had was the body of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the study of that body of divinity will make you systematic theologians of the best kind! Begin at the center, with the sun, and you will understand astronomy! And if you put anything in the center of your system, except Christ, you will be sure to be in a thousand muddles and will never be able to understand the things of the kingdom of God! A sight of Jesus secures a sight of other things. He that has seen Him has seen the Father, seen the Spirit, and shall see all the rest!

Let us encourage ourselves with the thought that a sight of Jesus Christ makes amends for a great deal else that we do see. And what do I see? I see wars on all sides. I see sin in my members, but I see Him and,

therefore, I know that He will subdue sin. "You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." I see a thousand imperfections and weaknesses in my daily walk and conversation, but when I see Him, it covers all, for His blood and righteousness shall cover all the iniquities of Israel, and if they are searched for, they shall not be found. My dear brothers and sisters, perhaps some of you see poverty tonight. Some of you brothers see many difficulties in your calling—some brother minister here, perhaps, sees much disappointment about his sphere of labor. But, my dear friends, if you can see Him, you shall find that that one sight will make amends for all the black and dreary visions that rise before you—and you shall be content and look on them with holy cheerfulness if you have fully learned to look on Him!

To look on Him, again, is, as we have said before, *to prepare our eyes for the greatest sight that ever eyes can see*. If we see Him today, it is a small thing compared to that. It is a small thing to see angels, as we shall see them, hovering about our dying bed. It is a small thing to see the shining ones, as we shall see them, meeting us at the river's brink to help us up the hill whereon the celestial city stands. If we see Him, it will be, comparatively, no very great advance to see the innumerable company of angels and the glorious church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, for in seeing Him we have had the earnest and the pledge of all these wondrous sights! We shall not fear to see the world on fire, though the elements dissolve with fervent heat. We shall not fear to see the graves all opened and the myriads of the saints departed starting up from their graves. We shall not fear to see the dread assize and the judgment-seat, and the King with the balances in His hand, weighing out the fates of men! We shall not fear to look upon yonder hell, with all its horrors past conception dire, nor on yon eternity, through which the terrors of divine justice shall blaze forth as consuming fires! There is *nothing* that can alarm the man who has seen the Lord! No, there shall be little that shall astonish him, for the sight of Jesus is the glorious sight of all things in embryo. It is the sight that shall make a heaven within us, while teaching us, by His Spirit, what the heaven shall be in which we shall dwell hereafter! Press forward for more of this sight of Christ. Get your eyes clear, and God grant that you may continue to see Him and only Him.

If any here have never seen Jesus, let me remind them of this one text, "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To believe on Him is to trust Him. If you trust Him, you shall have everlasting life, but if you trust not in Jesus Christ, you shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on you! May these words never be forgotten by you till you have, by His grace, looked to Christ. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 110:1-7; HEBREWS 7:1-14.

Verse 1. *The LORD said unto my Lord.* Or Jehovah said unto my Adonai.

1, 2. *Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion: rule You in the midst of Your enemies.* This is the Messiah, this is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. Where are His subjects?

3. *Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth.* A willing people shall make up the forces of this great King—and upon them the freshness of the morning shall rest!

4. *The LORD has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.* King and priest. None other of the house of David save our Lord Jesus Christ could claim the union of these two offices. In Christ we have a King and a priest, as also with Melchizedek of old, a great type of Jesus.

5-7. *The Lord at Your right hand, shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head.* This conqueror shall be refreshed in His journey; therefore shall He lift up the head.

HEBREWS 7:1-14.

Verse 1, 2. *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.* His very names being instructive, Righteousness first, and Peace afterwards, as it is with our divine Lord who has brought in everlasting righteousness, and speaks peace to guilty men!

3. *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.* Melchizedek just passed across the page—he has no predecessor, he has no successor. We see him in Scripture and we know nothing of his descent. We know nothing of his death. We only know that he was a priest of the Most High God—and this very silence about him is highly significant and instructive—for in this he is "like unto the Son of God, who abides a priest continually." Now consider who this great man was, unto whom even "the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth part of his spoil." If Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God, paid tribute to him, how great must he have been, how high his office!

5-7. *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham. But he whose descent is not counted from them receive tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.* Therefore, Abraham was less than Melchizedek—he could not bless Melchizedek, but Melchizedek could bless him. How great, then, was he. How far greater still is that Lord of ours of whom Melchizedek was but a type!

8-10. *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them of whom it is witnessed that he lives. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receives tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.* Thus the old priesthood, the Levitical and Aaronic priesthood, did homage unto the Melchizedek priesthood, which is still greater!

11. *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?* We read in the psalm just now, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," which proves that the priests of the order of Levi were not sufficient—there was need of a still greater priesthood.

12. *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.* The law of the priesthood alters, since the person of the priest, the character of the priest, and the very office of the priest had altered too.

13. *For He of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.* According to the belief of the Jewish people, the Messiah was to come of the tribe of Judah, yet none of the house of David or of the tribe of Judah ever presumed to present themselves as priests of the order of God.

14. *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.* So there was an entire change of the priesthood and of the law of priests.

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KEEPING THE SOUL ALIVE
NO. 3444

A SERMON
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"None can keep alive his own soul."
Psalm 22:29.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY is the sin of nature—all-sufficiency is the supply of divine grace! Ishmael, sent away into the wilderness with his bottle, is man trusting in himself—Isaac, dwelling by the never-failing wells of Gerar, is man led by grace to trust in the unfailing supplies of the God of all consolation! It is as hard to get man away from self-trust as it would be to reverse the course of Niagara. He begins by believing that he can make himself alive—and when he is convinced that this is not possible, he then tries to entrench himself behind the idea that he can keep himself alive. No, though man is dead in trespasses and sins and it is but a rank absurdity to imagine that death can produce life, yet the sinner still thinks that by something of his own he can create a soul within the ribs of death, that a sinner may grow into a saint of himself, that the man who is as full of sin as the leopard is full of spots, may yet, by his own innate energy, cast off his spots and become pure! I say that when man is cured of that rank absurdity, he then will need as much trouble to be cured of another, for even those who are alive unto God fall, more or less, into the false confidence that they can keep their own souls alive, and he out of us all who best knows that he can do no such thing has, nevertheless, sometimes caught himself acting as if he did believe that he could keep his own soul alive! To be sound in doctrine is one thing, but to have that orthodoxy in the heart is another thing. To believe that I am dependent every day upon the grace of God is easy, but to carry that dependence and the sense of that dependence into all my dealings with God and with man—this is not nature, but is in itself a work of grace!

Now, it is upon our entire dependence upon God as believers that I am to speak tonight. We have, if we are believers, been made alive from the dead. Our souls have been quickened by the life of Christ—we live with the life that Christ has given to us, but we cannot keep ourselves alive any more than we could first make ourselves alive. That is the point to be thought over tonight—may its rich and humbling instructions be sanctified to us all. First, let me—

I. BREAK UP THIS DOCTRINE A LITTLE.

It is like one of the loaves brought to Christ—it needs breaking and we will break it up thus. The believer's life must be dependent upon God. He cannot maintain it by his own strength *because of its very nature*. It is a derived life. We know how plainly our Savior puts this in the parable of the vine. The life of the Christian is not the life of the separate plant put into the soil to suck for itself through its own throat, the nourishment out of the earth. It is the life of a plant which derives all its sap through the stem—through a root that is not in itself. It does not bear the root, nor a root, but the root bears it, so that once you cut away the branch from the vine, you have taken away the life from the branch, for though the life is in the branch as long as it is joined to the vine, yet it is not so in the branch, itself, that it is there at all apart from the vine. You are dead—then where is your life? Your life is hid with Christ in God, and if you live at all, this is the reason! "Because I live, you shall live also." Your life is not in yourselves as a separate life. Your life, the true life of your soul, is a derived one, and is in Christ Jesus! Another illustration from the same blessed Word of God gives us the like sense. We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. There is life in my hand—undoubted life—but let that hand be laid down upon the block, and the headsman's axe separate it from the arm, and there remains no life whatever in the hand that is separated from the vital center, the heart. The limb moves and has life in itself, in a certain sense, but it is derived life, relative life—it only lives at all, in fact—because it is joined to something else in which its life more truly dwells. You see then, brothers and sisters, that none can keep his own soul alive, because the soul's truest life is not in itself, but lies in another, even in Christ its head!

Furthermore, the life that is in a believer *is a very dependent life*. We are born in regeneration, but after a child is born it will not live if the mother's care shall cease. It must be nursed. It must be fed. It must have a thousand little needs supplied, which, if neglected, would be pretty sure to end that little life right speedily. When our dear converts are born to Christ, our anxieties for them are not ended. Their life is but a frail and feeble thing and though we believe they shall not die, but live, yet they only live because the great Father of the Christian family takes care that they shall be supplied with the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, that they shall be continually nursed in the ordinances of God's house, that they shall be trained and instructed and brought up until they come to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, just as the life of the baby would not be sustained unless something was done for it which it could not do for itself, so the life of the Christian is of the same sort—dependent upon the blessed offices of God the Holy Spirit, and of the gracious Redeemer who watches over all the children of grace as a nurse watches over her child. Yes, but you tell me that this is a great truth for young believers, but what of those that become adults in Christ? I reply that still if the figure does not hold good, yet the truth, itself, does, and we will change the figure and come back to

the one we had before. The fully-developed arm will die if separated from the trunk, just as surely as the infant's arm—and yonder huge branch of the ancient oak, itself a tree—yet were it sundered from the oak, must wither. It doesn't matter how great the growth of a Christian, nor how mature his experience, he still owes all he has, and all he is to his union with Christ; he cannot keep his own soul alive! If I might use such an allegory, it is something like this—all believers are pensioners upon the court of heaven. They begin, we may say, as pensioners when they are converted, to draw out of heaven's bank but a small pension. They are poor in grace, poor in faith, poor in everything—but they draw a pension just as large as they can manage to live upon. By-and-by they are promoted, and their pension is now not £50 a year, but £100. By-and-by they are promoted yet again, but as they are promoted and draw more pension money, they spend more. There are certain demands upon them which require them to spend whatever they get! So at last we will suppose that one of them has come to a high rank and he draws out of the court of the King's bank at the rate of £10,000 a year. Yet, my brothers and sisters, if at any moment that pension should be stopped, he is just as poor a man as he that drew his £50, for, as I have said, he spent it as he received it—and if he is now rich, he is only rich because of the constant income which his gracious King is pleased to give him! But if that were stopped, he could no more keep alive his own soul, though he has come to the first rank in grace, than he could who has just commenced to draw from the bank of the King of Kings! Your spiritual riches all flow in from Christ, and if you are once separated from Him, you are naked, and poor, and miserable, be you who you may!

Still further breaking up this one truth, let me remark that *the believer's life is always an endangered life*. In some way or other it is always in such danger that no man can keep it alive. I find that with some Christians, and with myself, one chief spiritual danger is that of sloth. I mean a tendency to grow lethargic, to stop short where you are, to be pleased with attainments already reached, to lose youthful elasticity and ardor. Well now, when is a soul more in danger than when it falls into spiritual sloth? Then, indeed, the great arch-enemy comes into the Christian camp, as David and Abishai stole into the camp of Saul—and as the great dragon, the enemy of souls—finds a Christian sleeping, he lifts his spear, and if he might but smite him this once, he would not need to smite him a second time! Oh, if sovereign grace did not hold back that diabolic hand, if he could but give that one stroke, he would make a full end of the Christian! Now, as we are, most of us, given to slumber at certain times, and may be surprised with it, the truth is most sure that we cannot keep our own souls alive! But if our temptation should not be that of slumbering, yet who among us does not sometimes get faint? The most valorous believer sometimes finds his faith turn to unbelief. When David was in the midst of battle, we find that the king

waxed faint, and Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, had almost slain him! And there have been times when the offspring of some gigantic evil which in other days we slew, has now been too much for us, and then we feel faint just when we most needed to be strong! He that never has fainting fits may laugh at this, but I think he knows but little of spiritual life, for spiritual men find that all too often these fainting fits come upon them and then they feel that they cannot keep their own soul alive.

Moreover, if we are neither faint nor slumbering, yet—I think I may speak for every Christian here—our life is attended with many temptations. Is there one Christian here who is never tempted? I was about to say I wish I could pursue his calling, but I think he cannot have looked at it correctly. There are temptations everywhere! Some of you work among ungodly associates. Some of you are in places still more perilous, namely, with those who profess to be religious, but who lie and whose example is generally more evil than the example of even outrageously godless men! Oh, there are snares in your business and there are snares in your pleasures! There are temptations in your wants, you poor. There are temptations in your plenty, you rich. There are perils in your knowledge, you men of reading. There are perils in your ignorance, you who read not at all. There are evils that will pursue you in the street that will follow you to your homes that will even come to your beds! They will not let you find a shelter anywhere from them, for Satan spreads his snares wherever he sees God's birds of paradise! Who, then, amidst such dangers, can hope to keep his own soul alive? Even if we had an independent life, which I have shown you we have not, yet with such perils surrounding us, the Psalmist was absolutely correct when he said, "None can keep alive his own soul."

Once more. Remember that all *the supplies of our spiritual life are put, not in us, but into Christ*. We are not like the camel that can traverse the desert and carry with it, its own supply of water for many days. No, we must drink continually from the flowing well, Christ Jesus, or we die. Everything that any one of us shall need between here and heaven is ready for us, but it is all in Christ—there is not a grain of it in ourselves! When the Egyptians were passing through the seven years of famine and had eaten up all their own food, there was quite enough corn in Egypt to keep them through the seven years, but it was all under lock and key in the granary, and Joseph had to keep it all. And so for the spiritual famine between here and the gates of heaven there is enough heavenly corn provided, but it is all in the granaries of the covenant, and it is all in the keeping of Jesus! If you want it, you must go to Jesus for it! There is nothing but emptiness, beggary, famine and death in all the fields of nature. You shall ransack heart, head, memory and judgment through and through—but you shall not find so much as a solitary meal for your hungry soul to live upon within yourselves! Only in Christ is there enough! And there is enough in Him for all of His people, blessed be His name! So, then, because all the stores are in Christ, and there are no

stores in ourselves, the text comes true again—"None can keep alive his own soul." We have thus broken up the doctrine. And here we will pause a minute. Secondly, let us—

II. SEE WHAT OUR EXPERIENCE SAYS TO THIS DOCTRINE.

I will speak of some of the experience of God's servants and I should not wonder but what I shall be, as it were, holding up a mirror in which many here will see themselves! Many of us have verified that we cannot keep our own souls alive in the following way—first, by having our carnal security all shipwrecked. Do you remember years ago, now, or it may be only months ago with some of you, that you felt so confident? You had had a long time of peace and happiness. Whenever you went up to God's house, the Word was very sweet to you. In private prayer you had much fellowship with Christ. At the Lord's Table you sat at the King's banquet and you said to yourselves, "I wonder how it is that so many Christians are doubting and fearing? I am not. My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved." You hardly dared to say that, but you whispered it to yourselves. You felt grateful to God that it was so, but I think there was a little self-congratulation—and you looked down a little upon some of your brothers and sisters who were not quite so joyous and confident as you! Well now, shall I tell the story? It has happened to me, and I must blushingly tell it. I doubt not it has also happened to you. Within a very short time a temptation surprised you and you fell into the trap. God's face was hidden from you—your soul was troubled and the scene was all changed—and whereas yesterday you could write yourselves down in big letters with certainty as a child of God, now you felt that if you were one, you were the meanest of them all! You could have taken the chief seat in the synagogue yesterday, but now if there were a mouse hole you would have been glad to creep into it, and if there were a doorkeeper's place vacant, you would be happy to take it if you might but still be numbered with the household of God. I should not wonder but what you were a better man in the last case than you were before, though you did not think so. Well, it was then when you began to perceive that you could not keep alive your own soul, for what you built up so delightfully, turned out to be only just a card house—and Satan had but to give it one flip with his finger and over it went! You had piled up your habitation, and you thought it was all made of strong stone, but it was only rubbishing cement—and the first frost that came, cracked it from the foundation right up to the top—and soon it began to totter about your ears! You have passed through that, and if you have, you know that you cannot keep your own soul alive!

Again, did you ever feel like this, my dear brothers and sisters? The Sabbath is coming round and on Saturday night you are very glad that tomorrow is the Sabbath, but somehow or other you do not feel that interest in spiritual things that you did some months ago. You go up to the house of God and take your seat. The preacher seems different—

perhaps you half think he must be—but yet you hear of others who are feeding on the Word and so you conclude that there is a lack of appetite in yourselves, for you do not seem to enjoy it. And those hymns; why, they used to be like archangels' wings to you, and now you are just criticizing the style of the music and not much else. You do not drink into the Word when you get home and get your Bible open. Why, it used to blaze before your eyes! The promises seemed as if they were written in letters of light—but now that Bible is very dull to you. You pray you could not give that up, but you rise from your knees as if you had not prayed—and you feel in all your religious exercises a kind of dullness and sleepiness. You go about it all. You cannot give it up and do not want to give it up. You would not give it up—you would sooner die than give it up—but still, you cannot stir your soul. I have often felt spiritually like those poor people who have taken opium, or some other drug, who have to be walked about by the hour together, for fear lest they should go to sleep—and I have heard of people sticking pins into them to keep them awake. I have tried to stick pins into myself in a spiritual sense to try to wake myself up. What is wrong with me, to be sleeping while poor souls are perishing? How is it that I do not feel this truth more? Why does not that truth affect me more? It did once—why does it not now? Well now, whenever you are in that state of mind, you have learned this lesson—you cannot keep your own soul alive. Why, you cannot even wake your soul, much more quicken it! You cannot even stir it to vigor, with all your attempts, much less, then, could it be possible for you to preserve spiritual life! That must be a work of grace—your experience must teach you that.

And, dear brothers and sisters, have you ever found, under a severe trial, how difficult it is to exercise the grace that you before thought you possessed very abundantly? You are just now, perhaps, being tried in your faith. You used to sing Luther's psalm—

"Loud may the troubled ocean roar!
In secret peace our souls abide."

Well, now the ocean has hardly began to roar. It is only just a little storm—but the sacred peace—where is that? Why, you are running to your neighbor to say, "What shall I do? There is such-and-such about to happen!" Your neighbor might well reply. "Did not I hear you sing the other day—

'Let mountains from their seats be hurled
Down to the deeps and buried there!
Convulsions shake the solid world—
My faith shall never yield to fear,'

and yet here you are! Here you are!" Ah! yes, we may smile, but we have all been through it. It reminds me of what an old country man used to tell me. "Ah!" he said—old Will Richardson—"I always find, sir, that I could do a long stretch of mowing in the winter! And I often think when the snow is on the ground and I see my old sickle hanging up, that I'd like to go out and do some harvesting, and I'd do it with the best of the

young'uns, but, you know, when the time comes for mowing I find that old Will cannot do much of it, and when the harvest comes round I find that it is very little that makes a good day's work for an old man like me." And you and I think like that sometimes. We say, "Oh, if I had a temptation now, how I could master it!" And then it comes and we find that we cannot master it. "Oh, if I were tried, how I could stand!" And we are tried and we cannot stand. Now this ought to teach us that we cannot keep our own soul alive. Depend upon it, brother, that the very grace which you set most store by is probably that in which you are most deficient—and that virtue which you could almost wish to expose to peril because you feel yourself so safe in that respect—is just the joint in the plating of your armor through which the arrow would find its way! Boast not of anything! Above all, boast not of your best things, for they may prove your worst in the day of trial! You have found it so. It may be so again. "None can keep alive his own soul."

Another piece of experience is this. You who love the Master may, perhaps, have been sometimes in a position in which *you have been fascinated by a temptation*. You know the figure I am using now in connection with the word *fascination*. Some of those large pythons that have to be fed upon living animals will have a rabbit, perhaps, put into, their cage for them to feed upon. We are told that the poor little rabbit will sit up on its haunches quietly, calmly and still— because the python has fixed its eyes on the creature and fascinates it—and if it could escape, if the cage door were open so that it could run away, it cannot! It feels itself spellbound and sits there, incapable of that motion by which it might escape—fascinated by the serpent's eyes. Have you ever been in that position under a sin, and you would have fallen into it, only just then the spell was broken by providence? Something happened that you could not have looked for, and you escaped because you were a child of God! If you had not been a child of God, that fascination would have continued till it would have ended in your destruction! And if you have ever been under that fascination you will dread ever to expose yourselves to it again. You will take care to keep out of harm's way again, but you will have learned at least this lesson, that you may be cast, even in providence, in such positions that nothing but the supernatural grace of God could deliver you, and you will then have seen that none can keep alive his own soul!

But one more illustration taken from our experience. *We have seen others fall into great sin* and that observation must have helped us to see that we could not keep ourselves. I do not wish to revive old memories for the sake of pain, but I would revive them for the humiliation they ought to cause us all. Have you ever known a man whose prayers comforted and edified you, whose language about the things of God was full of savor, full of instruction to the young and even of comfort to the old? Have you ever seen that man earnest, indefatigable, generous? Have you

ever thought to yourselves, "I wish I were half as good as he"? Have you not known the time when a look from his eyes would have cheered you, and a good word from his lips would have been a blessing to you? And yet you heard one day—and it was as though you had been felled to the earth—you heard that man had been living a life of sin, had been a hypocrite and deceived the people of God! Well you remember that! Perhaps you remember that such a thing has happened not once, nor twice, and there are black marks down in your recollection concerning such an one, and such an one, and such an one. Did you write down after that in your diary, "But I should never do the same"? Then you are a fool, be sure of that! But if, instead of that, you wrote down in your diary, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." If you fell on your knees and said, "Lord, keep me, for—

"Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last,"

then you have learned a good lesson, and you have learned also the meaning of my text, "None can keep alive his own soul," for that is what God meant to teach you! May you learn it from others, and not have to painfully learn it by your own falls into sin. My time has failed me, yet must I keep you a little longer while I dwell with great brevity, in the next place, upon—

III. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS OF THE TEXT.

I have shown you the doctrine and the experience which backs it up. Now what are the practical lessons? They are these. First, *never entertain a good opinion of ourselves*. "What, never believe that I am saved?" Oh, yes, if you are saved, always believe that! But then, what is your ground for believing that you are saved? If that lies in your goodness, then away with it, for it is a bad foundation and the sooner you get off of it, the better! My dear brother, you are no better than the poor publican when he smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and if you think you are any better than he, you do not know yourself! You will go down from this Tabernacle without a blessing if you are able to get higher up than he, and can say with the Pharisee, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men." Nothing but a heap of dust and ashes—and a mass of misery and sin—are you but for sovereign grace! "In me," says the apostle, "that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing." That is to say, "In me, inexperienced me, uninstructed me, unenlightened me, whatever else of good or of virtue may be appended to the word, me, there dwells no good thing!" Grace, grace, grace alone can keep and must keep us! But as for any absolute personal acquirement, no confidence can be placed in any of these! Dear brothers and sisters, take care that you have never a good opinion, then, of yourself.

The next lesson is never get away from the cross. This psalm is all about Christ on the cross. "None can keep alive his own soul." The life of souls is in the dying and living Savior. If you can live a day without

feeling the blood of sprinkling, you have lived a dangerous day! If you feel that you can afford to go into any Christian duty without a Mediator, you are in danger! Dear brothers and sisters, always sing —

"There is a fountain filled with blood,"

and sing it always because you always need that fountain and always need the washing!

Another lesson is *never neglect the means of grace*. If you cannot keep alive your own soul, then do not neglect the means through which God helps your soul to live. If you could live without food, why then, you would not come to the table at the time of meals, but as you cannot keep alive your soul, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. I have known some who have said, "Oh, well, I can do as well at home. I can read this good book or that." Sir, I know what it always comes to—it comes to bringing leanness into the soul and, by-and-by, if persisted in, it ends in apostasy, and proves that the man never had the grace of God at all! I find that I cannot do without the means of grace, and I believe that if I cannot, you cannot, my brothers and sisters.

But there is a further lesson—*never rest on the means of grace*, for even by their use you cannot keep alive your soul! Do we live on sermons, live on hymns, live on other people's prayers? Oh, no! The sermon is only useful because it is like a ladder to help you to climb. The prayer of another is only useful because it may be like a torch from another altar to set your sacrifice on a blaze. Never neglect the means, but *never depend upon the means*. Go above the means to the God of the means, and do not be satisfied with the mere means of grace, but try to get the grace of the means!

So let me add again, and I will sit down, *never run into temptation*. If you cannot keep your soul alive on safe ground, what can you do in the midst of pestilence? Those Christian people who are always saying, "Well, I do not see the harm of this," and, "I think I may do that"—I am afraid their grace must be very problematical—they cannot have any at all, or they would not talk in that way! A man who wishes to be living and healthy, but who feels his life to be in jeopardy, will not run any unnecessary risks. Go you not into the path of temptation, for even while the devil tempts you, you may expect divine help, yet if you tempt the devil to tempt you, I do not know that there is any promise that God will help you! Bless God daily, dear friends. Bless God daily if you are kept. As you cannot keep alive your own soul, if your soul is kept alive, bless God for it! Oh, I think that the children of God, when they get to mourning and saying, "I have not as much faith as So-and-so, I have not the love of the Apostle Paul, I have not the joy of such-and-such a Christian," they would do quite as well if they were to sit down and say, "Lord, while I mourn that I have not these things, I do bless You if I have half a grain of faith, for that will keep me out of hell." If you have not got

sunlight, do be thankful for candlelight. Ah, the day may come when you will be glad to get the slightest evidence, so while you have got it, thank God for it! We ought to lament that we have not more grace, but we ought to be thankful that we have any at all! If I am not a full-grown man in Christ, and ought to be, I ought to mourn over my dwarfed estate! But if I am a child of God at all, there is something to be thankful for! Praise His name, then! Lift up the notes of song, you mournful ones! Yes, let every believer bless the name of the Lord!

And so let us close by saying this—if God has kept you alive, and you bless His name for it, *show your gratitude by helping others.* "None can keep alive his own soul," but often a word from a brother may be a word from the great Father of us all. A gentle admonition from a matron may help a young sister. A word of wisdom from a father in Christ may help the young brother. Oh, watch over one another. Be pastors to each other. "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." I am sure that in this great London of ours, much of our safety against a wicked world will lie in keeping our ranks close. I know that young men coming up to London, even if they have the grace of God in their hearts—if they get isolated and separated, are very likely to be led astray. Therefore, if there is any young Christian in the Tabernacle tonight who is spending his first Sunday evening in London and does not know anybody here, I say, my dear brother, hook on to one of our classes! Lay hold of somebody tonight that belongs to the church and try to make friends with him, for none of us can keep alive his own soul, and it is not good for man to be alone! God may mean by joining you with this church and bringing you into some of the various classes, to bless you and keep your soul alive!

Ah! you have come up, have you, and taken a job in London. And you come out on Sunday evenings, and your mother told you to come here, and you are glad to listen to my voice tonight. Well, next Sunday afternoon, my sister, there is Mrs. Bartlett's Bible Class downstairs where you will meet with many sisters in Christ who will be glad to talk with you and cheer you. Perhaps if you do not go into that class, you will be quite lonely, and by degrees grow cold and get laid aside. You will not be able to stand alone, very well, so come and get a hold of some of your sisters in Christ, and by God's grace, though you cannot depend upon them, yet they may be the means in God's hand of helping you to stand! Soldiers, close your ranks! Each man to his fellow stand firm for Christ! The enemy is doing all he can to break our solid ranks. Let us be true to one another, and true to the great Captain who is at our head! Up to where the blood-red cross is the banner to which we all shall rally, let each man turn their eyes, and then next, let each man look right and left upon his fellows and help to hold up such as begin to stagger in the dreadful battle—and who knows but that thus we may help to keep ourselves upon our feet, for he that helps others shall be helped himself!

He that waters others shall be watered himself. God grant it may be so with you all, and may Jesus make and keep alive all our souls! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27.

Very much of the language of David used here, I trust, we can make our own. May the Spirit of God lead us to understand, by experience, what he has written.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation.* I find no comfort anywhere else but in Him, and expect salvation from none but Himself. "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

1. *Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Who can stand against Him? What strength can resist His strength? What darkness can baffle His light? What foes can prevent His salvation?

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* "They wanted to destroy me altogether—to eat me right up." If they did not destroy me, it was not from lack of heart to do it, nor even from lack of power, for there were many of them. But I had not to fight, for they fell before they reached me. "They stumbled and fell."

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* Let them come on. They fell before—they will fall again. Let them come on. God was strong enough to meet them and overthrow them once. He will do it again! Therefore, why should we fear? Ah, dear brothers and sisters, those who have had the most experience of the divine fullness will rest most confident that nothing can harm them!

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His Temple.* He only wished to be always like a child at home—live in God's house—no temporal structure, but wherever he was, he wished to feel that he was near to God—that all places were the mansions of the great Father, so that he might always have his eyes fixed upon the beauty of the Lord, and his ears always open to listen to the voice of the Lord. Ah, if we can once get ourselves wholly given up to God, it will take our thoughts off the various oppositions we meet with—and we shall no more be afraid!

5, 6. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret places of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* It is a blessed resolution, not always easily carried out, but still it ought to be. Our life ought to be singing. It

used to be sinning—it ought now to be singing, since the sin has been put away. Oh, happy are the men that know their God! If the whole world would be full of storms, yet may they rest in peace! Get near to God—acquaint yourself with Him and be at peace! The remedy for all trouble is dwelling near to God!

7, 8. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, Seek you My face, my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD will I seek.* Are we always mindful of divine monitions? When the still small voice in the heart says, "Seek you My face," Brothers and sisters, do we always at once respond and say, "Your face, Lord, will I seek"? I am afraid we are often as the horse and the mule which have no understanding—and need to have the bit, and the bridle, and the rod. But happy are those who have a sensitive nature—quickly feel the movements of the Spirit of God!

9, 10. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger: You have been my help: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* He prayed, you see, and it looked a little unbelieving when he said, "Leave me not, neither forsake me." But it was not so, for at once he confessed that he did not think that God would leave him, even when our father and mother, who are the last to leave us, should do so. "Then the Lord will take me up."

11-14. *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies, for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say on the LORD.* I suppose he meant that last sentence to be his own personal recommendation, derived from his own experience. "Wait, I say, on the Lord." He had tried it—proved its wonderful power as the restorative to his heart, and so he says—"Wait, I say, on the Lord."

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STRONG FAITH IN A FAITHFUL GOD
NO. 3445

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1915,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will cry to God most high; to God that performs all things for me." Psalm 57:2.

DAVID was in the Cave Adullam. He had fled from Saul, his remorseless foe, and had found shelter in the clefts of the rock. In the beginning of this Psalm he rings the alarm bell—and very loud is the sound of it. "Be merciful unto me," and then the clapper hits the other side of the bell. "Be merciful unto me." He utters his miserere again and again. "My soul trusts in You; yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by." Thus he solaces himself by faith in his God. Faith is always an active grace. Its activity, however, is first of all manifested in prayer. This precedes any action. "I will cry," he says, "unto God most high." You know how graciously he was preserved in the cave, even when Saul was close at his heels. Among the winding intricacies of those caverns he was enabled to conceal himself, though his enemy, with armed men, was close at hand. The Targum has a note upon this which may or may not be true. It states that a spider spun its web over the door of that part of the cave where David was concealed. The legend is not unlike one told of another king at a later time. It may have been true of David, and it is quite as likely to be true of the other. If so, David would, in such a passage as this, have directed his thoughts to the little acts God had performed for him which had become great in their results. If God makes a spider spin a web to save His servant's life, David traces his deliverance not to the spider, but to the wonder-working Jehovah! And he says, "I will cry unto God most high, to God that performs all things for me." It is delightful to see these exquisite prayers come from holy men in times of extreme distress. As the sick oyster makes the pearl, and not the healthy one, so does it seem as if the child of God brings forth gems of prayer in affliction more pure, brilliant and sparkling than any that he produces in times of joy and exultation.

Our text is capable of three meanings. To these three meanings we shall call your attention briefly. "To God who performs all things for me." First, there is *infinite providence*. As it stands, the words, "all things," you perceive, have been added by the translators. Not that they were mistaken in so doing, for the unlimited expression, "God that performs for me," allows them to supply the omission without any violation of the sense. Secondly, there is *inviolable faithfulness*, as we know that David here referred to God's working out the fulfillment of the promises He had made. We sang just now of the sweet promise of His grace as the performing God. I think Dr. Watts borrowed that expression from this

verse. Thirdly, there is a *certainty of ultimate completeness*. The original has for its root the word, "finishing," and now working it out, it means a God that performs or, as it were, perfects and accomplishes all things concerning me. Whatever there is in His promise or covenant that I may need, He will perfect for me. To begin with—

I. THE MARVELOUS PROVIDENCE.

The text, as it stands, speaks of a service—"I will cry to God most high; to God that performs all things for me." "All things," that is to say, in everything that I have to do, I am but an instrument in His hands—it is God who does it for me. The Christian has no right to have anything to do for which he cannot ask God's help. No, he should have no business which he could not leave with his God. It is his to work and to exercise prudence, but it is his to call in the aid of God to his work and to leave the care of it with the God who cares for him. Any work in which he cannot ask divine co-operation, the care of which he cannot cast upon God is unfit for him to be engaged in. Depend upon it, if I cannot say of the whole of my life, "God performs all things for me," there is sin somewhere and evil lurks in the disposition thereof. If I am living in such a state that I cannot ask God to carry out for me the enterprises I have embarked in, and entirely rely on His providence for the issues, then what I cannot ask Him to do for me, neither have I any right to do for myself! Let us think, therefore, of the whole of our ordinary life and apply the text to it. Should we not, each morning, cry unto God to give us help through the day? Though we are not going out to preach; though we are not going up to the assembly for worship; though it is only our ordinary business, that ordinary business ought to be a consecrated thing! Opportunities for God's service should be sought in our common avocations—we may glorify God very much therein. On the other hand, our souls may suffer serious damage, we may do much mischief to the cause of Christ in the ordinary walk of any one day. It is for us, then, to begin the day with prayer—to continue all through the day in the same spirit and to close the day by commending whatever we have done to that same Lord. Any success attending that day, if it is real success, is of God who gives it to us! "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it," is a statement applicable to the whole of Christian life! It is vain to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for so He gives His beloved sleep. If there is any true blessing, such blessing, as Jabez craved, when he said, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed," it must come from the God of heaven—it can come from nowhere else. Cry then, Christian, concerning your common life to God! Say continually, "I will cry to God most high; to God that performs all things for me."

Perhaps at this hour you are troubled about some petty little thing, or you have been through the day exercised about some trivial matter. Do you not think we often suffer more from our little troubles than from our great ones? A thorn in the foot will irritate our temper, while the dislocation of a joint would reveal our fortitude. Often the man who would bear the loss of a fortune with the equanimity of Job will wince and fume under a paltry annoyance that might rather excite a smile than a groan. We are apt to be disquieted in vain. Does not this very much

arise from our forgetting that God performs all things for us? Do we not ignore the fact that our success in little things, our rightness in the minutiae in life, our comfort in these inconsiderable trifles depends upon His blessing? Know you not that God can make the gnat and the fly to be a greater trouble to Egypt than the diseases of cattle, the thunder, or the storm? Little trials, if unblessed—if unattended with the divine favor, may scourge you fearfully and betray you into much sin. Commend them to God, then! And little blessings, as you think, if taken away from you, would soon involve very serious consequences. Thank God, then, for the little. Put the little into His hands—it is nothing to Jehovah to work in the little, for the great is little to Him! There is not much difference, after all, in our littles and our greats to the infinite mind of our glorious God. Cast all on Him who numbers the hairs of your head, and allows not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His decree! Cry to God about the little things, for He performs all things for us. Do I speak to some who are contemplating a great change in life? Take not that step, my brother, my sister, without much careful waiting upon God. But if you be persuaded that the change is one that has the Master's approval, fear not, for He performs all things for you. At this moment you have many perplexities. You may vex yourself with anxiety, and make yourself foolish with shillyshallying if you sport with fancy, vexing up bright dreams, and yielding to dark forebodings. There is many a knot we seek to untie which were better cut with the sword of faith! We should end our difficulties by leaving them with Him who knows the end from the beginning!

Up to this moment you have been rightly led—you have the same guide. To this hour, He who sent the cloudy pillar has led you rightly through the devious ways of the wilderness—follow, still, with a sure confidence that all is well. If you keep close to Him, He performs all things for you. Take your guidance from His Word and, waiting upon Him in prayer, you need not fear. Just now, perhaps, in addition to some exciting dilemma, you are surrounded with real trouble and distress. Will it not be well to cry to God most high, who now, in the time of your strait and difficulty, will show Himself, again, to you a God all-sufficient to His people in their times of need? He is always near! I do not know that He has said, "When you walk through the green pastures, I will be with you, and when your way lies hard by the river of the water of life, where lilies bloom, I will strengthen you." I believe He will do so, but I do not remember such a promise. But, "When you go through the rivers, I will be with you," is a well-known promise of His. If ever He is present, it shall be in trial—if He can be absent, it will certainly not be when His servants most need His aid! Rest in Him, then. But you say, "I can do so little in this time of difficulty." Do what you can, and leave the rest to Him! If you see no way of escape, does it follow that there is none? If you see no help, is it, therefore, to be inferred that help cannot come? Your Lord and Savior found no friend among the whole family of man, "Yet," said He, "could I not presently pray to My Father, and He would send me twelve legions of angels?" Were it necessary for your help, the squadrons

of heaven would leave the glory-land to come to your rescue—the least and poorest of the children of God as you may be! He will perform for you—be you, therefore, obedient, trustful, patient; 'tis yours to obey, 'tis His to command; 'tis yours to perceive, 'tis His to perform. He will perform all things for you!

Very likely among this audience, some are foolish enough to perplex themselves as to their future life, and forestall the time when they shall grow old and their vigor shall be abated. It is always unwise to anticipate our troubles. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Of all self-torture, that of importing in sure trouble into present account is, perhaps, the most insane! Do you tell me you cannot help looking into the future. Well, then, look and peer into the distance as far as your weak vision can reach, but do not breathe upon the telescope with your anxious breath and fancy you see clouds! On the contrary, just wipe your eyes with the soft kerchief of some gracious Word of promise and hold your breath while you gaze through that transparent medium. Use the eye-salve of faith! Then, whatever you discern of the future, you will also descry. He rules and He overrules! He will make all things work together for good! He will surely bring you through! Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever! He it is who will perform all things for you. Oh, strange infatuation. You see your weakness, you see the temptations that will assail you and the troubles that threaten you, and you are afraid. Look away from them all! This is no business of yours. Leave it in His hands, who will manage well, who will be sure to do the kindest and the best thing for you. Be of good confidence and rest in peace!

So shall it be even at life's close. He performs all things for me. I have the boundary of life in the prospective, the almost certainty that I must die. Unless the Lord comes before my term expires, I must close these eyes, gather up these feet in the bed, breathe a last gasp and yield my soul to Him who gave it. Well, fear not! He helped me to live—He will help me to die! He has made me perform up to this moment my allotted task, yes, He has performed it for me—giving me His grace and working His providence with me. Shall I fear that He will desert me at the last? He performs not some things, but *all* things, and He cannot omit this most important thing which often makes me tremble. No, that must be included, for all things are mine—death as well as life! I leave my dying hour, then, with Him, and never boding ill of it, I cry to God most high, to God that performs all things for me! I want, dear brothers and sisters, to leave this impression in your minds, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands for lack of work, yet God works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. This we recognize distinctly—if anything is done right, or successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give Him the glory! I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by Him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of His grace through you by Himself, to His own honor and praise, world without end! The second run of thought which the text suggests is that of—

II. INVIOLABLE FAITHFULNESS.

"To God that performs all things for me." The God who made the promises has not left them as pictures, but has made them to fulfill them. It is God who is the actual worker of all that He declared in the covenant of grace should be worked in and for His people!

Let us think of this as it pertains to our Redeemer's merits. "To God that performs all things for me." Meritoriously our Savior-God has performed all things for us. Our sin has been all put away—He bore it all—every particle of it. The righteousness that wraps us is complete—He has woven it all from the top throughout. All that God's infinite, unflinching justice can ask of us has been performed for us by our Surety and our Covenant Head. I need not say I have to fight—my warfare is accomplished. I need not think I have to wash away my sins—as a believer, my sin is pardoned. All things are performed for me! Don't forget amidst your service for Christ what service Christ has rendered to you! Do all things for Christ, but let the stimulating motive be that Christ has done all things for you! There is not even a little thing that is for you to do to complete the work of Christ. The temple He has built needs not that you should find a single stone to make it perfect. The ransom He has paid does not wait until you add the last mite. It is all done! O soul, if Christ has completely redeemed you and saved you, rest on Him and cry to Him! And if sin rebels within you at this present moment, fly—though your spirit is shut up as in the Cave Adullam—fly to Him by faith—to Him who has done all things for you as your Representative and Substitute! After the same manner, all things in us that have ever been worked there have been performed by God for us. The Holy Spirit has worked every fraction of good that is within our souls. No one flower that God loves grows in the garden of our souls in the natural soil, self-sown. The first trembling desire after God came from His Spirit. The blade, though very tender would never have sprung up if Jesus had not sown the seed. Though the first rays of dawn were scarcely light, but only rendered the darkness visible, yet from the Sun of Righteousness they come—no light sprang from the natural darkness of our spirit! It could not be that life could be begotten of death, or that light could be the child of darkness. He began the work. He led us when we went tremblingly to the foot of the cross. He helped us when we followed Him with staggering steps. The eyes with which we looked to Jesus and believed, were opened by Him! Christ was revealed to us not by our own discovery, nor by our own tuition, but the Spirit of God revealed the Son of God in our spirit! We looked and we were lightened. The vision and the enlightening were alike from Him—He performed all for us.

As I look back upon my own spiritual career, when I was seeking the Savior, I am wonderfully struck with the way in which God performed everything for me. For if He had not, I do remember well when I should have rendered it impossible for me to have been here to tell of the wonders of His grace! Hard pressed by Satan and by sin, my soul chose strangling rather than life. Had I known more of my own guiltiness, my heart would utterly have broken, and my life have failed. But wisdom and prudence were mingled with the teachings of God's law. He did not

allow the schoolmaster to be too severe, but stayed the soul beneath the dire remorse which conviction caused. I had never believed on Him if He had not taught me to believe! To give up hope in self was desperate work, and then to find hope in Christ seemed more desperate, still. It appeared to me easy enough to believe in Jesus while one was really believing in one's self, but when "despair" was written upon self, then one was too apt to transfer the despair even to the cross, itself, and it appeared impossible to believe! But the Spirit worked faith in me, and I believed. That is not my testimony, only, but the testimony of all my brothers and sisters—in that hour of sore trouble it was God who performed all things for us! Since then and up to this moment, my brothers and sisters, if there has been any virtue, if there has been in you anything lovely and of good repute, to whom do you or can you attribute it? Must you not say, "Of Him all my fruit was found"? You could not have done without Him! If you have made any progress, if you have made any advance, or even if you *think* you have, believe me, your growth, advance, progress, have all been a mistake unless they have come entirely from Him! There is no wealth for us but that which is dug in this mine. There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One Himself. "You who perform all things for me," must be our cry up to this hour!

What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What He was yesterday, He is today. What we find Him today, we shall find Him forever! Are you struggling against sin? Don't struggle in your own strength—it is God who performs all things for you! Victories over sin are only sham victories unless we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of divine grace. I am afraid of backsliding, but I think I am more afraid of growing in sanctification apparently in my own strength. It is a dreadful thing for the gray hairs to appear here and there—but it is worse, still, for the hair to appear to be of raven hue when the man is weak. Only the indication is changed, but not the state itself. May we have really what we think we have—no surface work, but deep, inner, spiritual life, worked in us from God—yes, every good spiritual thing from Him who performs all things for us and, I say, whatever struggles may come, whatever vehement temptations assail, or whatever thunderclouds may burst over your heads, you shall not be deserted, much less destroyed! In spiritual things it is God who performs all things for you. Rest in Him, then. It is no work of yours to save your own soul—Christ is the Savior. If He cannot save you, you certainly cannot save yourself. Why rest you your hopes where hopes never ought to be rested? Or let me change the question. Why do you fear where you never ought to have hoped? Instead of fearing that you cannot hold on, despair of holding on yourself and never look in that direction again! But if the preservation is of God, where is the cause for anxiety with you? In Him let your entire reliance be fixed. Cast the burden of your care on Him who performs all things for you! Lastly, this text in its moral, literal acceptation refers to—

III. THE FINISHING STROKE OF A GRAND DESIGN.

It really means, "I will cry to God most high—to God who perfects all things concerning me." David's career was charged with a great work. It

was portentous with a high destiny. He had been anointed when a lad by Samuel. The Lord had said, "I have provided Me a king among the sons of Jesse." And Samuel had taken "the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers." He was thus clearly ordained to be king over Israel. His way to the throne was by Adullam. Strange route! To be king over Israel and Judah, he must first become a rebel, a wandering vagabond, known as a chieftain of bandits, hunted about by Saul, the reigning monarch. He must seek refuge in the courts of his country's enemies, the Philistines, being without an earthly refuge, or place to lay his head. Strange way to a throne! Yet the Son of David had to go that way, and all the sons of God. The younger brethren of the Crown Prince will have to find their way to their crown by much the same route. But is not this a brave thing? Though Adullam does not look like the way to Zion, where he shall be crowned, David is so confident that what God has said will come to pass, so sure that Samuel's anointing was no farce, but that he must be king, that he praises and blesses God that while He is making of him a houseless wanderer, He is perfecting that which concerns him and leading him by a sure path to the throne. Now, can I believe that He who promises that I shall be with Him where He is, that I may behold His glory—He who gives the certainty to every believer that he shall enter into everlasting happiness—can I believe tonight that He is perfecting that for me—that the way by which He is taking me tonight, so dark, so gloomy, so full of dangers, is, nevertheless, the shortest way to heaven? That He is, tonight using the quickest method to perfect that which concerns my soul? O faith! Here is something for you to do and if you can perform it, you shall bring glory to God! The pith of it is this—that if God has the keeping of us, He will perfect the keeping in the day of Christ! All His people are in the hands of Jesus, and in those hands they shall be forever and ever! "None shall pluck them out of My hands," He says. Their preservation shall be perfected. So, too, their sanctification; every child of God is set apart by Christ and in Christ—and the work of the Spirit has commenced which shall subdue sin and abolish the very roots of corruption—and this work shall be perfected! No, is being perfected at this very moment! The dragon is being trodden down under foot. The seed of the woman within us is beginning to bruise the serpent's head and shall clearly bruise it and crush it, even to the death within our soul.

He is perfecting us in all things for Himself! He has promised to bring us to glory. We have the earnest of that great glory in us now. The new life is there—all the elements of heaven are within us. Now He will perfect all these. He will not allow one good thing that He has planted within us to die. It is a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. He will perfect all things for us. There is nothing that makes the saints complete but what God will give to us. There shall be lacking in us no one trait of loveliness that is necessary for the courtiers of the skies—no one virtue that is necessary to mark us as of the divine race, but shall be given, no, perfected in us! What a marvelous thing is a Christian! How mean; how noble! How abject; how august! How near to hell; how close to

heaven! How fallen, yet lifted up! Able to do nothing; yet doing all things! Doing nothing; yet accomplishing all things because herein it is that, in the man, and with the man, there is God—and He performs all things for us! God, give us grace to look away entirely, evermore, from ourselves and to depend entirely upon Him!

Now is there a soul here that desires salvation? My text gives you the clue of comfort. Try—the thing is simple—try; look to Him. He performs all things for you! Everything that is needed to save your soul, your heavenly Father will give you. Jesus, the Savior, has worked out all the sinner's needs. You have but to come and take what is already accomplished and rest in it. "I cannot save myself," you say. You need not—there is One who performs all things for you. "I am bruised and mangled by the Fall," says one, "as though every bone were broken." "I am incapable of a good thought. There is nothing good in me, or that can come from me." Soul! It is not what *you* can do, but what God can do—what Christ *has* done—that must be the ground of your hope! Give yourself up to God, Most High—to God, who performs all things for you, and you shall be blessed, indeed! God send you away with His own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34:1-20.

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* "Others may do what they please, and murmur, and complain, and be filled with dread and apprehension of the future, but I will bless the Lord at all times. I can always see something for which I ought to bless Him. I can always see some good which will come out of blessing Him. Therefore will I bless Him at all times. And this." says the Psalmist, "I will not only do in my heart, but I will do with my tongue." His praise shall continually be in my mouth, that others may hear it, that others may begin to praise Him, too, for murmuring is contagious, and so, thank God, is praise! And one man may learn from another—take the catchword and the keyword out of another man's mouth—and then begin to praise God with him. "His praise shall continually be in my mouth." What a blessed mouthful! If some people had God's praises in their mouths, they would not so often find fault with their fellow men. "If half the breath thus vainly spent" in finding fault with our fellow Christians were spent in prayer and praise, how much happier, how much richer we would be spiritually! "His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear it and be glad.* Boasting is generally annoying. Even those who boast cannot endure that other people should boast! But there is one kind of boasting that even the humble can bear to hear—no, they are glad to hear it! "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." That must be boasting in God—a holy glorying and extolling the Most High with words sought out with care that might magnify His blessed name! You will never exaggerate when you speak good things of God. It is not possible to

do so. Try, dear brothers and sisters, and even boast in the Lord. There are many poor, trembling, doubting, humble souls that can hardly tell whether they are the Lord's people or not—and are half afraid whether they shall be delivered in the hour of trouble—who will become comforted when they hear you boasting. "The humble shall hear it and be glad." "Why," says the humble soul, "God that helped that man can help me! He that brought him up through the deep waters and landed him safely, can also take me through the river and through the sea, and give me final deliverance. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord!" "The humble shall hear *it* and be glad."

3. *Oh magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* He cannot do enough of it himself. He wants others to come in and help him! First, he charges his own heart with the weighty and blessed business of praising God, and then he invites all around to unite with him in the sacred effort. "Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt His name together."

4. *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* That was David's testimony. That is mine. Brother, that is yours, is it not? Sister, is not that yours, too? Well, if you have such a blessed testimony, be sure to proclaim it! Often do you whisper it in the mourner's ear, "I sought the Lord and He heard me." Tell it in the scoffer's ear. When he says, "There is no God," and that prayer is useless, say to him, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." It is a pity that such a sweet encouraging profitable testimony should be kept back. Be sure at all proper times to make it known! But it is not merely ourselves. There are others who can speak well of God.

5. *They looked unto Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.* And who were they? Why, all the people of God—the whole company of the saints in heaven and the saints on earth! It can be said of them all, "They looked to Him and were radiant." As there is life in a look, so is there light in a look! Oh, you that looked to Christ and lived at first, look to Him again if it is dark with you tonight—and speedily it shall be light round about you! "They looked unto Him and were lightened."

6. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* Who was he? He was a poor man—*any* poor man—nothing very particular about him, but he was poor—a poor man. What did he do? He cried. That was the style of praying he adopted—as a child cries—the natural expression of pain. Poor man, he did not know how to pray a fine prayer and he could not have preached you a sermon if you had given him a bishop's salary for it! But he cried. He could do that. You do not need to go to the Board School to learn how to cry. Any living child can cry. This poor man cried. What came of it? "The Lord heard him." I do not suppose anybody else did, or if they did, they laughed at it. But it did not matter to him. The Lord heard him. And what came of that? He "saved him out of all his troubles." Oh, is there a poor man here tonight in trouble? Had he not better copy the example of this other poor

man? Let him cry to the Lord about it! Let him come and bring his burdens before the great One who hears poor men's prayers! And, no doubt, that poor man lived to tell the same tale as he who wrote this verse. "This poor man cried and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles."

7. *The angel of the LORD encamps all round about them that fear Him and delivers them.* It is no wonder, then, that they are delivered, for the angels are always handy. They are waiting round about God's people. Lo, they are not at a distance to fly swiftly and come for our rescue, but God has set a camp of angels round about all His people! Are we not royally attended? What a portion is ours! Many are they that are against us, but glorious are they that are for us, both in their number and their strength. But the text does not intend so much the angels, as one blessed, glorious, covenant angel—the angel of the Lord, the messenger of God. He it is that holds His camp hard by His people and sends His messengers for their rescue in all times of difficulty.

8. *Oh taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* That is the language of experience. Some of us have lived by trusting God for many years and, instead of growing weary of it, we would invite others to do the same! Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! You cannot know His goodness without tasting it. But there was never a soul yet that did taste of the goodness of the Lord but what could bear cheerful testimony that it was even so. "Oh, taste and see." Partake of it! Become practically acquainted with it! Trust God, yourselves, and none of you shall ever have to complain of God. To your last hour you will have to find fault with yourselves, but never once will you have to accuse Him of changeableness, or of unfaithfulness, or even of forgetfulness! "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good, for blessed is the man that trusts in Him."

9, 10. *Oh fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.* They are very strong, those young lions. They are fierce. They are rapacious. They are cunning. And yet they lack and suffer hunger. And there are many men in this world who are very clever, strong in body and active in mind. They say that they can take care of themselves and, perhaps, they do appear to prosper, but we know that often you who are the most prosperous apparently are the most miserable of men! They are young lions, but they lack and suffer hunger. But when a man's soul lives upon God, he may have very little of this world, but he will be perfectly content. He has learned the secret of true happiness. He does not need any good thing, for the things that he does not have, he does not wish to have. He brings his mind down to his estate, if he cannot bring his estate to his mind. He is thankful to have a little spending money on the road, for his treasure is above. He likes to have his best things last, and so he is well content if he has food and raiment, to urge on his way to the rest which remains for the people of God! "The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

11. *Come, you children.* You that are beginning life—you that want to know where true happiness is found.

11. *Listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.* It is that which you need to know, beyond everything else!

12, 13. *Who is the man that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.* He that can rule his tongue can rule his whole body. Alas, that unruly member destroys peace and happiness in thousands of cases! The tongue can no man tame, but the grace of God can tame it! And that man begins life with a prospect of happiness whose tongue has been tamed by divine grace.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* True happiness is found in true holiness. "Depart from evil." That is, do not go after it. But it is much more than that. Get away from it. Give it a wide berth. "Depart from evil." But be not satisfied with the negatives. It is not enough to say, "I do not do any evil," but do good! The only way to keep out the evil is to fill the soul full of good. We must be active in the cause of God, or Satan will soon lead us into sin. "Depart from evil and do good."

"Seek peace." Be of a quiet turn of mind. Be always ready to forgive. "Seek peace and pursue it." That is, when it runs away, run after it! Make up your mind that you will have it. There are some that seek quarrels. There are some that seek revenge. As for you, seek peace and pursue it.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.* God is all eyes and all ears, and all His eyes and all His ears are for His people. Are you distressed in heart? God sees your distress. Are you crying in secret in the bitterness of your soul? God hears your cry. You are not alone. O lonely spirit, broken spirit, be not dismayed—be not given to despair—God is with you! If He sees nothing else, He will see you. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous." And if He hears no one else in the world, He will hear you—"His ears are open to their cry."

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* You know what we sometimes say—"I set my face against such a thing as that." Now God sets His face against them that do evil. You will come to an end, my friend. Your happiness, like a bubble painted with rainbow colors, may be the object of foolish desires, but in a little while it will burst and be gone, as the bubble is, and there will be nothing left of you! Even your remembrance will be wiped out from the face of the earth! What numbers of books have been written against God of which you could not get a copy, now, except you went to a museum? What numbers of men have lived that have been scoffers—and they who had great names among the circles of unbelievers? They are quite forgotten, now! But the Christian Church treasures up names of poor, simple-hearted Christian men and women—treasures them up like jewels, and their fame is fresh after hundreds of years!

17. *The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.* That is how we live, if you want to know. God makes us righteous and then we cry. We often praise Him. We desire to have our mouth full of praise for Him. But we cry as well, and whenever we cry, God hears, and our troubles are removed.

18. *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.* Are you here, tonight, poor weeping Mary? Are you here, brokenhearted, troubled sinner? Are you here? Are you seeking the Lord? Do not seek Him any longer! You have got Him! Read the text, "The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart." He is with you now! Speak to Him! Cry to Him! Trust Him. You shall find deliverance this night!

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* You should hear some of them talk, and you would soon know that, for I know some of the righteous that seldom talk of anything else! "Oh, the badness of trade." They have been losing money—Oh, ever since I knew them. They had not any when they started, but they have gone on losing money every year—and I believe they always will! And they always have pains of body. The weather is so bad. And they always have ungrateful friends. And the church they belong to is not up to the mark. Indeed, there is nothing around them that is right. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Well now, dear brothers and sisters, as that is recorded in God's Word, and most of us have a pretty good acquaintance with that subject, I do not think that it is necessary for all of us to insist upon it every day! Should not we go on to the next part of the verse? "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," but—but—

19. *But the LORD delivers him out of them all.* Not out of some of them, but out of all of them, however numerous they may be!

20. *He guards all his bones: not one of them is broken.* He sustains no real injury. He gets flesh-wounds and bruises, but his bones are not broken. That is to say, the substantial part of his nature is well kept and preserved.

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"CHRIST IS ALL"
NO. 3446

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"Christ is all."
Colossians 3:11.

MY text is so very short that you cannot forget it and, I am quite certain, if you are Christians at all, you will be sure to agree with it! What a multitude of religions there is in this poor wicked world of ours! Men have taken it into their heads to invent various systems of religion and if you look around the world, you will see scores of different sects. But it is a great fact that while there is a multitude of false religions, there is but one that is *true*. While there are many falsehoods, there can be but one truth—real religion is, therefore, one. There is but one gospel—the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing it is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should be born of humble parents and live as a poor man in this world for the purpose of our salvation! He lived a life of suffering and trial and, at last, through the malignity of His enemies, was crucified on Calvary as an outcast of society. "Now," they said, "there is an end of His religion! Now it will be such a contemptible thing, that nobody will ever call himself a Christian—it will be discreditable to have anything to do with the name of the man, Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." But it is an amazing fact that this religion has not only lived, but is at this hour as strong as ever! Yes, the religion He founded still exists and is still powerful, and constantly expanding. While other religions have sunk into the darkness of the past, and the idols have been cast to the moles and to the bats, the name of Jesus is still mighty—and it shall continue to be a blessed power so long as the universe shall endure!

The religion of Jesus is the religion of God. Hence, notwithstanding all the disgrace and persecution which it has had to encounter, it still exists, and still flourishes! It is this religion which I shall attempt to preach to you—the one gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—and the text embraces it all in the most comprehensive manner, "Christ is all."

I shall use it, first, as *a test to try you* and, afterwards, as *a motive to encourage you*. I want, first, to sift you, to see how many of you are the people of God, and how many are not. I shall make my text a great sieve and put you in it to see which is wheat and which is chaff. We must consider this passage in two or three senses in order, first, to use it as—

I. A TEST TO TRY YOU.

Christ must be all, as your Great Master and Teacher. There are some who set up a certain man as their authority. They regard him as their master, they look up to him as their teacher—and whatever he says is right—it is the truth and is not to be disputed. Or, perhaps, they have taken a certain book, other than the Bible, and say, "We will judge all things by this book"—and if the preacher does not teach exactly the creed written in that book, he is set down as not sound in the faith—and this they do not hesitate to say at once, because he does not come up to the standard of their little book! We meet with many people in this world who make their creed, their one little narrow creed, everything—and they measure everything and everybody by that. But, my friends, I must have you say that "*Christ* is all," and not any man, however good or great, before I can allow that you are Christians. We have not to follow men. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God! We are to follow no man, except as far as he follows Christ, who alone is our Master! Be not deceived—submit not yourselves to creeds, to books, or to men—give yourselves to the study of God's Word, derive your creed and the doctrines of your faith from it, alone, and then you will be able to say—

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

Let Christ be your only Master, and say, in the words of our text, "Christ is all." Now can you say this, or are you boasting, "The Baptists are all"—"The Wesleyans are all"—"The Church of England is all"? As the Lord lives, if you are saying that, you do not know His truth because you are not testifying that, "Christ is all," but simply uttering the Shibboleth of your little party! I should like to see the word, "party," blotted out from the vocabulary of the Christian Church! I thank God that I have no sympathy whatever with that which is merely sectarian, and have grace given me to protest against it, and to exclaim—

"Let party names no more
The Christian world overspread"

since—

"Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,
Are one in Christ, their Head."

If "Christ is all" to you, you are Christians, and I, for one, am ready to give you the right hand of brotherhood! I do not mind what place of worship you attend, or by what distinctive name you may call yourselves—we are brothers and sisters in Christ and I think, therefore, that we should love one another. If, my friends, you cannot embrace all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter to what denomination they may belong, and cannot regard them as your brothers and sisters in the Lord, and as belonging to the universal Church, you have not hearts large enough to go to heaven because, if such are your contracted views, you cannot possibly say, "Christ is all."

Next, *Christ must be all as your principal object in life—your chief good.* Your great aim must be to glorify Christ on earth, in the hope and expectation of enjoying Him forever above. But as it regards some of you, Christ is not your all. You think more of your shop than you do of Him. You are up early in the morning looking at your ledgers, and all day long toiling at your business. Do not misunderstand me—I dislike lazy people who let the grass grow over their shoes—and God disapproves of them, too! We want no lazy preachers of the gospel. The true Christian will say, "I know that I am bound to be diligent in business, but I want to work for eternity as well as for time. I need something besides earthly riches. I need an inheritance not made with hands, a mansion not built by man, a possession in the skies." Are you making this world your all? Poor souls, if you are, the world and the fashion thereof are passing away—your all will soon be gone! I fancy I see a rich man, one whose gold is his all, when he gets into the next world, looking for his gold, and wondering where it is, and being, at last, compelled to exclaim, in despair, "Oh, my all is gone!" But if you can say that Christ is your all, then your treasure will never be gone, for He will never leave you, nor forsake you. Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, you shall be happy and blessed, for you shall be crowned with glory and made to sit with Christ on His throne forever!

"Well," says some easy-going gentleman, "I do not make business my all, I assure you. Not I! My maxim is, let us enjoy this life, let us fill the glass to the brim and live in pleasure while we may." I also have a word for you. Do you think that such a course of conduct will fit you for heaven, for the enjoyments of eternity? Do you imagine that when you come to die, it will be any pleasure for you to think of your drunkenness? When you are lying on a sick bed, will your oaths bring you any peace, as they reverberate upon your conscience, just as I hear my voice, at this moment, echoing back to my ears the words I am saying? I think I see you starting up as you hear your blasphemies against God thus returning upon you, while, with a mind oppressed with anguish and eyes starting from their sockets, you exclaim, in your terror, "I hear my own oaths again! God is coming to call me to judgment, to demand of me why I dare blaspheme His name!" And the Judge will say, "You, with oaths and curses, profaned My holy name! You asked Me to curse your soul and now I will do it! You prayed in your profane moments that you might be lost, and now you shall be!" How horrible that would be! You who say pleasure is all, let me warn you that you will have to drink the bitter dregs of the cup of pleasure to all eternity, no matter how sweet the draught may now be to your taste!

But there are some more moderate people who are by no means extravagant in their pleasures and are great sticklers for religion! They go to church or chapel every Sunday and believe themselves to be a very good sort of people—such as will be accepted at the last day, and placed at the right hand of the throne of God. Again I put the question, can you say, "Christ is all"? No, you cannot say that. Many of you make the

externals of religion your all, resting in the letter, but knowing or caring nothing for the spirit. This will not do! And you are not such Christians as Christ will acknowledge if you are making anything your all but Him! Religion is not to be stowed away in the dark attic of the brain. Christianity is a *heart* religion, and if you cannot say, from the very depths of your being, "Christ is all," you have neither part nor lot in the blessings and privileges of the gospel—and your end will be destruction, everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord! God grant it may not be so, but that in both your lives and mine we may each be enabled to say of a truth, "Christ is all"—and that we may meet again around the eternal throne of God!

Next, *Christ will be all as the source of your joy*. Some people seem to think that Christians are a very melancholy sort of folk, that they have no real happiness. I know something about religion and I will not admit that I stand second to any man in respect of being happy. So far as I know religion, I have found it to be a very happy thing—

"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great."

I used to think that a religious man must never smile, but, on the contrary, I find that religion will make a man's eyes bright, cover his face with smiles and impart comfort and consolation to his soul, even in the deepest of his earthly tribulations! In illustration of this, I might tell you the story of a poor man who lives in one of the courts in Holborn, who experiences great joy in religion, even in the midst of the deepest poverty. A Christian visitor, going up into the poor man's room at the top of the house, said, "My friend, how long have you been in this place?"

"I have not been downstairs, nor walked across the room, these 12 months."

"Have you anything to depend upon?"

"Nothing," he replied, but recollecting himself, he added, "I have a good Father up in heaven, and I depend upon Him entirely, and He never lets me down. Some kind Christian friends are sure to call, and they never go away without leaving me something. And I get enough to live on and pay my rent, and I am very happy. I would not change places with anybody in the world, for I have Jesus Christ with me, and my heavenly Father will take me home, by-and-by, and then I shall be as rich as any of them—shall I not, sir? Sometimes I get very low, and Satan tells me that I am not a child of God, and that I had better give up all as lost, but I tell him that he is a great coward to come and meddle with a poor weak creature like I am, and I show him the blood, sir. And I tell him the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin—and when I show Satan the precious blood, sir, he leaves off tempting me, and immediately flees, for he cannot bear the sight of the Savior's blood."

Thus we see that true religion can cheer the sick man's couch, can make the poor man feel that he is rich and bid him be joyful in the Lord! Well did the old man say that the devil cannot bear the sight of the Savior's blood! And if, beloved friends, you can take Christ's blood and put it on your conscience, however sinful you may have been, you will be

able to sing of Christ as all your hope, all your joy and all your support! I ask you who love Jesus—does religion ever make you unhappy? Does love to Jesus distress you and make you miserable? It may bring you into trouble, sometimes, and cause you to endure persecution for His name's sake. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer tribulation. But all the afflictions which you may be called upon to endure for Him will work for your good, and are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed hereafter!

Now, then, let me ask, could you agree with me while I have been speaking? Can you now say that Christ is your only Master, your chief good, your only joy? "Oh, yes, I do love Jesus because He first loved me." Then, welcome, brother! Welcome, sister! You are one with Jesus, and we are one with each other! But if you cannot say it, how terrible it shall be with some of you when you shall find your gourds wither, the crops whereon you now lean struck down at a blow, your false refuges swept away and, deprived of all your feathers and finery, your soul will appear before God in its true character! May it not be so with any of you, but may you be united to Christ by living faith which works by love and purifies the heart! Secondly, I shall now consider the text as—

II. A MOTIVE TO ENCOURAGE YOU.

"Christ is all." My beloved friends, in what is He all? Christ is all in the entire work of salvation. Let me take you back to the period before this world was made. There was a time when this great world—the sun, the moon, the stars and all which now exist throughout the whole of the vast universe—lay in the mind of God like unborn forests in an acorn cup. There was a time when the Great Creator lived alone and yet He could foresee that He would make a world, and that men would be born to people it. And in that vast eternity a great scheme was devised, whereby He might save a fallen race. Do you know who devised it? God planned it from first to last! Neither Gabriel nor any of the holy angels had anything to do with it. I question whether they were even told how God might be just and yet save the transgressors. God was all in the drawing up of the scheme, and Christ was all in carrying it out! There was a dark and doleful night! Jesus was in the Garden, sweating great drops of blood which fell to the ground—nobody then came to bear the load that had been laid upon Him. An angel stood there to strengthen Him, but not to bear the sentence. The cup was put into His hands and Jesus said, "Father, must I drink it?" And His Father replied, "If You do not drink, sinners cannot be saved"—and He took the cup and drained it to its very dregs! No man helped Him. And when He hung upon that accursed tree of Calvary, when His precious hands were pierced, when—

"From His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down,

there was nobody to help Him. He was "all" in the work of salvation!

And, my friends, if any of you shall be saved, it must be by Christ alone! There must be no patchwork! Christ did it all and will not be helped in the matter. Christ will not allow you, as some say, to do what

you can, and leave Him to make up the rest! What can you do that is not sinful? Christ has done all for us! The work of redemption is all finished. Christ planned it all and worked it all out! And we, therefore, preach a full salvation through Jesus Christ!

What could we poor mortals do towards saving ourselves? Our best works are but mean and worthless to that great end. I am sure I could not do it. My preaching—I am ashamed of that, and there are a thousand faults in my prayers! God needs nothing of us by way of "making up" Christ's work, but He cancels all the sins and blots out all the transgressions of everyone who trusts to His Son's death!

If I have found Christ, I have found all. "I have not strong faith," you say. Never mind, Christ is all. "I do not sufficiently feel my sins"—but Christ is all. Many people think they must feel a load of repentance before they may hope Christ will receive them. I know every child of God will repent, but we are not *all* brought to the cross by the terrors of the law. It is not your *feelings*, my friends, that will save you, but only Christ—Christ standing in your place, Christ being your Substitute! If, feeling your need of His grace to pardon you, and His righteousness to justify you before God, you can but just look to Christ, though you have nothing good about you, you will have done all that is necessary to carry you to heaven—because it is not *your* act that can save you—but the act of Christ alone! A little while ago I had a conversation with an Irishman who had been to hear me preach. He had come to ask me, he said, the way of salvation. "What troubles me," he said, "is this—God says that He will condemn the sinner, and punish him—then how can God forgive, because He must punish if He would keep His word?" I placed before him the Scriptural view of the atonement, in the substitution of Christ for the sinner, and the poor man was astonished and delighted beyond measure, never having understood the beauty and simplicity of the gospel way of salvation before! "Is it really so?" he asked. "It is in the Bible," I replied. "Then the Bible must be true," he said, "for nobody but God could have thought it!"

If Jesus Christ is our Surety, friends, we are safe from the demands of the law. If Christ is our Substitute, we shall not suffer the penalty due to sin, for God will never punish the same sin twice. If I have nothing but Christ, I do not need anything else, for Christ is all! If Christ is your all, you will not need anything to help you, either in living or in dying! Now for two thoughts before I close:

1. *If a man has Christ, then what else does he need?* If a man has Christ, he has everything! If I need perfection, and I have Christ, I have absolute perfection in Him! If I want righteousness, I shall find in Him my beauty and my glorious dress. I want pardon, and if I have Christ, I am pardoned! I want heaven and if I have Christ, I have the Prince of heaven, and shall be there, by-and-by, to live with Christ and to dwell in His blessed embrace forever! If you have Christ, you have all! Do not be desponding, do not give ear to the whispers of Satan that you are not the children of God, for if you have Christ, you *are* His people and other

things will come, by-and-by. Christ makes you complete in Himself. As the apostle says, "You are complete in Him." I think of poor Mary Magdalene—she would have nothing to bring of her own—she would remember that she had been a harlot, but when she comes to heaven's gates, she will say, "I have Christ," and the command will go forth, "Let her in, Gabriel! Let her in!" Here comes a poor squalid wretch. What has he been doing—he has never learned to write, he scarcely went even to a Ragged-school, but he has Christ in his heart! "Gabriel, let him in!" Next comes a rich bad man, with rings on his fingers and fine clothes upon his person—but the command is, "Shut the gates, Gabriel! He has no business here!" Then comes a fine flaming professor of the gospel, but he never knew Christ in his heart. "Shut the gate, Gabriel!" If a man has Christ, he has all for eternity—but if he has not Christ, he is poor, blind, naked and will be miserable forever! Will not you, then, who are listening to me now, resolve, in the strength of the Lord, to seek Him at once and make Him your friend? No matter what may be your state or condition, you are invited to come to Him!

You blind, you lame, who are far from Christ, come to Him and receive your sight, and obtain strength! He is made your all—you need bring nothing in your hand to come to Him. "Ah," say one, "I am not good enough yet." Beggars do not talk thus! They consider that the needier they are, the more likely are they to obtain that for which they ask. The worse the dress; the better for begging. It is the same with respect to the gospel—you are invited to come to Christ just as you are, naked and miserable—that He may clothe and comfort you!

2. My last thought is this—*How poor is that man who is destitute of Christ!* If I were to say to some one of you that you are poor, you would reply, "I am not poor—I have £250 a year coming in—a decent house and an excellent job." And yet, if you have not Christ, you are a poor man, indeed. Look at that poor worldling with a load of £10,000 upon his back, a quantity of stocks and annuities in one hand, policies and railway scrip in the other—but he is wretched with all his wealth, though he can hardly carry it! There is a poor beggar woman, who says to him, "Let me take a part of your burden." But the miserable man refuses all assistance and resolves to carry all his load himself. But by-and-by he comes to a great gulf and, instead of finding these riches help him, they hang around his neck like millstones and weigh him down! Yet there are some who would do anything for gold. If there is one man more miserable than another in hell, it must be the man who robbed his neighbors to feather his own nest—such feathers will help the flight of the arrows which shall pierce his soul to all eternity! No matter what your wealth, if you have not Christ, you are miserably poor—but with Christ, you are rich to all eternity!

I think I see one of you ungodly ones in your last moments. Someone stands by your bedside and watches your face. The death-sweat comes over you and the big drops stand on your brow—the strong man is bowed down and the mighty one falls—and now the eyes close and the hand

falls powerless—life is fled. Ah, but the soul never dies! Up it flies to appear at God's bar. How will it appear there? Oh, the poor soul without Christ! It will be a naked soul—it will have no garment to cover it—it will be a perishing soul, no salvation for it! Mercy cannot be secured, then! It will be in vain to pray, then, because the lamp will be put out in eternal darkness! And the Judge will say, in tones that will pierce you to the quick, "Depart from Me, you cursed!"

May God give all of you grace to repent and to embrace the salvation which is revealed in the gospel! Every sin-sick soul may have Christ, but as for you who are Pharisees and trusting in yourselves that you are righteous—if you know nothing about sin, you can know nothing about Christ. The way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "But what is it to believe?" you ask. I have heard of a captain who had a little son, and this little boy was very fond of climbing aloft. One day he climbed to the masthead, and the father saw that if the boy attempted to return, he would be dashed to pieces. He therefore shouted to him not to look down, but to drop into the sea. The poor boy kept fast hold of the mast, but the father saw it was his only chance of safety, and he shouted once more, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, drop, or I will shoot you." The boy is gone! He drops into the sea and is saved. Had he not dropped, he would have perished. This is just your condition! As long as you cling to works and ceremonies, you are in the utmost peril! But when you give yourselves up entirely to the mercy of Christ, you are safe! Try it, sinner! Try it; that is all. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," is Christ's promise, and it shall never fail you. The invitation is to all who thirst. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come, and take the water of life freely."

I have heard that in the deserts where they can only get water at long intervals, they send a man on a camel in search of it. When he sees a pool, he springs off his beast, and before he drinks, he calls out, "Come," and there is another man at a little distance, and he shouts, "Come," and one further away still repeats the word, "Come," until the whole desert resounds with the cry, "Come," and they come rushing to the water to drink! Now I do not make the gospel invitation wider than the declaration of the Word of God, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Whoever you are, and whatever you may have been, if you feel your need of Christ, "Come," and He will receive you, and give you to drink of the water of life freely!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
COLOSSIANS 3; 4:1-4; PSALM 28:1-6.

COLOSSIANS 3.

Verse 1. *If uou then are risen with Christ. seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.* Oh, how often we need to be called to this, for the flesh is groveling and it holds down the spirit.

Very often we are seeking the things below as if we had not yet attained the new life, and did not know anything about the resurrection power of Christ within the soul! Now, if it is that you, believers, have risen with Christ, do not live as if you had never done so, but "*seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.*"

2. *Set your affection.* Not "your affections." Tie them up into one bundle. Make one of them.

2. *On things above, not on things on the earth.* You say that you were dead with Christ and that you have risen with Christ. Live, then, the risen life, and not the life of those who have never undergone this matchless process! Live above.

3. *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* The old life is dead. You are dead to it. You will not be consumed by it—you cannot be controlled by it. You have a newer and higher life. Let it have full scope.

4. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.* Christ was hidden while He was here. The world knew Him not. So is your life. But there is to be a glorious manifestation! When Christ is made manifest, so shall you be. Wait for Him.

5. *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth—fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* Since you are dead, let all the lusts of the flesh be put to death. Kill them! They were once a part of you. Your nature lusted this way. Mortify them! Do not merely restrain them and try to keep them under! These things you are to have nothing to do with.

6, 7. *For which things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. In which you also walked some time, when you lived in them.* "When you lived in them." But now you do not live in them. You are dead to them. If it should ever come to pass that you fall into any of these things, you will loathe yourself with bitterest repentance that you could find comfort, satisfaction, life in them. You are dead to them.

8-10. *But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.* No lies. Such communications are filthy. But you put these things away through your union with Christ in His risen life. Therefore, abhor them. Avoid the very appearance of them and cry for grace to be kept from them, for you have been "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

11. *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.* In the new life there is no distinction of race and nationality! We are born into one family. We become members of Christ's body and this is the one thing we have got to keep up—separation from the entire world! No separations in the church, no disunion, nothing that would cause it, for we are one in Christ and Christ is all! Now, as we have to

put off these things; that is the negative side—that is the law's side, for the law says, "You shall not." But now look at the positive side.

12. *Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.* This is what you have got to wear, even on the outside—to put them on, not to have a latent kindness in your heart and a degree of humbleness deep down in your soul if you could get at it—but you are to put them on. They are to be the very clothes you wear! These are the sacred vestments of your daily priesthood. Put them on!

13. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.* Just as readily, just as freely, just as heartily, just as completely!

14-15. *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.* For that is the great foundation of every godly fruit. We are in such a hurry, in such dreadful haste, so selfish, so discontented, so impetuous, and the major part of our sins spring from that condition of mind! But if we were godly, restful, peaceful, how many sins we would avoid! "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

15. *To which, also, you are called in one body; and be you thankful.* It looks like a very small virtue to be thankful. Yet, dear friends, the absence of it is one of the grossest of vices! To be ungrateful is a mean thing. To be ungrateful to God is a base thing! And yet how many may accuse themselves of it! Who among us is as grateful as he should be? Be thankful.

16. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you*—Alexander had a casket of gold studded with gems to carry Homer's works. Let your own heart be a casket for the command of Christ. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you."

16-18. *Richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* See how our being Christians does not relax the bonds of our Christian relationship? On the contrary, it calls us to the higher exercise of the responsibilities and duties connected therewith!

19. *Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.* Oh, there are some spirits that are very bitter! A little thing puts them out and they would take delight in a taunt which grieves the spirit. I pity the poor woman who has such bitterness where she ought to have sweetness—yet there are some such husbands.

20-21. *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* The duties are mutual. Scripture maintains an equilibrium. It does not lay down commands for one class, and then leave the other to exercise whatever tyrannical oppression it may please! The child is to obey, but the father must not provoke.

22. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers.* How much there is of that! How quickly the hands go when the master's eye looks on! But the Christian servant remembers God's eyes and is always diligent. "Not with eye service as men pleasers."

22-25. *But in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ. But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done; and there is no respect of persons.*

Colossians 4:1-2 *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that you, also, have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.* See how he keeps putting that in—"Be you thankful"—"with thanksgiving." Why, that is the oil that makes the machinery go round without its causing obstruction! May we have much of that thanksgiving.

3, 4. *Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.* So the preacher of the gospel asks your prayers—and it is a part of the duties arising out of the relationship between Christians that those who are taught should pray for those who teach God's Word.

PSALM 28:1-6.

Verse 1. *Unto you will I cry, O LORD my Rock: be not silent to me: lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down into the pit.* Oh, if God did not hear prayer, we would become like dead men—yes, like lost men. Our fall or despair would be terrible, indeed. "Lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down into the pit."

2. *Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto You, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy oracle.* Is that the way you pray, dear friend? I know there are some who, if they have uttered certain good words—got through a form of prayer—are perfectly satisfied. As to whether God hears them or not, that does not trouble them. But if you are a true child of God, it will be your main thought in prayer, "Will He hear me? Will He hear me? Will He answer me?" And you will think nothing of a prayer at all unless you have the comfortable, believing persuasion that your prayer has reached the ear and heart of God. Oh, believe us, for some of us know by experience that prayer is a real thing! It is no repetition of words. It really is the heart speaking into the ear of God—and God does graciously respond when prayer is truly offered.

3. *Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts.* We are often afraid lest we should get numbered with them—

"Oh, were it not for grace divine,
Their fate so dreadful had been mine."

"Gather not my soul with sinners," is the prayer of many a godly man. When he looks within and sees the sin that is there—and what he deserves from the hand of God, apart from the blood and righteousness of Christ—he begins, indeed, to pray, "Draw me not away with the wicked. O Lord, do not let me wander into doctrinal error or into errors of life, or into laxity of behavior, or into backslidings, but keep me fast, for unless You hold me fast—

'I feel I must, I shall, decline,
And prove like them at last.'

Draw me not away with the wicked."

4. *Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.* And a just mind feels that such ought to be the case. God is a judge and He will punish sin—and gracious men do not wish that it should be otherwise. Even to that terrible side of God's character which is seen in His vengeance upon the ungodly, the Christian turns the loving eye. He is not reconciled to half a god, or to a god with half the attributes of God, namely, love and tenderness, but he loves God as he finds Him. He loves that God who is a consuming fire! I would be afraid if I could not love God under any aspect in which He is presented to me, because just as I would feel that I did not love a man truly if I said, "In such a character I cannot endure him," I would feel that there was some difference between him and me. We must love God in every character—upon the throne of justice, as well as upon the seat of love.

5, 6. *Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up. Blessed be the LORD, because He has heard the voice of my supplications.* Can you say this? Excuse me putting the question again and again to all now present, for it is a very vital question. If you never knew what answered prayer means, God help you to begin to pray, "Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications."

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

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am with you."
Acts 18:10.

THE Apostle Paul was about to be placed in imminent peril. He was to be brought before the Roman governor, Gallio. The Jews, rank and rabble, were hopeful that they would get him condemned to death. In this threatening crisis the Lord Jesus would give him a word of comfort to strengthen him, that his courage might not fail. The best, the most assuring word that the Savior could speak to His servant was this, "I am with you." Nothing in heaven or earth could be more fitted to cheer his tried spirit! To know that Jesus was with him, approving, supporting, defending him, was a safeguard against fear. Years afterwards, when Paul had to stand before the Roman emperor whose will was absolute, whose fiat could have put him to instant death, he had no man who dared stand by him. A poor despised servant of a despised Master, he was not, then, cast down or disheartened, for he said, "Nevertheless, the Lord stood by me." Under the worst circumstances, true Christians find the richest comfort if they do but know that Jesus is with them! When our Lord went away to heaven and left His disciples on earth, they were like a flock of sheep surrounded with wolves. Just then He would surely give them, as a parting word, the tenderest and the most encouraging sentence that could fall from His lips. What do you think He said? Why, one of His farewell words was this, "*Lo, I am with you always*"—a dear and blessed legacy to His children who are still in banishment below! And when John, in Patmos, had a vision of Jesus in His glory, where, do you think, did he see Him? Did he see Him as standing before the throne of God, or in any position of glory? Yes, he did, but first of all he said, "I saw Him walking among the golden candlesticks." Now, he tells us, these golden candelabra represented the churches—and Jesus Christ was pictured even as a glorified Savior, holding the seven stars in His right hand and walking among the seven golden candlesticks! Hence I gather that the truest comfort of the Church is for Christ to be with us—and that one of the highest joys of Jesus is to be with His people!

I shall ask you, now, to consider the grateful fact that Jesus is with believers. The words, "I am with you," may be taken in three ways—and the three must be combined to get the whole of their sense.

"I am with you." This implies His *presence*. That would not be enough—a person is not with us if he is merely in the same place as a spectator. "I am with you" expresses His *sympathy*. He is not here as a stranger, but He is here feeling for us, compassionating with us. "I am

with you" has a yet deeper significance. It involves *succor*. He is working with you—on the same side—exerting His power in connection with yours. Put the three together, and you get presence, sympathy, co-operation, to interpret the meaning. We will take the three words, and Oh, as we take them, may we realize them as our own! The words, "I am with you" leave no doubt of—

I. THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

Believer, Jesus Christ's spiritual and most real presence is with you! This should greatly comfort you because it is the presence of One whom you dearly love and who reciprocates that affection with an accord so intimate that every hope or fear you feel is reflected in His breast. His heart beats true to you. I might almost say His nerves vibrate in sympathy with you! Oh, how it calms the mind in the midst of difficulty or danger, if we have near us, by our side, one toward whom our heart goes forth and from whom a kindred yearning comes back! The child sleeps sweetly when it is with its mother, watched and tended by her quick eyes and ready hands. The loneliest part of the pilgrim's road is relieved of its tediousness and its terror when some dear companion is with him, in whose fellowship he can agree, upon whose arm he may lean and whose constancy he can trust to share any danger. A sprightly word, a kindly look, a brotherly act seem like timely aid to us all when we are tired, footsore, out of our course, and out of spirits. Ah, then you could not have a sweeter friend with you than you have in Jesus! The society of brother or sister, husband or wife, parent or guardian, can never equal the hallowed peace of communion with Jesus, who loved you, lived for you, died for you, still lives for you, gives His whole heart to you—and only asks that you give your heart to Him in return.

Still more precious does this presence of Jesus become when we think how ennobling it is. Some people talk all their life of having been once in the society of some great person. That is, indeed, a foolish pride! Very empty! But to have been in the society of Jesus is worthy to be remembered, deserving to be recorded and most desirable to be repeated! I reckon that the angels would look more respectfully towards a man who has had communion with Jesus than they would at a council of kings and emperors, or a parliament of princes and peers! We are made priests and kings who enter into fellowship with our great High Priest and King. His glory overshadows us. Though He is transfigured in a way we are not, yet we participate somewhat in His honors, now, and we shall be altogether partakers of His glory, by-and-by. "I am with you," then, is the voice of a tender friend, and one of a superior nature who confers dignity by His companionship!

This—"I am with you"—is an enlivening cry. It inspirits a man, quickens his pulse and enables him to bid defiance to danger. We remember when Paul was in the ship tossed with tempest—what fear seized all persons on board! So much were they discouraged that they would probably have been unable to do anything for their own rescue had not Paul, with the coolness of faith, chided their panic, gave them counsel and bid them to eat, for, as he said, "this is for your health."

After long fasting, he saw the necessity of taking refreshment. And he led the way. He took bread, gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, then broke the bread and began to eat. This manly fortitude, this moral courage of the Apostle, repressed the general agitation and nerved them all with fresh hope, insomuch that they were all of good cheer and they also took some food. This was the turning point in their fortune and, in the end, they, everyone, came safe to land. Thus full often has it been in the time of battle. When the troops have been ready to flee, one able man has stood like a rock, has made caution look like cowardice by his own defiance of danger, has given a word which has made every soldier feel himself a hero, lion-hearted, not milk-livered! And so the battle has been turned. "I am with you," there, O Christian, is the voice of One whose presence fills your soul with dauntless courage! No fear when Jesus is near! None can be defeated who have Him to bring them succor. The presence of Christ with us puts an end to morbid apprehension and ghastly cowardice!

When we are told that Jesus is with us, we remember that His is a presence which causes intense delight. We have seen men with money, who were not happy. We have seen men with honor, who were not happy. We have seen persons in power, with the command of empires, yet they were not happy. But we never saw, and never will see the individual who has Jesus with him, who is not happy! To be near Him, to have Him with us is to have our fears relieved, our griefs soothed, our wounds healed and all our sorrows turned into joy! One drop of Jesus' love would turn the whole ocean sweet! Yes, though the bitterness within you seems to have penetrated your whole being, let but Jesus whisper, "You are Mine and I am yours," and the bitterness would turn to honey at that one single phrase! Only a glimpse from Jesus' eyes and the darkness is turned to noonday. Only one word from Jesus' lips, and the tempest that raged becomes calm and the ruffled sea is still! "I am with you" bespeaks the presence, then, of One who brings you delight.

And this presence, as I have already hinted, transforms the soul. When Jesus is with us, He makes us like Himself. He that lives near to Jesus becomes so like Jesus that others, "take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus." Put these thoughts together and you will see how infinitely desirable and how exquisitely satisfactory the company of Christ is. But, Ah, my words cannot tell you, though I had the tongue of the orator or the sweeter strains of the poet. Yes, the inspiration of the muse would fail to acquaint you with it! You must know it for yourself, or else you can never realize how transporting these words are—"I am with you"—Jesus present with His own people!

Now some of you know, by a happy experience, times and seasons when Jesus is specially present with His people. I trust we have often found Him so at the hour of prayer. Rising in the morning, it is sweet to find in those few minutes we give to God before we see the face of man, that, like the Psalmist, we can say, "When I am awake I am still with You." Then at nightfall, when the day's work is over, and we are about to

lie down and rest, it is good to find, as we kneel before Him once again, that Jesus is there! And, oh, some of us have proved what it is in the watches of the night to have His sweetest company! When darkness compasses us, silence awes us and sleep has deserted us, our soul has said, "Now will I speak with my Beloved," and we have always found Him awake! A sigh has reached His ears—the fluttering of an unfledged prayer! A desire after Him has brought Him near to our side, close to our bed, present to our heart. We have thanked God for sleeplessness when we have had our beloved Master talking with us and indulging us with a blessed sense of communion! And, oh, how near Jesus is to His people when they are passing through the stage of penitential love. I hope you often get there, when sensitive to your own imperfection and unworthiness before God, you are abased and humbled, yet looking up at the same moment to that dear cross on which He bled because we sinned! You see your pardon and acceptance written in crimson lines on the fair body of the dying Savior! I do not know that I have ever more tenderly felt the presence of Jesus than when, while my heart has been broken with a sense of my own worthlessness and insignificance, I have confidently fled for refuge to the hope that is set before me in the finished sacrifice and the perfect redemption that Christ has accomplished!

But, beloved, Jesus is present to us not only in our acts of penitence and devotion; He is present with His people in the battle of life! Yes, He will go with you to the workshop. The street is not too common for Him to tread side by side with you. Jesus can stand with you in the market. You can as truly maintain fellowship with Christ in your buying and your selling, if your commerce with the world is conducted in the fear of the Lord, as in your praying and your reading, which are of small account, unless "you have an unction from the Holy One." No kind of labor will ever make Christ take an aversion to you, however humble your toil, however poor the chamber in which that toil is carried on, or however rough may be the garb in which you have to earn your daily bread. Jesus cares not for these. 'Tis your soul He looks for and if you hunger and thirst for Him, He will go with you into the lowliest places and you shall find it true, "I am with you."

More especially, beloved friends, in the ordinances of God's house, may we look for the refreshment of the Lord's presence. Oh, what a beloved place this Tabernacle is when Jesus is here, manifestly in our midst, and witnessed by many hearts! It would be a poor meeting house if only the minister and the congregation, however large, were congregated together within its walls. Poor would it be, notwithstanding all the accessories of worship, yes, even with the bread and the wine, the elements of the communion supper, spread in rich abundance, without the Lord, Himself, here to bless the feast and feed the communicants! But, ah, when the King sits at His Table, then our spikenard gives forth a sweet smell and our heart is merry within us, even as the angels that are before the Throne of God! Does He not come to you as you sit in the pews, Beloved, and say to you, "I am with you"? And when you gather yourselves together to partake of the communion supper, is He not with

you there? Do you join in the solemn hymn, or do you unite in earnest prayer? What is it that makes the service enlivening, elevating, instructive and fruitful but the consciousness of His presence—this same "I am with you."

Yes, and when the time shall come for you to have done with ordinances—when the preacher's voice shall no more reach your ears, when the melody of sacred song shall cease to enter your senses—when you have joined here below for the last time in the fellowship of the Supper of the Lord, for you must bear the clammy sweat upon your brow, and wear the mortal paleness on your cheeks as you are about to pass through what they call the "gate of tears"—even then you shall find it a gate of endless joy because this shall be true to your experience in the highest sense, "I am with you." Fear not the darkness! Dread not the loose pains, shrink not from the weakness, tremble not at the advent of the grim King of Terrors. "I am with you" will change the hue of that affliction and when you are very ill, make you say that all is well!

Oh, if my Lord would come and meet me, my soul would stretch her wings in haste, fly swiftly through death's iron gate, nor feel frightened as she passed! So it shall be with you. I have but skimmed the surface of this first point—the *presence* of Christ—"I am with you." Do not any of you skim it. Go into the depths and enjoy it, beloved! The words still further express—

II. SYMPATHY.

Remember that Christ in very deed feels in His heart the sorrows of His people. Are they in the furnace? He walks the fire with them. Are they in the rivers? He says, "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you." And this is grounded upon the precious doctrine of vital union. Every believer is livingly one with Jesus. Jesus is the head, and the believer is a member of the one mystical body. Now you see, whenever a member suffers, the head must suffer, not only because the head wills to suffer, but because of necessity—if there is a vital union, there must be a real sympathy. Let this be, then, a matter of faith with us. If I have believed in Jesus unto everlasting life, Jesus is one with me as my head, and He must—whether I apprehend it or not at the time—He must be in sympathy with me. This He shows by the tender pity He has for His people. Do not think He is ever hard or unfeeling towards His poor, His afflicted, His depressed disciples! No, brothers and sisters, the heart of Jesus is full of tenderness! His heart melts with love, as He often proves by the sweet converse He has with them. Though He may leave the strong sometimes to bear, for a while, the hardships, and grapple, as it were, alone with the troubles of life, He will not leave His tried and tempted ones, or suffer them to faint by the way. Like a mother that lets her full-grown boy alone to shift for himself, but will scarcely go out of doors while the baby is ill, so will He watch over them. And has not Jesus been very, very watchful over us in times of pain, weakness, and serious apprehension? You know He has! He has kept His best succor till we had got into our worst plight. When we had spent all and exhausted

every resource, then He has come and brought Himself to our aid—and we found Him our all in all. Oh, what true sympathy this is! "A friend in need is a friend indeed." He treats us better as we grow worse. This is just the friend we need. One with us by vital union, He proves His oneness by His tenderness.

Now, beloved, if this is so, the very first sympathy you ought to seek in any time of trouble is that of Jesus. You have not always gone promptly to Him. You have been far more ready to run off to some kinsman or neighbor and ask counsel or succor of an earthly helper. What would you think of a wife—would you think she had much genuine confidence, much good understanding, much true love to her husband, if, on any sudden trouble or anxiety, she left him, fled from her home, crossed the road, entered another person's house and poured into another man's ears the story of her plaint or her peril? You would feel convinced that there was a lack of mutual love and reciprocal fellowship! And should it ever be that your soul goes after some poor mortal for consolation—when the beloved Bridegroom of your spirit can afford you all you need—to ask advice? It is often a helpful means, but go first to Jesus. Tell Him all! Pour out your heart before Him. He is with you. Oh, will you neglect One who is with you, and play Him so ill a part as to seek another's help when He is ready to give you all His help—His sympathizing help in time of need? The sympathy of Jesus will, in all probability, be most clearly manifested and most richly enjoyed by you at such times as you are most in need of it. Thus, when you are persecuted for His sake, He will not hide His face from you!

We are not likely to be burnt at the stake, or even cast into prison for the profession of His name in these days of civil and religious liberty, but there are divers tortures from which our fine sensibility shrinks, such as household persecutions. Little petty spites are often vented upon believers for Jesus Christ's sake. Now do not think a strange thing has happened to you! Take it as a natural consequence of not being of the world—and then hear the Savior say, "I am with you. I am reproached in your reproach. I am scorned in the scorn that is cast on you." Paul persecuted Jesus when he thought he had only persecuted some poor Jews. And the enemy persecutes Jesus when he persecutes a believer. "I am with you," then. Will you not say, "Lord, I will bear it for Your sake, and in Your company. Yes, if it were a thousand times worse, I would feel honored to endure it, if You are with me"? You will find Him with you sympathetically in your common sorrows. Remember, Jesus does not look for extraordinary occasions in which to sympathize with His people, though He will do it peculiarly then. But at all other times He is a faithful, feeling friend. "Jesus wept." It was at the death of Lazarus. Lazarus was only an ordinary saint—an ordinary believer. There was nothing so remarkable about his death as to make it exceptional. Think not for a moment that in the loss you have sustained, Jesus will keep aloof. With the grief that now weighs down your spirit, He fully sympathizes. In the griefs which are common to mankind, He bears you company. But if you should ever come into deeper waters—if you should

have to cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" then you shall still hear Jesus say, "I am with you," for He knows what strong temptations mean, and deep depressions and despondence that borders on despair. He has passed through all, that as the Captain of our salvation He might be made "perfect through suffering." "Tempted in all points like as we are," there is no grief in which Jesus is not near to us—we have but to open the eyes of faith and we shall see Him with us, even in the worst extremities of grief and pain!

"I am with you in sympathy." This shall be found true anywhere and everywhere by the believer—yes, even in death, itself, for Jesus died! He knows the death sweat, for He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He knows the fever, for He said, "I thirst." He knows the fainting, the languishing, for He said, "I am poured out like water; I am brought into the dust of death." He knows death in its severest form. He died as you will not die. Under the divine displeasure He passed away, but you shall have the light of the divine countenance amidst the shades of death. Fear not, therefore, that Jesus will forsake you! You have Jesus' sympathy. I want you to feel that. Well do I know what a precious thing sympathy is. A little child's sympathy will do you good. "Mother," said a little girl, "I do not know why Mrs. So-and-so wants me to go into her house so often, but she told me, when I came home tonight, to be sure and go tomorrow, for I comforted her so, now her husband was dead. And do you know, Mother, all I do is, when she cries, I put my face against hers and I cry, too—and she says that comforts her." And so it does. It is just that. We are not alone. Somebody—somebody cares for me! We shall never despair while we feel that is true.

Now there may be somebody here tonight who is alone in London—and you had better be alone in the deserts of Sahara. To be alone in London is to be alone, indeed! And you are thinking, "Nobody cares for me." But if you will take Christ to be your friend—if you trust in Him—Jesus will care for you and He will surely help you, for He is not one of those who will put you off by saying, "Be you warmed and be you filled." He will practically show His love to you, and you shall yet rejoice that Jesus is with you! You are not alone, though you seem alone." There I leave that second point, praying that you may all know the sympathy of Jesus. Once more—

III. CO-OPERATION is implied in the words, "I am with you." This was just what Paul needed. He had come down to the city to preach, and God said to Him, "I have much people in this city. I am with you." So Paul went to his preaching with a cheerful heart, for he felt that if the Lord was with him, it was good to preach. With good sowing, there would be good reaping. Now listen, worker—worker for God—and see if there is not music for your ears in this thought. Jesus co-operates with you! How so? Why, He commands providence! All things are ordered according to His will! The Father has given all power into the hands of Jesus. He regulates the fields of providence, that they may produce the best results for you. Go on, confidently, then. All things are favorable to you! As Mohammad

once said to his followers, "Swiftly on to the battle and win; I can hear the tramping of the angel Gabriel's horses as he rides into the thick of the battle to help you." They believed it and were comforted. What he said in lies, Jesus says in truth—"I am with you." You can hear the footsteps of the Prince Emmanuel! His power is ruling all creation to produce the grand result of His glory in the salvation of souls. "I am with you"—that is, "I will prepare human hearts for your message." You that talk to others will often find others ready to be talked to! It is a cheering thought to the preacher that he has always a picked congregation, selected by divine providence, that out of them divine grace may make a further selection! They are prepared. As the rain and the wind and the frost will prepare the clods for the plow and the seed, so do God's providence and the work of grace prepare men's hearts for the gospel! "I am with you."

Moreover, worker, Jesus is with you, helping you. He will suggest suitable thoughts. He will give you right arguments. He will often guide you to fitting words. Only trust Him and when you go about His business, the Holy Spirit shall be your strength! He will be with you to back up the Word of God you utter, by the power of the Holy Spirit going with it to convince men that what you say is God's Word to them. Fear not, therefore—if the converting of souls depended upon you, it would never be done! If a nation had to be reformed and the whole of another nation had to do it, it would never be achieved! But the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, and what He wills to do He can accomplish, and none can say no to Him!

Lastly, O earnest worker, Christ is with you to accept your service. Nobody has taken any notice of you lately. You have gone plodding on at your work with not a creature to help, and none to praise. Even your friend who used to, sometimes, give you a nod of approbation, appears not to have observed you lately. Never mind! Never mind! No servant that is deeply absorbed in his work cares much about what other servants may say about him by way of commendation. But if his master comes along and says, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" that is what he needs to cheer him! Some people will be overhauling your character—I know they do mine—and they are extremely welcome, for I care not as much for their opinion as for the barking of dogs in the streets! If my Master were angry with me, I would mind it, but they are no masters of mine, and they may say what they like. If my Master smiles, all the world may frown, it does not matter! But if my Master frowned, then if all said, "Well done!" it were but a poor, poor recompense to me. Servant of God, be this, then, your joy! "I am with you," says Jesus, "to see what you are doing—to accept and take your will for the deed full often—to read your real motives where men misconstrue them. I am with you. Therefore, go on your way." Sunday school teachers, tract distributors, or whatever you may happen to be—in one word, beloved child of God seeking to serve Jesus—take, then, this fresh from Jesus' lips, "I am with you," and go your way in the power of this, your might, to serve your Lord without weariness, till He shall say, "Come up higher." "I am with you"

Oh, you that have not any Savior to be with you, I pity you! But I would say this to you—He is still to be had. There is still—

"Life in a look at the Crucified One."

Jesus still has blood in which to wash the guilty—still has room in His heart for needy sinners—and the way to have Jesus for your Savior is simply to trust Him and to rely on Him implicitly. May God grant you grace to do this, for His mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 18.

Paul had been preaching the gospel at Athens to the most famous men of that city gathered at Areopagus.

Verse 1. *After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.* Another most important city of Greece, where he struck at the very center of the country by preaching the gospel, since these were the centers of commerce, and also of literature.

2. *And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come into Italy, with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome) and came unto them.* Lodged with them.

3, 4. *And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and worked: for by their occupation they were tent makers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.* He stepped into the synagogue and when the time came for strangers to address the audience, he began to argue that Jesus was the true Messiah. Nor did he argue in vain, for there were some who were persuaded. He endeavored to persuade them all, both the Jews and the Gentiles, who came together to listen to him.

5. *And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.* He may not have brought out the whole truth of God at first, but argued little by little to bring them, as it were, up the steps till they should be prepared to receive the grand doctrine that Jesus is the anointed one. His spirit was compelled at last to come to that point more fully

6. *And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.* Oh, what a blessed, "from henceforth," that was for you and for me! He no longer confines his ministry to Jews, but goes out seeking the Gentiles—takes up his true commission—becomes the apostle of the Gentiles. But let all of us take heed of opposing the gospel, because it is not to be trifled with impunity! A time comes at last when God's gospel seems to have done with us. Its ministers say, "We are clean." They shake off the dust of their feet and they go elsewhere to proclaim the gospel to others who may be less opposed to it. What a thing to be able to say, "I am clean." I wonder how many in this house of prayer could say that of everybody round about them, "I am clean. The blood be on your own heads. I am clean. I have spoken to you about Christ. I have warned you. I have invited you." "Night and day with tears," as Paul says elsewhere, "I have pleaded with

you, and now I am clean. I am clean." You know there is many a man that is clean in the blood of Christ in that sense who has not yet discharged his obligations to his fellow men, and cannot say, "I am clean." I thought it a grand thing of George Fox, the Quaker, when he was dying, when he said, "I am clean. I am clean of the blood of all men." To the best of his knowledge he had fearlessly proclaimed all the truth of God that he knew, wherever he had opportunity. O ministers of Christ, teachers of the young and all you who know Christ, the Holy Spirit be upon you, so that you may speak the gospel till you can say, "I am clean."

7. *And he departed from there and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.* "The nearer the church, the farther from God," they say—but it was not so in this case. He was one that worshiped God and his house joined hard to the synagogue.

8. *And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.* That is the old-fashioned way, you know—"hearing, believed, and were baptized." The new-fashioned way is baptized, perhaps hear, and very likely do not believe at all! That is not according to Scripture.

9-11. *Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace: For I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.* Farmers like to plow good soil, where they expect large harvests. So Paul, who was accustomed to make flying visits to places, on this occasion settled down for a long time—even for a year and a half! It would pay to do it, for God had much people in that city!

12-13. *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat; saying, This fellow*—"This fellow," says our Bible, but they did not say that. They had not any word bad enough, so they said "this"—

13-15. *Persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O you Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it, for I will be no judge of such matters.* I dare say you have heard Gallio condemned. They used to say in prayer, "Such-and-such a person went on, Gallio-like, caring for none of these things"—but in truth, Gallio does not deserve to be so condemned. It is no business of the civil magistrate to inquire into the religions of the people brought before him. It is out of his province. He was quite right when he said, "If it is a question of words, and names, and of your law, look you to it. I will be no judge of such matters." If the kings and queens of this world had been half as sensible as Gallio, there had been no stakes in Smithfield, there had been no prisons to lock up the Puritans!

Religion would be left alone, which is the one thing it needs—free Church and free State! We want neither the governor's help, nor the governor's hindrance. If he will kindly leave us alone, it is all we ask from him—and so far Gallio is to be commended! But I do not think he acted thus out of any intelligent scruples on that point. He is to be condemned because of the motive. No doubt he was indifferent and here may none of us imitate him! That he was indifferent and careless is certain, for he did not do his duty. It was his duty to leave this good man alone, but it was not his duty to allow the Gentiles, on the other hand, to begin beating the Jews. If there is six of one, there should be half a dozen of the other, and so we do not admire him when we read,

16-17. *And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things.* Perhaps liked it. "You came here," he said, "to accuse Paul, to get him beaten. Now the mob is beating you, and it serves you right. I shall not interfere. Why did you come here at all to plague me with your questions? Why did you interfere with Paul?" But I should think that this ruler of the synagogue must have opened his eyes when he found himself being beaten, instead of the persons whom he desired to have beaten! It is singular that this name, Sosthenes, should be used, when further up we find another ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, who was a believer in Christ. This was no doubt, one they had set up, instead of Crispus, having rejected Crispus for accepting Christ. And yet this man, Sosthenes, bears the same name as one that is spoken of as a brother in Christ afterwards. I wonder whether that beating did him good—whether, in the providence of God, he was led to see the hand of providence in this beating falling upon him, instead of Paul—and whether this ruler of the synagogue, who ousted a better man, did, himself, become a Christian! Let us hope it was so.

18. *And Paul, after this, tarried there yet a good while and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed from there into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.* Most probably not Paul, but Aquila had shorn his head, because usually Luke puts the man first. "Aquila, and his wife Priscilla." But here, in order to state that Aquila had made a vow, he put it, "Priscilla and Aquila." I think it very questionable that Paul ever shaved his head in that way. I think it was Aquila. If Paul did it, I think he must have been under a sort of mental aberration, as he once or twice before may have been thought to have been. Even he who, above all men, had cast out Jewish rites and ceremonies, yet, you remember, took Timothy and circumcised him—a most extraordinary action to do, as in this case, if, indeed, it was he who had shorn his head.

19. *And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.* Though he had turned away from them, yet still his heart is after his own country.

20-21. *When they desired him to tarry a longer time with them, he consented not, but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep*

this feast that comes in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God wills. Oh, how wise it is to say that when we are making plans and promises, "If God wills." The short way is to put a little "D.V.," which means that you are ashamed to say, "If God wills."

21-23. *And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.* For you not only need planting, but strengthening! Young saints, like young plants, need much watering, and Paul took care of them. Evangelists have not half done their duty when they stir up a community unless they go and seek after those who are converted, to strengthen them. Hence the essential need of a permanent pastorate over churches.

24-25. *And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord knowing only the baptism of John.* He had not got farther than that, but it is always well to tell out what you do know. It is the way to learn more and we doubt not that many a half-instructed Christian is doing good in his way, and it is not for us to stop him, or to find fault with him, but rather quietly to endeavor to tell him more of the truths of God. Paul did not say, "Now, Apollos, you must stop this, you know. You had better study. You do not know enough yet," but he let him tell out what he did know.

26-28. *And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, allowing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.* Now let us sing ourselves an encouraging hymn that as Christ, the Lord, said to Paul, "Fear not," so His Spirit may say to us tonight—

"Give to the winds your fears."

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GOD'S GLORY AND HIS GOODNESS
NO. 3448

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

"And he said, I beseech You, show me Your glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And He said, You cannot see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand when I pass by: and I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back parts: but My face shall not be seen."
Exodus 33:18-23.

IT has frequently happened that good men in times of great trial have asked God either to give them a signal token of His love, or a special revelation of Himself, that they might be strengthened and encouraged thereby. I suppose of many here present it is true that when called by the Master to great labor or deep affliction, you have been conscious of the same inward desire—your heart has craved after some extraordinary dispensation of grace to counterbalance the extraordinary visitation of suffering that has overtaken you. Were you indulged with singular nearness to God and unusual glimpses of His glory, you feel it would then be easy to leave all matters in His hands and acquit yourselves valiantly—strong for service, whatever there is to do—and patient in enduring whatever there may be to bear. That prayer, "I beseech You, show me Your glory," is a natural yearning, a spontaneous impulse of the soul. Albeit, I know that there is a grievous incredulity, a sinful unbelief which asks to see signs and wonders—and without them men will not believe—yet I think there is a desire which springs up in the breasts of believers from an earnest childlike feeling of dependence upon the great Father God which is not sinful, and which God accepts—and to which He often sends a gracious reply.

Now we will not linger over any preliminary reflections. Our text is rather long, and our time this evening is very short. Let us draw your attention, in the first place, to the fact that—

I. GOD'S GLORY EVIDENTLY LIES IN HIS GOODNESS.

You observe that when Moses said, "I beseech You, show me Your glory," the answer given him was this, "I will make all My goodness pass before you." So then, beloved, if we could actually see the glory of the Lord, then the infinite graciousness of His thoughts, His words and His deeds, all concentrated in one noontide effulgence and all beaming forth

with ineffable brightness, would break on our vision! But, of course, it is not a glory to be seen with mortal eyes, for God is a spirit and, therefore, He is not to be discerned by our weak senses, or to be understood by our gross materialism. Still, I put it thus—could God be beheld by the mind of man and His perfections unfolded to our creature apprehensions, we would perceive that the chief splendor of His Majesty lay in His infinite benevolence! God is love. This is the prominent point of the divine character. Though all excellent qualities beyond measure or degree, surpassing thought or reckoning, could be found in Him, yet, like the blended hues of many colors in the rainbow, the whole might be summed up in such words as these, "Your goodness."

Some sublime evidences and brilliant reflections of this goodness of God may be seen *in the works of creation*. Who can leisurely walk in the fields, or saunter among the hills and dells, observing the beauty and order, the uses and capabilities of this fertile earth, without breathing a tribute of gratitude to the goodness of the Creator? Who can look up to the heavens with a gleam of sensibility, or a glimmer of intelligence, by day or by night from these dusky streets of ours, and observe the luster of the constellations, or meditate on the regular motion of the celestial bodies, without an overwhelming impression of the transcendent goodness of the Lord? Yes, "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." The woods ring with the melody of "happy birds that hymn their rapture in the ear of God." The cattle on a thousand hills low out His praises and winged insects in countless numbers hum their joy! The world is His temple in which everything speaks of His glory! Some glimpses of His goodness may be perceived in Providence, too. The history of man is the unrolling of the volume of divine benevolence to a great extent. That silver thread runs through all the web of human history. Yet, my brothers and sisters, these are but glimpses, for, alas, in creation (and in Providence, too) much is to be seen of the terror and of the justice of God as well as of His goodness. Earthquakes swallow cities. Storms sweep away not only the possessions men own, but the men, themselves, who own the possessions. Shipwrecks are constantly occurring and the sea is a vast cemetery. Dire famines are still abroad. Fell diseases stalk forth and mow down their helpless victims. The Lord most high is terrible, yet surely He is good! His decrees are inscrutable. What then? We must be always ready to worship Him with resignation as well as with exultation, with bated breath as well as with grateful song. Tell me of the goodness of God to the whole animate creation! Commend me to the tiny insects that dance in the sunbeams of His widespread benevolence and I tell you that He is great in power! His ways baffle our scrutiny. For by one chill wind, by one cold frost, in the course of a night millions of millions of those creatures perish at once! Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God! Whether in creation or in Providence, between the tenderness that fosters life and the sternness that destroys life, the balance is held so steadily that we can but get glimpses of God's goodness by broadly surveying or minutely examining them.

The full display of the goodness of God, however, is reserved for the *working of His grace in the redemption of man*. Do you ask wherein the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared? The answer is, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." It is here at the cross, by the blood of the Covenant, that Jehovah makes His goodness known in its most divine forms! That God should be good to creatures is something to be thankful for, but that He should be good to *sinful creatures* exhibits His character in a far more marvelous light and should compel our gratitude beyond all degree. That He should plan a scheme of redemption, that He should give His Son to carry out that purpose, that His Holy Spirit should bow the heavens and come down and be resident on earth, dwelling in the bodies of His people, that He might work out the good pleasure of His own will—herein is goodness! Is the earth a temple?—its windows are few and narrow, letting in little light compared with the temple of God's grace which seems to be a very crystal palace, letting in the light of His grace on all sides! Or rather it is like one huge pearl, whose light beams from within and makes the earth and the nations bright with the radiance of its glory! If you would see the goodness of God in its purest tenderness, you must come into the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, into the holy of holies, where He dwells in the hearts of His people, who form the living temple of the living God! The experience of one and all who know Him will bear witness to this. It would appear, however, that in the manifestation of this grace, the goodness of God shines in a peculiar light. Another attribute is blended with it. Permit me to read the verse to you—"I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."

You observe here, that while God's goodness is His glory, *the very glory of His goodness lies in His sovereignty*. What less than this can be meant by the sentence, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." God is not bound to be gracious to anyone, and He is peculiarly jealous of His right to bestow His grace where He will. "Shall I not do as I will with My own?" is the question which the Most High seems to be constantly asking. He will show mercy, but He will take care so to grant it that His own absolute prerogative shall be conspicuous. He exercises a right of His own in every act of mercy—it is not of debt, but of grace—therefore, no flesh shall glory in His presence. The creature may not say unto his Maker, "Why did You made me thus?" No man is permitted to challenge His authority, or ask, "Why have You withheld such a gift from me, or why have You bestowed such a gift on another?" Against His fiat there is no appeal. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." I know this attribute of divine sovereignty does not shine in a very lovely light to many eyes. Oh, may those eyes be

touched with a heavenly salve—and they will see better! The naked grandeur of the fact is not to be impeached—the eyes are at fault! Let them be abashed—the eyes that are dazzled and blinded by the excess of its splendor, for the Lord is God, He gives no account of His doings. The Lord Most High does as He wills among the armies of heaven and with the inhabitants of this lower world!

Glory be to His name. Some of us have learned to love this attribute and to rejoice therein. We thank God that He is King. We delight in His absolute sovereignty, knowing as we do that He is too wise to err, too good to be unkind. Therefore, we say, "Let His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven"—and in all things let His counsels prevail—for in submission to Him we find all the purposes of His heart on our side, while in resistance to Him we find all His decrees set in array against us! Let not the creature, therefore, ask account from the Creator! Let not the subject call in question his rightful Lord! Above all, let not the disciple have a scruple about His Master's teaching. Not, indeed, that we should gaze at this one attribute till our eyes are so blinded with its dazzling splendor that we cannot perceive other attributes of the Almighty. All His perfections blend and harmonize—none of them clash or contradict one another!

God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, but *He always exercises that sovereignty with respect to justice.* He treats no man unequally. In judgment He is impartial. Among lost spirits, not one shall dare charge the Judge of all with partiality. The equity of their sentence shall be palpable alike to the criminal and the foe. Unmoved by passion or by prejudice, the heavens shall declare His righteousness—and hell itself shall be unable to impeach the integrity with which He administers the laws and statutes of His universal kingdom! Neither does God exercise that sovereignty inconsistently with wisdom. He has chosen a people, and He did not choose them because of their merits, yet depend upon it, He made a wise choice! Were we endowed with more wisdom, we might easily discern the choice God has made is not only gracious, but highly judicious. He is not blind and unwitting that the counsel of His heart should be distorted with a random change or an inevitable fatality. What though we cannot decipher the why or the wherefore, there is a reason which He has not been pleased to reveal. Therefore, it ill becomes us to pry into matters so far beyond the sphere of our intelligence! And still less would it be fitting to ascribe to mere caprice motives which we are unable to fathom. Our Sovereign Lord acts according to His own will, it is true, but know that He acts *according to the counsel of His will*, that is to say, not without deliberation, forethought and prescience of all the issues! Nor is this sovereign choice of God ever exercised apart *from* His goodness. He is infinitely gracious, infinitely benevolent, infinitely loving. His election makes the grace He bestows, the compassion He feels and the love He manifests more abundantly conspicuous.

Some preachers have set forth this doctrine as if it were their delight to represent the Almighty as an austere Ruler, to be dreaded rather than

to be revered! By exaggerating one feature of His admirable character, or rather by neglecting to draw other features in their due proportion, they have produced an unseemly caricature, instead of an attractive delineation. His absolute dominion has thus made men shudder as if it were an awful despotism wherewith He tramples down the creatures whom verily He upholds by His power! But know you that the Lord is good, that His tender mercy is over all His works, and His mercy endures forever! Though in the exercise of His supreme prerogative, He says, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," yet He speaks again in words like these, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live." He wills not, He declares, the death of the sinner. Infinite mercy is not inconsistent with unrivalled sovereignty. Do you tell me to show you that? No, but I cannot show you it—it is for God to show you! Who am I that I should attempt to reveal the Infinite? Go to Him and put up the prayer, "Show me Your glory," and you shall see His goodness with His sovereignty illuminating it like a blaze of light, always making it more resplendent, never obscuring it! At any rate, Beloved, the doctrine is transparent enough to arrest attention. Do not, I beseech you, reject it. I know how angry it makes some men to allude to it, but I know also how good a thing it often proves for them to be incensed, when the truth of God is more understandable than edible, for if the arrows of God stick fast in their conscience and wound them, there will come healing afterwards. Anything that wakes men from their apathy and makes them think is good. What though this doctrine may look like a stumbling block in your pathway, it is one of the great thought leaders that have often brought men on their knees before the majesty of heaven!

But ah, the best of men, while here below, can only have a partial view of this glory of God's goodness and sovereignty. Moses, highly favored as he was, beholds it but in a measure. He sees the skirts of God's garment—he cannot see His face. And yet it has been well observed that this very Moses afterwards saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ on the mountain of Transfiguration. "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Here you can but know in part, but soon, and oh, how soon!—you shall know even as you are known. The veil will soon be torn, my brothers and sisters! If we have believed in Jesus, the least among us shall soon be wiser than the wisest of those who still linger behind in the wilderness! We shall stand before the throne of God upon that sea of glass that glows with fire and cast our crowns before the eternal One, and see the Infinite One and glory in the sight! Thus have we tried to show you that the glory of God lies in His goodness and His sovereignty.

II. HIS GLORY CAN BE BEST SEEN IN THE CLIFF OF THE ROCK.

Moses was put into the cleft of the rock. Surely I am not guilty of trifling with a literal fact or fancifully spiritualizing the sacred narrative, when I take up the language of the Apostle Paul, and say, "That rock was Christ." If the rock from which the Israelites drank was Christ, surely

this cleft in the rock, this splitting of the rock, this making a shield and shelter of the rock, was a true type of our Lord Jesus Christ—

"Rock of ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

It is no poetical fiction, no coinage of the brain. It is a substantial truth of God that Jesus is the cleft of the rock wherein we stand when we come to God in Christ Jesus. There it is that we can look upon the goodness and the sovereignty of Jehovah, and more fully survey the glorious vision than it were possible for us to behold anywhere else. *Apart from Christ, men do not see the true goodness of God.* The description that some preachers give of God's goodness amounts to this—that men's sins are such trifles that God will entirely overlook them as frailties of the creature, or if He should punish the transgressors, it will be with gentle discipline and not with fiery indignation—and that only for a short time—after which they will either perish by annihilation, or else perhaps they will enter into life everlasting by a general restitution. Sin is treated with an indifference that borders on levity! It excites so little aversion among men that they begin to think it of no very great account in the sight of God! He is too good and generous to be hard upon His poor subjects, who did but follow their own inclinations and trample on His laws! Knowing what they are, He pities them, as if vice were a disease and crime a misfortune! Take heed, my friends, of all such sophistries! That leniency is not goodness. In fact, it is the very opposite. It has neither integrity nor benignity to recommend it. Take the case of a legislator or a judge, whose sense of justice might be lax, while his feelings were too tender to denounce a crime and too timid to condemn a criminal. Would you consider him deserving of eulogy? Suppose a magistrate on the bench should say, "Well, it is true this man did break into a dwelling house, smite the servant, kill the owner and wreck the property. The evidence is clear, but there are extenuating circumstances. He needed a little money, or he would not have done it. Poor man! The money tempted him! Let us take a merciful view of the matter. Is not money a commodity that everybody is anxious to get? Are we not all exposed to temptation? Do not put him in prison! Do not sentence him to death—how would you like to be hanged? Admonish the unhappy fellow, but give him his liberty! Encourage him with the hope of a better career in the future."

What would you think of this new species of charity? When felony is but a misdemeanor, and murder is condoned as a casualty, I can hardly imagine you would feel very comfortable with the red-handed culprit by your side in this Tabernacle! You would rather not have him go home and sleep in one of your houses tonight—your generous hospitality would rather grudge him a cordial welcome! No, we say that kindness to the murderer is cruelty to the nation! The easy good nature that makes light of sin is a wrong to the community! The reprieve and the release of heinous offenders is a breaking up of the defenses that shield us from men whose conduct is unscrupulous and whose disposition is ferocious. Or when, to give another example, I see a man in Holland, digging away

at the dykes which are made to keep out the sea, I might ignorantly resent any interference with him. Why should not the man have a little sand if he needs it to put on his floor, or why may not he take home a bag of earth to make the things in his garden grow better? Do not molest him! No, but with the knowledge I now possess of the consequences, I would say he will let in the sea—he will break up the ramparts! It cannot be endured. It must not be tolerated. He infringes the law to the hazard of his neighbors, so that it becomes such a high offense that mercy extended to him would be a misery to the surrounding population! What say you, then, my dear friends, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Would you impute to Him a pitiful clemency that rather exposes weakness than exhibits strength of character? No such callousness or apathy, no such disregard of the rights and wrongs of the inhabitants of the world belongs to the government of the Most High! Even the mercy of God, which is revealed in Christ and recorded in the Bible, is wise and discriminating. He is as severe as if He were not kind and He is as tender as if He were not rigorous. His justice is never eclipsed by His mercy and His mercy is not diminished, but rather is increased in splendor by His justice! Never, I pray you, think that men can understand the goodness of God till they see Christ Jesus! When they see Him crucified, they discover how He pardons sin, but not till an atonement is made—how He puts away the transgression, but not till His law is fulfilled and made honorable by the suffering of the Only Begotten! He does not pull up the sluices of iniquity and let loose the floods upon mankind. He is too good to do that. He lays help upon one that is mighty and executes His vengeance upon the sinner's Substitute. You never see His goodness till you get into Christ.

Nor does any man ever see God's sovereignty aright until he comes into the cleft of the rock, Jesus Christ. I love the high doctrines of the covenant of grace, I must confess, most devoutly and devotedly. But of this I am quite certain, that all the counsels of the Father concerning His people, and all the benefits He has conferred on His people were bestowed in the person of His well-beloved Son! Still, I know of no greater pest under heaven than high doctrine preached or believed in as an abstract system of divinity or a blind fatalism by those who have not their heart set upon the One Mediator whom God appointed, the blessed Redeemer whom He has accepted as our representative. Oh, how they caricature God as a Moral Governor! Oh, how they burlesque the gospel as a proclamation of good tidings to the children of men! The love they attempt to describe is unlovely—and the mercy they essay to publish is unattractive! They sing hymns of grace to the tune of reprobation! But in Christ Jesus you may see how sovereignty blends with sympathy and how the strong will that knows no mutability is consistent with the goodwill that owns no animosity! The Lord is King, but the silver scepter is in His hand. He fulfils His own decrees, but His decrees are not grievous, for Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant and He proclaims His readiness to receive every heavy-laden soul that comes to Him for mercy!

Now I further remark that *in the gifts of the gospel and the blessings of Christ we see divine goodness.* You will never see divine goodness as clearly as you do in the fact that God gave His Son. "God so loved the world that He gave"—gave what?—Gave what token of His love? Gave the air we breathe, the fruits of the earth we feed upon, the flowers that charm our eyes, the gorgeous sun that shines resplendent in the skies—these are proofs of His benevolence no doubt, but all other proofs are comprehended in this—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The gospel of good news declares everywhere that whoever believes in Christ is not condemned. Herein the amazing goodness of God is described in a few words—an infinity of meaning is pressed into a single sentence! The blessings that God has conferred on us in Christ—comprehending as they do the Holy Spirit who brings all things to us—show the riches of His goodness! Earthly blessings are but the lower springs—and they are often discolored in a measure by the soil through which they flow—but heavenly blessings are the upper springs, leaping from the eternal throne, immortal and pure, making those that drink pure and immortal, so that they shall never die! In Christ you can see divine sovereignty as you never saw it before. Oh, I like to think that Christ is King—that over the entire world He reigns—that God has committed all power into His hands who is our brother, touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The sons of Jacob might not go to Pharaoh, but it was a good thing when it was said, "Go to Joseph," for they would, none of them, be afraid to go to their brother! And now there is a mediatorial kingdom set up on the earth in which Christ, alone, is the Head. And who would wish to have a better Head and a better King? We can trust the power with Him, for He has absolute wisdom, unlimited goodness, unbounded grace. Oh, how glad are we that the Lord reigns and that Christ Jesus is head over all things to His Church, that He is King of kings and Lord of lords, according to that ancient saying, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." In Christ, sovereignty and goodness shine as with noontide radiance!

And now I would ask you, my dear hearers, to remember that *the sovereign grace of God may be seen in the gospel that is preached to you.* God might, if He had willed, have made salvation conditional upon your performing certain works. He has not done so—He has been pleased to give salvation to every soul that will believe in Jesus Christ! In His sovereignty He has been pleased to make faith the channel of saving blessing. He, in His sovereignty, might have ordained a thousand graces as the way to mercy, but He has only put two. "Repent," He says, and in another place, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." The knowledge of salvation might have been put so far beyond the reach of common intelligence that the whole of the British Museum could not have contained the volumes in which it was written—and an entire lifetime could not have sufficed to learn the rudiments of this best of all the sciences! Instead of that, He has put it in these simple sentences, "He

that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "He that believes not shall be damned." Here is His sovereignty and His goodness, too! Thank God for so simple a plan of salvation and thank Him, I pray you, for such promises as He has made. Listen, sinner! He has said, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He has said, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him." He might have chosen to send the gospel to the great and mighty, but He has dispensed it freely to the poor! He has directed it to the humble, yes, and He has made a special mark that He has provided it for every broken and contrite heart that trembles at His Word! How can you kick at sovereignty, however absolute, which is exercised in so tender, so gentle, so merciful a manner? Instead of rebelling against His scepter, come and kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way! Bow down before His nailed feet and ask the pardon that His wounds and death have purchased! Come to His cross and let your trust fix itself on His passion which has expiated the guilt of all believers! In His resurrection which has secured life to all that trust Him, and on His intercession, which guarantees salvation to all that come unto God by Him—salvation even to the uttermost! Oh, see Him! He might, if He had so willed, have withheld the gospel. He might, if He willed, have clogged the gospel with terms and conditions which would make the acceptance of it a hardship. Or He might have denied to you the hearing of it, even though He gave others that unspeakable privilege.

What, then, should be your gratitude, when He has been pleased to send His messenger to you with these tidings of grace, this proclamation of pardon—"Trust in the Only Begotten, who died on the cross, and I will forgive you—forgive you now"? "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as snow." Oh, yield, yield now. May His blessed Spirit come with these words of mine, which I would to God could be made more quick and powerful than they are—may His eternal Spirit come and clothe them with might and with energy to convict your conscience, to convert your heart, to renew your spirit, to make you bow before the infinite heart so good and yet so absolute! Then might you say, "Great God, I acknowledge You as my King! I love You because You are a gracious God. I worship You because You could reject me if You willed. I kneel at Your footstool and pray You to accept me, not for my merit, since I have none, but for Your mercy's sake! Oh, for Christ's sake, have pity upon me!" He will hear you, sinner! An answer of peace shall be given you—shall be given you *now*!

The practical end of all this may be summed up in a few sentences. Sinner—unsaved, you are in the hands of God to do what He likes with you. He can destroy you. He can save you. A moth is not more feeble beneath the finger of a man than you are beneath the finger of God. Be not, therefore, high-minded. Submit yourself to Him whose power is able to crush or to uphold you. But know that He in whose hands you are, is

infinitely good and gracious! Therefore, appeal to Him for mercy. By all means cherish hope. Yield not to despair. Suffer not that demon, like a nightmare, to sit on your breast, to crush out all your energies, stifle all your cries and prevent your drawing near to God in prayer! He is not more majestic and absolute as a sovereign than He is benignant and compassionate! When you are in His hands, you are in good hands. Resist not His will! Repine not at His decrees! Confide in His clemency. Approach Him in the courts of His house. Fall down at His mercy-seat! Adore Him by His generous titles. Seek shelter in His love. Give earnest attention to the gospel—believe it implicitly. Right soon will you then get silent musings, obvious reasoning, solid arguments to banish fear and nourish hope! God need not have sent His Son into the world to suffer and to die. It must have been gratuitous on His part. That you should have a share in this great redemption could never be inferred from His justice! It must be referred to His grace. But if you believe Him, then the redemption is yours! The faith you have in Him is a token of the favor He has towards you. If you rely upon the simple fact that Christ died for you, your faith is the substance of the thing you hope for, and it shall be the evidence of your special redemption! His blood was shed for your remission. Because He poured out His soul unto death, therefore your soul is raised up to everlasting life! Your relying upon Christ is my warranty for accrediting you with all the immunities and all the advantages of His salvation!

This sovereign goodness of God ought to be a great encouragement to any of you that have been great sinners, because while there is no competition on your part in which merit might bear the palm, there is a complacency on His part in which grace can assert its claims. If He can save whom He will, He may be as willing to save you who are the most depraved as He is to save those who have been the most virtuous of mankind! Do you heartily repent, at this good hour, of your transgressions? God has not limited the promise of this mercy to those who have transgressed but a little, but He is known to make the chief of sinners the objects of His greatest mercy! It is well for us that grace is distributed sovereignly. Better that we should look to His goodwill than dream of our own free will. To be suitors for the great benefits He has treasured up for His people is far preferable to being schemers seeking to justify ourselves and forge a righteousness void of worth, graceless, heartless and good for nothing! Since He does as He wills, He may be willing to give to you what you are desirous to ask of Him. No, He does will to give to you if now He moves your will to accept at His hand the rich fruit of the Savior's passion! Never did a soul desire God, but God desired that soul. Whenever a soul yearns to be saved through Jesus Christ, admiring the grace as it has been vouchsafed to others, and craving the same grace for itself, that hunger and thirst are prompted by God, and by God it shall be satisfied, for blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness—they shall be filled! Oh, come then, come and welcome! What more, what better can I do to conclude than ring

again that silver bell which has so often resounded clear and loud in this Tabernacle? It has not lost any of its sacred melody or its enchanting power—

"From the Mount of Calvary,
Where the Savior deigned to die,
What transporting sounds I hear,
Bursting on my ravished ear—
Love's redeeming work is done!
Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

Come, I pray you, for His mercy's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 45:1-16.

Verses 1-4. *Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me.* Long before the period of Cyrus's birth, this prophecy was written by Isaiah—and surely it must have flashed solemn conviction upon the heart of the king when he came to read words like these, in which his very name was mentioned—and all his exploits and successes, with which he vanquished his enemies, captured their strong places and cut the gates of brass in pieces! Our God has all things present before Him. To Him there is no future. All things are in one eternal *now* with Him and, therefore, He tells His prophets the things that shall be.

5. *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded you; though you have not known Me.* It is a wonderful subject—the providential government of God over princes and potentates that know Him not—how He raised up Cyrus on the behalf of His people, that they might be delivered—and though Cyrus did not know it, yet was he, as it were, an instrument in the hand of God—moved according to the divine will!

6, 7. *That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* It was to correct the Persian mistake into which Cyrus had fallen of a duplicate deity—one power creating light and another power creating darkness. "No," says Jehovah, "I alone am God."

8, 9. *Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!* As many do in these days. Tongue-

valiant men who dare to accuse the Most High, and arraign Him at *their* bar.

9. *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.* Let them strive with their equals, but who is he that shall come into conflict with the eternal God?

9, 10. *Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What are you making? Or your work, He has no hands? Woe unto him that says unto his father, What did you beget? Or to the woman, What have you brought forth?* Quarreling with God is a waste of time, is audacity and presumption! It will end in disaster to us, for the Lord is Lord of All!

11-13. *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command you Me? I have made the earth, and created man upon it. I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded. I have raised him*—That is, Cyrus.

13-15. *Up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the LORD of Hosts. Thus says the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you: in chains shall they come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, Surely God is in you; and there is none else, there is no God.* No other God. The day shall come in which this shall all be true, when men shall relinquish their idols and believe in that one great invisible God, the maker of all things! For the present we do not see this.

15. *Verily you are a God that hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior.* Throughout these long and weary years, man has forgotten or blasphemed his Maker, and God has sat still and borne it in the majestic patience of His infinity.

16. *They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.*

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BUYING THE TRUTH
NO. 3449

A SERMON
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"Buy the truth, and sell it not."
Proverbs 23:23.

JOHN Bunyan pictures the pilgrims as passing at one time through Vanity Fair, and in Vanity Fair there were to be found all kinds of merchandise, consisting of the pomp and vanities, the lusts and pleasures of this present life and of the flesh. Now all the dealers, when they saw these strange pilgrims come into the fair, began to cry, as vendors will do, "Buy, buy, buy—buy this, and buy that." There were the priests in the Italian row with their crucifixes and their beads. There were those in the German row with their philosophies and their metaphysics. There were those in the French row with their fashions and with their pretty things. But the one answer that the pilgrims gave to all the dealers was this—they looked up and they said, "We buy the truth; we buy the truth," and they would have gone on their way if the men of the Fair had not laid them by the heels in the cage and kept than there—one to go to heaven in a chariot of fire and the other, afterwards, to pursue his journey alone. This is very much the description of the genuine Christian at all times. He is surrounded by vendors of all sorts of things, beautifully got up and looking exceedingly like the true article. And the only way in which he will be able to pass through Vanity Fair safely is to keep to this—that he buys the truth—and if he adds to that the second advice of the text, and never sells it, he will, under divine guidance, find his way rightly to the skies. "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

Is not the parable we have just read a sort of enlargement of our text? When the merchantman had traveled all over the world to find some pearl that should have no flaw, some diamond of the purest water, fit to glisten in the crown of royalty, at last in his searches, he met with a gem the like of which he had never seen before and, knowing that here was wealth for him in the joy of his discovery, he sold all that he had that he might buy that pearl! Even so, the text seems to tell us that truth is the one pearl beneath the skies that is worth having, and whatever else we buy not, we must buy the truth! And whatever else we may have to sell, yet we must never sell the truth, but hold it fast as a treasure that will last us when gold has cankered, silver has rusted, the moth has eaten up all goodly garments and all the riches of men have gone like a puff of smoke, or melted in the heat of the judgment day like the dew in the

beams of the morning sun! Buy the truth. Here is *the* treasure. Cost it what it may, buy it. Here is the piece of merchandise which you must buy, but must not sell! You may give all for it, but you may take nothing in exchange for it, since there is nothing that can be likened to it.

With this as a preface, let us now came straight to the text, and you shall notice—

I. THE COMMODITY THAT IS SPOKEN OF.

"Buy the truth." I shall not speak tonight of those common forms of truth that relate to politics, to history, to science, or to ordinary life, yet would I say of all these—buy the truth. Never be afraid of the truth. Never be afraid in anything of having your prejudices knocked on the head. Always be determined, come what may, even though truth should prove you to be a fool, yet to accept the truth—and though it should cost you dearly, yet still pursue it, for in the long run they who build mere speculations, fancies and errors, though they may seem to build suitable structures for the time, shall find that they are wood, hay, and stubble, and shall be consumed—but he that keeps to what he knows, to matters of fact, and matters of truth, builds gold, silver, and precious stones, which the trying fire of the coming ages shall not be able to destroy! I would sooner discover one fact, and lay down one certain truth, than be the author of ten thousand theories, even though those theories should, for a while, rule all the thought of mankind!

But I speak now of *religious truth*. Buy that truth! Buy that truth above all others. And here we must have three heads. First, *in the matter of doctrinal truth, buy the truth*. Holy Scripture is the standard of the truth. To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no truth in them. "Your Word is truth." Here is silver tried in the furnace and purified seven times. Speak of Infallibility? It is not at Rome, but it is here in this Book! Here is an infallible witness to the truth, and he that is taught of the Holy Spirit to understand it gets at the truth. Now, dear brothers and sisters, do aim to get the right truth, the real truth as to matters of doctrine. Count it not a trifle to be sound in the faith. Think no error to be harmless, for the truth is very precious, and error, even when we do not see it to be so, may lead to the most solemn consequences of mischief. In this world we see too much of salvation without Christ—I mean we meet with many who believe that they are saved because they have been baptized, or confirmed, or passed through the ceremonies of the church to which they belong. They have not looked to the precious blood! They are not depending simply upon the finished work of the Redeemer, but something else than Christ has become their confidence. Now, avoid that, and buy the truth which lies here, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." We hear too much, now-a-days, of regeneration without faith—the supposed regeneration of unconscious babies, the new birth of people through drops of water when they are not able to understand what is performed upon them! I beseech you believe that there is no new birth where there is not a confidence in Christ, and

that the regeneration which does not lead to repentance and faith, which is not, indeed, immediately attended therewith, is no regeneration whatever! Buy the truth in this matter. Stand to it that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in rational and intelligent beings, leading them to hate sin and to lay hold of eternal life!

Alas, we have in some quarters too much of faith without works. A kind of faith is preached, a kind of faith is trusted in which is not practical. Men say they believe, but they do not prove it by their lives. They remain in sin and yet wrap themselves up in the belief that they are God's chosen ones. From such, turn away, and remember that a faith without works is dead, and only the faith that changes the character, sanctifies the life and leads the man to God, is the faith which will save the soul! We must see to it that in our doctrine we bow our judgment to the teachings of Scripture and try to be conformed to all the revelation of God and especially to all the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ! May we not fall into one error or another. Scylla is there and Charybdis there, and he is a happy helmsman who can steer between the two! You shall fall into this 'ism' or into that, unless you keep to the truth! Never mind whether you can make the truth always consistent to your own judgment or not; if it is the truth, believe it! And though it should seem to contradict another truth, yet hold to it, if it is in the Word, waiting till clearer light of God shall reveal to you that all these truths stand in a wonderful harmony and consistency which, at first, you could not perceive. In doctrine, buy the truth!

But, secondly, *buy experiential truth*. I know not another word to use. I mean truth within, the truth experienced. See that this is real truth. How easy it is to be deceived with the notion that we are converted when we still need to be converted—to fancy that because we have the approbation of our minister and of our Christian friends, we must, therefore, necessarily be the people of God! There is only one true new birth, but there are 50 counterfeits of it. In this respect, then, buy the truth. Let me have you beware of an experience which has a faith in it that was never attended with repentance. I am afraid of a dry-eyed faith! That faith seems to me to be the faith of God's elect, whose eyes are full of tears. If you have never felt yourself a sinner, never trembled under the law of God, never felt that you have deserved to be cast into hell, I am afraid your faith is a mere presumption and not the faith that looks to Christ. Beware of an experience that lies in talk and not in feeling! Mr. Talkative, in Bunyan's Pilgrim could speak very glibly about religion—no man more so than he—he was fit to take the chair in an assembly of divines, but it was not heart-work, it was all surface-work. Plow deep, my brothers and sisters! Feel what you believe! Let it be with you real home-work, soul-work, the work of God the Holy Spirit—not a temporary excitement, not head-knowledge, not theory! May the truth be burned into your souls by the operation of the Holy Spirit! In this respect, buy the truth.

Alas, we see now-a-days in many professors, a great deal of life without struggle—and I think I have learned that all spiritual life that is not attended with struggles is a mistake, for Isaac, the child of the promise, is sure to be mocked by Ishmael! No sooner does the seed of the woman come into the world than the seed of the serpent tries to destroy it. You must, and will, find a battle going on within you if you are a believer! Sin will contest with grace, and grace will seek to reign over sinful corruptions. Be afraid of too easy an experience. "Moab is at ease from his youth; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel; for the time comes when the Lord will search Jerusalem with candles and punish the men that are settled upon their lees." There must be strivings within, or we may well beware of such an experience! And I think I have noticed a growing feeling abroad of confidence without self-examination. I would have you hold to believe God's Word, but do not take your own state at haphazard. Do not conclude that you are a Christian because you thought you were one ten years ago. Day by day bring yourself to the touchstone. He that cannot bear examination will have to bear condemnation! He that dares not search himself will find that God will search him. He that is afraid to look himself in the face had need to be afraid to look the Judge in the face when the great white throne shall be placed, and all the world summoned to judgment! Confidence is quite consistent with self-examination and I pray you in this thing, buy the truth and seek to have a religion that will bear the test—a true faith, a living faith, a faith that moves your soul, a deep-rooted faith, a faith which is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, for the time comes when, as the Lord lives, nothing short of this will stand you in good stead!

Again, I spoke of three sorts of the truth—doctrinal revelation, experiential truth, and now *practical truth*. By practical truth I mean our actions being consistent, and those of a right and straightforward course. In this matter, buy the truth! You profess to be a Christian—be a Christian! You say that you are a follower of Christ—follow Him, then! You know it is right to be a person of integrity and uprightness—be so! Let dirty tricks of trade, let no meanness, let none of those white lies which degrade commerce now days, ever come across your path except to be reprobated and abhorred. Walk straight forward. Learn not to tack. Do not wish to understand policy, craft and cunning. Buy the truth. It will yet shame the world! He that speaks out his mind, says what he means, and means what he says, does the just thing, does the right thing, fears no man and lifts his head boldly in the face of all creation if it dares to whisper that it will enrich him by his doing wrong—that is the man that buys the truth *practically*. You know how it can be carried out in commerce readily enough, in the parlor, in the drawing room, and in the kitchen. There is a truthful way for a shoeblack to blacken shoes in the street, and there is a lying way of doing it. There is a truthful way of doing the most common actions, and there is a false method of doing the very same thing. In this respect, then, buy the truth, as to the

straightforwardness, the clean, sharp transparency of your moral character and of your Christian conduct! Never seem to be what you are not, or if you must, for a while, be in that position, count that you are unfortunate and escape from it as soon as you can! Never do what you are ashamed of—it matters not who sees. Think always that God sees, and with God for a witness, you have enough observers! Only do that which you would have done if all eyes were fixed on you and you were observed even by your most cruel critics. Never stifle conscience. Carry out your convictions. If the skies fall, stand upright. What God's Holy Spirit tells you, do. What you find in this Book, carry out. If you bring any mischief to other people through it, that is their business. If I stay on the correct side of the road and run over anybody—that is his fault—he should have stayed out of the way. I would not run over him if I could help it, but I cannot turn aside from the correct road. Stand in your place. Let malignant eyes look at you, but, like the sun, shine on. And if others envy you, fret not because of them, neither be grieved to do the truth—but in this respect, again, fulfill the text and—"buy the truth."

So have I shown you what the commodity is—doctrinally, experientially, and practically. "Buy the truth." Now let us come and think especially of the first part of the text.

II. HOW THIS COMMODITY IS OBTAINED.

"*Buy* the truth." Let us correct an error here. Some might suppose that Christ, the gospel and salvation—all of which are included in the truth—can be bought. They can, but they cannot. They can in the sense of the text. They cannot in any other sense. You cannot purchase salvation—merit cannot win it. Christ's price is, "Without money and without price." Has not the prophet so worded it? "Yes, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Salvation is of free grace, and is, from the very necessity of its nature, gratis. You cannot merit it! You cannot earn it! It is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth, but, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion."

What, then, does the text mean? I will try to expound the Word. It means, first, *to be saved, give up everything that must be given up in order to your receiving the free salvation. Every sin must be given up.* No man shall go to heaven while he lives in and favors any one sin. A man may sin, and be saved, but he cannot love sin and be saved! Give up, then, your drunkenness, if that is your sin. Give up, then, your unchaste living if that is your sin. Conquer that angry temper, that love of greed—whatever it is that keeps you back from Christ. Buy the truth and give up these. You will not merit salvation, then, but if this must be given up, let it not stand in your way. Give it up, man! Since you cannot have your sin and have Christ, too, get a divorce from your sin and take holiness and take the Savior! You must also give up all your self-righteousness. Some are trusting in their prayers. Some are trusting in their tears, their repentances, their feelings, their church or chapel attendance and I know not what men will not trust in! Give them all up. They are all lies! There

is no reliance to be placed on anything you can do. Come and trust what Christ has done, and if it is, as it certainly is necessary for you to give up your own righteousness to win Christ and be found in Him, then do it, and in this sense part with all you have that you may buy Christ! Yourself—your sinful self and your righteous self—oh, that you might be willing to part with both, that you might buy the true salvation!

And the text means this, again, that if, in order to be saved, it should cost you a deep experience and much pain, yet never mind it. It is better that you should bear all that and get the truth, than that you should escape without this heart-searching work and be deceived at the last. If the price at which you shall have a true experience is that of sorrow, buy the truth at that price. Be willing to let the doctor's knife wound you, if thereby he shall heal you. Be willing to lose the right eye or the right hand if, thereby, you shall enter into eternal life!

It also means this—buy the truth—that is, *be willing at all risks to hold to the truth.* Buy it as the martyrs did when they gave their bodies to be burned for it! Buy it as many have done when they have gone to prison for it. Buy it if you should lose your job for it. Lose your job sooner than tell a lie! Like the three holy children, be rather willing to go into the fiery furnace than to worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Run the risk of being poor. Do not believe, as all the world says, that you must live. There is no absolute necessity for it. Sometimes it is a grander thing to die. Let the necessity be, "We must be honest. We must do the right. We must serve God," for that is a far greater necessity than that of merely living. Count all things but dross that you may be a true man, a godly man, a holy man, a Christly man, and in this sense make sacrifice of all, and thus "buy the truth."

I think that is what the word means. I expound it to mean this—give anything and everything, sooner than part with Christ, part with the living work of grace in your heart, or part with the integrity of your conduct. And now let me—

III. PARAPHRASE THESE WORDS.

"Buy the truth." Then I say, *buy only the truth.* Do not be throwing away your life, your abilities, your zeal and your earnestness, for a lie. Some are doing it. Thousands of pounds are given to erect edifices for doing mischief. Multitudes of sermons are preached, very zealously, to propagate lies and sea and land are compassed to make proselytes, who shall be ten times more children of hell than they were before! Buy only the truth. Do not buy the glittering stuff they call truth. Never mind the label—look to see if it is the truth. Bring everything that is propounded as the truth to the test, to the trial. If it will not stand the fire of God's Word, then do not buy it! No, do not have it as a gift! No, do not keep it in the house! Run away from it! It eats as does a canker—let it not come near you. Buy only the truth!

"Buy the truth" at any price, and sell it at no price. Buy it at any price. If you lose your body for it, if you lose not your soul, you have made a good bargain! If you lose your estate for it, yet if you have heaven in

return, how blessed the exchange! You certainly will not need for it to lose your peace of mind, but you may lose everything else, and you shall make a good bargain. Come to no terms with Christ. Throw all into the soul bargain. Let all go as long as you may, but have truth in the doctrine, truth in the heart, truth in the life and Christ, who is the truth, to be your treasure forever!

Buy all the truth. When you come to the Bible, do not pick and choose. Do not try to believe half of it and leave out the other half. Buy the truth—that is, not a section of it that suits your particular idiosyncrasy, but buy the whole! Why need you break up pearls and dissolve them? Buy all that is true. One doctrine of God's Word balances another. He who is altogether and only a Calvinist probably only knows half the truth, but he who is willing to take the other side, as far as it is true, and to believe all he finds in the Word of God, will get the whole pearl.

Buy the truth, now —buy the truth tonight. It may not be for you to buy tomorrow. You may be in that land where God has cast forever the lost souls away from all access to the truth, where truth's shadow, cold and chill, shall fall upon you, and you, in outer darkness, shall weep and wail, and gnash your teeth because you shut out the truth from you, and now truth has shut you out, and all your knockings at her door shall be answered with the dolorous cry, "Too late, too late! You cannot enter now!"

Thus I have paraphrased the text. Buy only the truth. Buy all the truth. Buy the truth at any price and buy the truth now. Briefly let me give you—

IV. THE REASONS FOR THIS PURCHASE.

You need the truth and you will never be received by God at last unless you bring the truth in your right hand. Only the truthful can enter those gates of pearl. You need the truth now. You are not fit to live any more than to die without an interest in the truth as it is in Jesus. Accept Christ to be truly yours, so truly yours as to make you true! You know not how to fight the battle of life at all without the truth. Your life will be a blunder, and the close of it will be a disaster unless you buy the truth. God grant that you may buy the truth now. You need it. You need it now, and you will need it forever. Oh, I would to God that that hymn we sang should not merely be heard by you, but felt by you—

"Hasten, sinner, to be wise,
And stay not for the morrow's sun."

Oh, that fatal "tomorrow!" Over the cliffs of "tomorrow" millions have fallen to their ruin! Tomorrow; yes, "tomorrow! Here are these put-offs, and these delays, and yet God has never given you a promise of mercy tomorrow! His Word is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." A better day shall never come than this day. Oh, that you would accept it now!—

"If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all."

And till times are more propitious, if you wait, you will wait on forever and forever! God grant you may buy His truth now, for the text is in the present tense, for now you need it. Let me direct you to—

V. THE MARKET WHERE YOU CAN BUY IT.

These are the words of Jesus Christ when He appeared to His servant John, "I counsel you, buy of Me." There is no place where truth can be found in its power and life, except in Jesus Christ! Truth is in His blood—it will wash away what is false in you. Truth is in His Spirit—it will eradicate what is dark and vile in you. His love will make you true by conforming you to Himself. Come to Christ. Bring nothing with you. Come as you are, empty-handed, penniless and poor. The rivers of milk and wells of wine are all with Him. He is the banquet giver, and the banquet, too. To trust Him is to live. To look to Him, alone, for salvation is to find salvation in that look! Oh, that these simple words might point someone to the place where he shall buy the truth! And now let me repeat my text again, "Buy the truth."

Do not misread it. It does not say *hear about the truth*. That is a good thing, but hearing is not buying, as many of you tradesmen know to your cost. You may tell people where to go, but you do not want them merely to hear—you are not content with that—you want them to buy! Oh, that some of you, my hearers, would become buyers of the truth! I know some of you. I happen to look about and find out here and there one—some of you, whom I know, and respect, and esteem, and pray for. I had thought that you would have bought the truth long ago—it often staggers me why you have not! Oh, that you were decided for God! I am afraid I am preaching some of you into a hardened state. If the gospel does not save you, it will certainly be a curse to you—and I am afraid it is being so to some of you. Do think of this, I pray you! Why should you and I have the misery of doing each other hurt when our intention is on both sides, I am sure, to do that which is kind and good? Oh, yield to my Master! The Light of the World is, with His hand, softly knocking at your door tonight! Do you not hear the knock of the hand that was pierced? Admit Him! He comes not in wrath—He comes in mercy! Admit Him! He has tarried long, even these many years, but no frown is yet upon His brow. Rise now and let Him in! Be not ashamed. Though ashamed, be not afraid, but let Him in, and blushing, with tears in your face, say to Him, "My Lord, I will trust You. Worthless worm as I am, I will depend upon You!" Oh, that you would do it now, this moment! The Lord give you grace to do it! Do not only hear about it, but buy the truth!

Do not merely commend the truth by saying, "The preacher spoke well, and he spoke earnestly, and I love what he said." The preacher had almost rather that you said nothing than that, if you do not buy the truth! How it provokes the salesman when a customer says, "Yes, it is a beautiful article, and very cheap, and just what I need"—and then walks out of the shop! No, buy the truth and you shall commend it afterwards—and your commendation shall be worth the hearing.

And, I pray you, do not stand content *with merely knowing about the truth*. Oh, how much some of you know! How much more you know than even some of God's people! You could correct many of my blunders. But ah, he that knows is nowhere unless he also has. To know about bread will not satisfy my hunger. To know that there are riches at the bank will not fill my pocket. Buy the truth, as well as know it! That is, make it your own.

And do not, I pray you, *intend to buy it*. Oh, intentions, intentions, intentions! The road to hell—not heaven—that is a mistake of the proverb—the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Oh, you laggards, pull up the paving stones and hurl them at the devil's head. He is ruining you! He is decoying you to your destruction! Turn your intentions into actions and no longer intend to buy, but buy the truth!

And do not, tonight, *wish that the truth were yours*, but buy it! You say the cost is too great. Too great? It is nothing. It is "without money and without price." Do you mean, however, to say, that it is too great a cost to give up a sin? What? Will you burn in hell rather than give up a lust? Will you dwell in everlasting burnings sooner than give up those cups that intoxicate you? Must you have your silly wantonness and lascivious mirth, or any kind of sin? Must you have it? Will you sooner have it than heaven? Then, sirs, your blood is on your own heads. You have been warned. I hope you are sober and have not yet gone to madness, but if you are, you will see that no pleasures of an hour can ever recompense for casting yourselves under the anger of God forever and forever! Buy the truth! Do not merely talk about it and wish for it, but buy, buy the truth! And then, lastly—

VI. A WARNING AS TO LOSING THE PURCHASE.

"Sell it not." My time has gone and, therefore, as I never like to exceed it, there shall be but these few words. When you have once got the truth, I know you will not sell it. You will not, I am sure, at any price. But the exhortation, nevertheless, is a most proper one. *There have been some who have sold the truth to be respectable*. They used to hear the gospel, but now they have got on in the world and have a carriage—and they do not like to go where there are so many poor people—so away they go where they can hear anything or nothing, so that they may be respectable! Ah, I have the uttermost contempt for this affectation of gentility and respectability that leads men to be so mean as to forsake their Christian friends! Let them go! They are best gone! Such chaff had better not be with the wheat, and those that can be actuated by such motives are too base to be worth retaining!

Some sell the truth *for a livelihood*. I pity these far more. "I must have a job; therefore I must do what I am told there. I must break this law of God, and that, for I must keep my family." Ah, poor soul, I pity your unfortunate position, but I pray that you may have grace, even now, to play the man and never sell the truth, even for bread.

Some sell the truth *for the pleasures of the world*. They must have enjoyment, they say, and so they will mingle with the multitude that do evil—and give up their Christian profession.

Others seem to sell the truth *for nothing at all*. They merely go away from Christ because religion has grown stale with them. They are weary of it, and they go away. I shall put the question painfully to all—will you also go away? Will you, to be respectable, will you to have a livelihood, will you to have the pleasures of sin for a season, will you out of sheer weariness—will you go away? No, we can add—

"What anguish has that question stirred,
If I will also go!
Yet, Lord, relying on Your Word,
I humbly answer, No."

Sell it not! Sell it not! It cost Christ too dear! Sell it not! You made a good bargain when you bought it. Sell it not. Sell it not! It has not disappointed you—it has satisfied you and made you blessed! Sell it not—you want it. Sell it not, you will want it. The hour of death is coming on and the day of judgment is close upon its heels. Sell it not! You cannot buy its like again—you can never find a better. Sell it not—you are a lost man if you part with it. Remember Esau, and the morsel of meat, and how he would again have found his birthright if he could. Remember Demas. Remember Judas, the son of perdition! You are lost without it. It is your life. Skin for skin, yes, for the truth, part with all that you possess, and be resolved, come fair or come foul, come storm or come calm, come sickness or come health, come poverty or come wealth, come death, itself, in the grimmest form, yet none shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord, and none shall make you part from the truths you have learned and received from His Word—the truths you have felt and have had worked into your soul by His Spirit—and the truths which in action you desire should tone and color all your life.

God bless you, dear friends, and keep you. And when the Great Shepherd shall appear, may you have the mark of the truth upon you, and appear with Him in glory.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:24-50.

Verse 24. *Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.* He knew that it was good. It had been tested—it was unmixed—it was good throughout.

25. *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.* It was a very malicious action. The thing has been done many times. Bastard wheat was sown in among the true wheat, so as to injure the crop.

26-27. *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said*

unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? From where, then, has it tares? We often have to ask that question. How did this come about? It was a true gospel that was preached, from where, then, come these hypocrites—these that are like the wheat, but are not wheat? For it is not the tare that we call a tare in England that is meant here, but a false wheat—very like wheat, but not wheat.

28. *He said unto them, An enemy has done this.* The enemy could not do a worse thing than to adulterate the Church of God! Pretenders outside do little hurt. Inside the fold they do much mischief.

28-30. *The servants said unto him, Will you, then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, No, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* The separation will be more in season, more easily and more accurately done when both shall have been fully developed—when the wheat shall have come to its fullness and the counterfeit wheat shall have ripened.

31, 32. *Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds.* Commonly known in that country.

32-35. *But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spoke He unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.* How thoroughly impregnated our Lord was with the very spirit of Scripture! And He always acted as if the Scriptures were uppermost in His mind. They seemed to be always in their fullness before His soul.

36. *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him*—Those house talks—those explanations of the great public sermons and parables—were sweet privileges which He reserved for those who had given their utter confidence to Him.

36-44. *Saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. And shall cast them unto a furnace of fire:*

there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth; then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field which a man has found, and for joy over it—Stumbling upon it, perhaps, when he was at the plow—turning up the old crop in which it was concealed.

44. *He goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.* Some persons do stumble upon the gospel when they are not looking for it. "I am found of them that sought Me not" is a grand free grace text. Some of those who have been most earnest in the kingdom of heaven were at one time most indifferent and careless, but God, in infinite sovereignty, puts the treasure in their way—gives them the heart to value it and they obtain it to their own joy!

45. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.* He does not stumble on it—he is seeking pearls.

46, 47. *Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered fish of every kind*—Bad fish and good fish, and creeping things and broken shells, and bits of seaweed, and pieces of old wreck. Did you ever see such an odd assortment as they get upon the deck of a fishing vessel when they empty out the contents of a drag net? Such is the effect of the ministry. It drags together all sorts of people. It is quite as well that we have not eyes enough to see one another's hearts tonight, or else I dare say we would make about as strange a medley as I have already attempted to describe as being in the fisherman's vessel!

48. *Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.* All a mixture. We cannot sort one from the other, now, but when the net comes to shore, then will be the picking over the heap. No mistakes will be made. The good will go into vessels, and the bad, and none but the bad, will be cast away!

49, 50. *So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Not fire, then, which annihilates, but fire which leaves in pain and causes weeping and gnashing of teeth!

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DANGEROUS LINGERING
NO. 3450

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He lingered."
Genesis 19:16.

LOT was highly favored. In the midst of a general destruction, angels were sent to take care of him. He had received a warning which many had not heard—and he had felt the terror that warning would excite—while some who had heard the tidings little heeded their imminent moment. Lot stood in the condition of one who knew that he must leave the city, for it was about to be destroyed. He intended to leave it. He was just about to take his departure, but, nevertheless, hesitated a little, halted a while, avoided hurry, protracted his stay with some attachment to the place where he had dwelt, and so, in the face of danger, he hesitated. Being slow to move when fully aware that judgment was swift to overtake, "He lingered." I believe Lot to be in this respect the exact counterpart of a great many hearers of the gospel. They understand at least its threats. They know something about the way of escape. They have resolved to follow that way and they intend to do so very soon. Yet for a long time they have halted on the verge of decision, almost persuaded to be Christians. Strong as their resolution to become followers of the Savior seems to be, unhappily they stop short; they linger in their old condition—halting between two opinions. To such persons I propose to address a few words of exhortation this evening. First of all, *to expostulate with you personally upon personal matters; then to speak to you about others,* for I have the full conviction that the man who lingers puts others in danger as well as himself, just as Lot's lingering was hazardous to his daughters and to his wife; and lastly, *to commend the means which I trust God will use tonight,* similar to those which He used with Lot, that some angelic hand or some providential force may lay hold upon the lingerer, that he may be brought out from the City of Destruction and made to flee for help to Christ the Lord. I must begin by speaking to—

I. THE PERSON WHO IS LINGERING.

I would like to be looked upon, just now, less as a preacher than as a friend who is talking to the lingering one, the one almost decided—talking to him in the most familiar tones, but, at the same time, with the most earnest purpose. There are certain thoughts which have been, and are still fermenting in my soul. I have heard that a conclave was held in pandemonium. In the lower regions Satan had called together all the devils that showed him allegiance and he said to them, "I want one of you to go forth as a lying spirit from this place to deceive many. The gospel is

being faithfully preached and men are being won to Christ, my rival. Spirits of the infernal pit, I desire your help that this gospel may not spread further! I pause while each one of you, my liege servants, shall tell me of the devices you will use to prevent men from fleeing to Christ. His device that shall seem wisest to my subtlety shall be most fully employed among the sons of men." Then one spoke and said, "O prince of the infernal pit, I will go forth and tell men that there is no God, no heaven, no hell, no hereafter." But the arch-fiend said, "It is in vain! The gospel has already gone so far with the men of whom I am now thinking that this would not be of use. They know there is a God—they are sure of it. The testimony which has been borne in the world has brought so much light into it that they cannot close their eyes to the fact—your device, though admirable, will not succeed." Then up rose another, and he said, "I shall insinuate doubts as to the authenticity of Scripture. I shall belie the teachings of the doctrines of the Word of God, and so shall I keep them from Christ." But again the leader of that conclave objected that this would scarcely suffice, for the multitude had so heard the gospel. And those whose conversion he was most anxious to prevent were so conversant with its historical facts, that they could not seriously question them. Neither could they live in systematic doubt that had been schooled in positive belief. There were many devices, but I will tell you which most of all struck Satan, which he determined to use most among the sons of men. It was this—one foul spirit said, "I will not insinuate doubts about the existence of God or the truth of Scripture. I know it would not be of any use. But this thing I will do—I will tell men that, though these things are true and important, there is no hurry about them, there is time enough and to spare—that they may wait a little till there is a more convenient season, and then shall they attend to them." Now the subtlety of Satan was pleased with this, and he said, "Servant, go your way! You have invented the net in which the fowler shall take more birds then in any other. Good speed to your enterprise. This deadly poison will destroy innumerable souls!" Feeling this to be the case, it shall be my earnest endeavor to tear that net to pieces, and to expose this poison, that none may be entangled unawares and perish unwarned!

Coming back, then, to the purpose with which I started, earnestly and personally to speak to the lingerer, I would like to ask you, my beloved friend, if this matter about which you are still hesitating *is not of vital importance to you?* It concerns your soul, yourself, your true self! It deals with your destiny, your impending, your eternal destiny! You are immortal—you acknowledge a deathless principle within you—and you are conscious that you shall live forever in happiness or woe. Do you think you ought to put off all preparation for the future that awaits you? If I knew that someone was about to defraud you of your estate, and that unless you were diligent about it you would lose all your property, I think I would say to you, "Bestir yourself!" If I knew that some deadly disease had begun to prey on your constitution and that, if neglected, it would soon gain an ascendancy with which it were hard to grapple, I think I would say, "Go to the physician. Do not delay, for bodily health is very

precious." But, dear friend, if your estate is precious, much more your soul! And if the health of this poor clay ought to be looked to, much more the welfare of your soul—the welfare of your soul forever! Do you not think, if anything should be postponed, it should be something of less importance? Was not Christ right when He said, "Seek, *first*, the kingdom of God and His righteousness"? Does not your reason agree that He was right in putting that first? I shall not need to argue with you. I speak as to a man who has his wits about him. Is it not so? Suppose you look to getting on in the world, first—you may die and be lost before you have got on! Suppose the taking of a degree at the university should be your first concern—that would be a poor recompense. The honors of learning could not mitigate the terrors of judgment! Do you not feel now (if you will let your better nature speak) that the very first thing a man should see to should be this—to be reconciled to God and be all right with Him for eternity?

I will then ask you another question—is there anything so very pleasant in a state of enmity to God that you should wish to remain in it? Why should Lot want to linger in Sodom? He had often been vexed there. The very night, before, he had his house beset with rioters! Why should he want to linger? Have you found any great comfort in being undecided? Is there anything very fascinating in remaining hesitant and halting between two opinions? Dear friend, if your condition is at all like what mine was before I believed in Jesus, I know you would be glad enough to get out of it! Oh, how earnest I was, sometimes, in seeking Christ! Oh, how wretched I was at other times that I could not find Him! Then, again, I was stupidly senseless about divine things, and my self-upbraiding would not let me be at peace. It is a most unhappy condition to be in—to have light enough to know that you are in the dark and no more—to have just enough grace to feel that you have not the grace that can save you—to be enough awakened to feel that if you remain as you are, you must perish forever! I do not see anything in this hesitating condition that should allure you to keep in it any longer than you can help. Beloved friends, have you ever seriously weighed—if not I will ask you to do so—the solemnity of the destruction which must come upon you if you are not decidedly a believer in Christ and, on the other hand, the unspeakable glory and bliss which will belong to you if you are led to trust in Jesus and are saved? I can scarcely give you the details of a little incident in Russian history which might illustrate the emergency. The Czar had died suddenly and in the dead of night one of the counselors of the empire came to the Princess Elizabeth and said to her, 'You must come at once and take possession of the crown." She hesitated, for there were difficulties in the way, and she did not desire the position. But he said, "Now sit down, Princess, for a minute," Then he drew her two pictures. One was the picture of herself and the Count thrown into prison, racked with tortures, and presently both brought out to die beneath the axe. "That," he said, "you can have if you like." The other picture was of herself with the imperial crown of all of Russia on her brow, and all the princes bowing before her, and the entire nation doing

her homage. "That," he said, "is the other side of the question. But, tonight, your Majesty must choose which it shall be." With the two pictures vividly depicted before her mind's eye, she did not hesitate long, but cast in her choice for the crown. Now I would gladly paint for you two such pictures, only I lack the skill. You will either sink forever down in deeper, and yet deeper woe, filled with remorse because you brought it all upon yourself, or else, if you decide for Christ, and rest in Him, you shall enter the bliss of those who forever and forever without admixture of grief enjoy happiness before the throne of God! To my mind there ought to be no halting as to the choice. It should be made. I pray God's Holy Spirit to help you to make it tonight! On this winged hour, eternity is hung; the choice of this night may be the cooling of the wax which now is soft. Once cooled, it will bear the impress throughout eternity! God grant it may be a resolve for Christ, for His cause, for His cross, for His crown!

I would like still, dear friend, to hold you by the button which I laid hold of just now, and to say to you, *What is it that has kept you waiting so long?* Did I not meet you some years ago in the street, and you said to me, "Sir, I have been a hearer of yours for many years." And I said, "Oh, yes, and when did you join the Church?" And you said, "Ah, I have never done that." And I asked, "Why not?" And you were honest enough to say, "Because I am afraid I should be very much out of place there, for I am not a believer in Christ." Do you recollect how I squeezed your hand, and said, "Ah, I hope it will not be long before you give your heart to the Lord," and you said, "Well, I hope so, too"? It is a good long while now—and you have been getting gray since then. I dare say if I saw you tonight and put the same question to you, you would make the same reply! And in ten years' time, if you and I live, we shall be still relatively in the same position—I still pleading, and you still saying—"Yes, yes, yes, it is very right." No, no, I answer, it is very wrong, that consenting without complying, not doing what the gospel bids you do, yielding and resisting, as it were, by turns; repenting and then forgetting. "Forgetting?" Yes, forgetting, and forgetting, till these delays will cast you into irrevocable ruin! What is it you are waiting on, my friend? Is there some sin you cannot give up? What sin is worth being damned for? If there is one, keep on with it. I defy you to defend your negligence! Put it to this test—if there is any supposable delight that is worth the endurance of eternal wrath, pursue that delight, however sensual it may be, with avidity! But if there is not, do not play the fool or act the madman! Do I hear you plead ignorance? I would make some excuse for you, if I thought the plea was just and true, but suppose for a minute that it is so? Then, dear friend ought not you to begin to search the Scriptures? Should not you be making intensely earnest inquiries that you might know the certainty of these things? For the soul to be without knowledge is not good. But if you are perishing for lack of knowledge, there certainly is no reason why you should!

Many of us would only be too delighted if we might tell you still more fully what is the way of salvation. "Well, but it is inconvenient just now!"

Are you promising yourself a more favorable opportunity? Let me ask you, Do you imagine you will be any better off tomorrow than you are today? Do you think in ten years' time you will be more likely to lay hold on Christ than you are now? I do not think you will. Have you ever seen sponges that have been turned into flints? Well, that is a slow process—it takes a long time; the same process, however, is gradually happening to you. Every year you are getting flintier! The drip, drip, drip of this world's care and sin is petrifying you! You are getting stony. It strikes me the best time to repent is this moment—and the very best season in which to fly to Jesus is now! Before yet the clock has ticked again, your heart will have grown more callous. It certainly does not soften. When will there be any influence more potent than there is now to help you? The Spirit of God is ready now. Do you need more than His power? The blood of Christ is a full atonement for sin. Do you need anything more than that for your salvation? Do you expect Christ to come down again on earth to save you? Do you need any promise fuller than that which the Bible has in it now, or any invitation more gracious than that which the gospel gives to you now—"Today is the accepted time: today is the day of salvation." I pray you, my lingering friend, linger no longer! Oh, how I wish I could put my hands in yours, and lead you to the Savior! But I cannot. I will, however, pray Him to lead you this very night! "I will think about it," you say. No, that is the very thing I do not want you to do! I want you to believe in Jesus *now,* and not talk about thinking of it tomorrow. In your seat, if you will rest in Jesus, and trust your soul in His hands, you are saved this very moment! It is an instantaneous work—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through His blood!"

Oh, that you would exercise that simple faith, now, and not talk about thinking of it tomorrow, for tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, alas, tomorrow never comes! It is in no calendar, except the almanac of fools! Each day to the wise man is today as it comes. The fool wastes today, and so wastes all his life. O lingerer, I beseech you, think now of the long time you have lingered. It may well suffice you—it has surely been long enough, and I would say to you, in the words of one of old, "How long halt you between two opinions?" And quote the saying of yet another, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." And may God the Holy Spirit guide the choice, and He shall have the praise! Now I need to speak a little upon another topic.

II. REMIND THE LINGERER THAT WHILE HE LINGERS, HE ENDANGERS THE SOULS OF OTHER PEOPLE.

When Lot went to his sons-in-law, and told them that the city was to be destroyed, "he was to them as one that mocked." How would they say to him, "Go to, old dotard! Do you think we believe you? The sky is clear and blue, and the sun has risen—do you think we believe your nonsense about fire and brimstone coming out of heaven? We don't believe you!" When Lot lingered, he was defeating his own purpose, and doing the worst imaginable thing if he wanted to convince his sons-in-law that he

spoke the truth, for while he lingered, they would say, "The old fool does not believe it, himself; for if he did believe it, he would pack up and hasten away! No, he would take his daughters by the hand, and lead than out of the city at once." A little hesitancy in the conduct of a man who said that he believed a dreadful judgment was imminent would be sufficient to give them umbrage—quite reason enough to make them say, "He does not believe, himself, what he tells us." Have not some of you spoken seriously to others about the value of their souls, though you are not saved? Did you try the other day to rebuke a swearer? I am glad you did. You are a member of a Temperance Association, and you do what you can to stop drunkenness. I am glad you do. You will not allow sin to pass unrebuked in your presence. But, listen, man, with what face do you reprove others while you are not decided yourself? Where is your consistency? If they should turn round to you, and say, "If there is anything reliable in the grace of God, why are you not reconciled to Him? If there is anything desirable in religion, why do you not walk according to its precepts? If Christ is a Savior, why do you not yield to Him, and obey His ordinances?" I know not what answer you could give! I cannot imagine any response but a blush that should betoken your shame and confusion of face!

The mischief that Lot did to his daughters was yet more aggravated, *for all the while he was hesitating, they were sure to hesitate too*. He was keeping them waiting. They were in jeopardy as well as himself. How many comrades, young man, you might have instructed in the faith before now had you been yourself decided? It is a happy circumstance when a young married couple become converted to God before their little ones are able to imitate a bad example. I thank God for a father whom I know and honor—that of his children there is only one that can recollect the time when the evening was spent in playing cards—and that one recollects the night when the cards were all thrown into the fire and burnt! Only one of his children recollects when the Sabbath was known to be spent in quiet walks, and pleasant recreations, but not in public worship or private devotion. He recollects the rearing of the family altar, when prayer was made a household institution; he can well remember the earnest entreaties made that the father's sin might not be visited upon the children. Oh, happy circumstance! Had the parents been converted later in life, the ill example might never have been wiped out! The converted father might have found that the children did not emulate the good example of his regenerate state, but did rather imitate him in the negligence and sinfulness of his natural unrenewed life! When you, who are parents, habitually demur and hesitate, do you not think that other members of your family will hesitate too? I have noticed it frequently, where there is a man or a woman knowing the truth of God in a measure, but not decided, it almost always happens that when the husband or the wife is in the same condition, the moment the father gets savingly converted, the wife comes and avows her faith. Not infrequently the children follow suit! It only needed somehow, in God's providence, the decision of the head of the household! This has led the others to

decision. It becomes, therefore, a very mournful reflection that there should be men and women lingering upon the brink of the grave who are helping others to linger—their example being the means of keeping others in a state of perilous hazard! You must know, many of you, that it is so with you! Therefore, I shall leave the truth to weigh upon your conscience, hoping it will stir you up to decision!

Let me venture to make one other observation here. I should not wonder if, perhaps, *the death of Lot's wife might partly be attributed to Lot himself*. If you think that this is a severe reflection, I would remind you that she must have seen her husband hesitate. She was a woman far lower down in the scale than he was—when, therefore, she saw him lingering, was it any wonder if that contagious example led her to look back? Perhaps, among the regrets of Lot throughout the rest of his life, there would be this one, "I did not hurry myself out of that city as I should. I was in no hurry. I tarried, and lingered, and paused; I had almost to be dragged out by the angels' hands." And this, it may be, led Lot's wife to look back with lingering—and then to be turned into a pillar of salt. O undecided man! I would not like you to feel that the blood of your wife was on your hands. O undecided father! I would dread to have you think, in years to come, "The loss of my children's souls was due to my procrastination." Alas, it may be so—it may be so! Therefore now, with a brother's earnest affection, let me come to you and say, "You intend to believe; you have resolved to be a Christian; you are no Atheist, and no scoffer; you are not hardened and rebellious—your heart is soft and tender, and ready for these things—then yield it now, yield it up completely this night to that dear hand that once was crucified! That hand shall mold you according to its own will. Thus says the Spirit of God to you tonight, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He that believes not—though he may have *resolved* to believe, if he dies believing not—must be damned! Our last word was to be this—

III. LET US PRAY FOR THE LINGERERS that they may by some means be hastened. I do not expect to see angels come walking down these aisles or threading their way through these pews tonight. But I do trust that a messenger from God will come, notwithstanding that. Sometimes lingerers have been quickened and decided by their own reflections being blessed to them by the Holy Spirit. A very simple observation was once the means of deciding a man. He was a mechanic and a man of a mathematical turn of mind. He had attended a meeting. The meeting was held in an upper room, and going below the stairs, his attention was attracted by the beam that had supported the people, and he said to himself, "What a weight there must have been upon that!" Just at that very minute, into his mind there flashed, "And what a weight there is resting upon you!" How that thought followed the other, I cannot tell, but as he turned it over, it did seem to him that he had a weight of sin enough to crush him—that he could not bear up under such a weight as that—and that his soul would come down in ruin like many a building whose beams have not been strong enough and have, at last, given way. I

mind not what form the thought may take—I only pray that some such thought may come home and decide you! Occasionally, a good man has been the means of suggesting the deciding thought. A smith was blowing his bellows in a smithy one day, when the saintly McCheyne stepped into the smithy for a shelter from a shower of rain. As the smith was blowing the coals, and they were at a great heat, he simply said to him, "What does that fire make you think of?" He never gave an answer—and McCheyne went his way. It made the smith think of the wrath to come, and it made him flee from it too! We cannot tell what may be, in the gracious providence of God, the means of bringing you to decision. He that used an angel's hand with Lot can use a well-timed observation with you. Therefore I urge all Christian people to use every opportunity, and study to season their conversation with divine grace! Sow beside all waters, for you know not which may prosper—this or that.

Sometimes men have been decided by the deaths of their relatives or their friends. "I may be the next," has been suggested to them. When the dear child has been buried, it has made the afflicted father reflect that he shall never meet it in heaven unless he mends his ways. So, too, the bereaved mother, in the bitterness of her heart, has sought a Savior in the hope that she might meet her baby, again, in the better land. Such things are good. They are blessed deaths that bring eternal life to the survivors! These little ones well spend their lives in winging their flight to Paradise and showing us the way. But surely, dear friend, you don't require a distressing visitation to decide you! I trust your heart will be given to Christ without the dire necessity that you should lose those you love on earth. Occasionally, and very occasionally, persons have been decided by personal sickness. Some, but oh, how few, have witnessed the good confession in the hour of death. A soldier in the army of the Potomac, of whom I somewhere read, was taken to the rear to die. He was badly wounded. He was also suffering from fever. Someone had told him, just before the fever came on, of a soldier found asleep at his post who was condemned to die. The poor fellow, in his delirium, imagining that he was that soldier, cried out to the doctor who was attending him, "Sir, I am to be shot tomorrow morning, and as I wish to have all right, I want you to send for the chaplain at once. I need to see him." The doctor, to calm his fears, said. "No, no, you are not to be shot tomorrow morning. It's a mistake." "Oh, but I am," he said, "I know I shall." "But I will be here," said the doctor, "and if anyone comes to touch you, I will have him arrested. I will take care you shall not die." "Is it so, doctor?" he said, in calmer accents, "then you need not send for the chaplain. I shall not need him just yet." So the truth came out that fear, not faith, animated him, though it was but spoken in a feverish fit.

How many men, if they thought they were going to die, would say, "Oh, yes, let all be said and done that it is right to say and do!" But persuade them that they are likely to live a little longer, and they will wait and adjourn their faith while they can calm their fear. Not very often is the decision genuine which men arrive at under the stress of that fear which comes of impending dissolution. May God's spirit deepen in some

here present their sense of sin! May your crimes sting you; may you feel your guilt; may you hate yourselves because of your transgressions; may you be distressed because of your ingratitude, your disobedience, your unbelief! Then you will long to get rid of this horrible evil, this enmity against God! May you feel tonight what a mischievous thing it is for the creature to be at variance with his Creator, for man to be out of order with his God. What a shameful thing it is for the most favored of creatures to be unfriendly to the Sovereign that favors him! What an incredible thing it is, that while the ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib, man, the object of divine love, should not know his Lord, his Friend, his Benefactor! Oh, may you give no rest to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids till you have opened your mouth to profess the name of the Lord, and fled for refuge to take hold of His righteousness and strength! Oh, that you might be too agitated to sleep till you have confessed your sin into the ear of the Great Elder Brother, and sought pardon from your God through Christ your Savior! There is forgiveness; there is mercy to be had—to be had now! Whoever believes in Christ Jesus shall be saved! Believing is trusting, relying in simple but sincere dependence. May His grace enable you to cast yourselves upon His mercy, and credit His promise in this good hour, so you shall be this night enrolled among the saved, and He shall have all the praise! The Lord grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:1-24.

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* The attraction of His love brought them into the inner circle. Had He been a self-exalting Pharisee, they would have stood as far off as they could if they listened to Him at all! But the Savior spoke so gently, so earnestly, with such evident love in His heart, that "then drew near unto Him the publicans and sinners to hear Him."

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.* The thunder and lightning of their anger could not turn the milk of His human kindness, but rather did it take an opportunity from their bitter speech to speak all the more sweetly to those who gathered near to Him.

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* And then we read three parables—yet are they one. As you have sometimes seen a picture in three panels, so this is one picture in three panels, in which we see three views of lost sinners and the three divine persons of the ever blessed Trinity in unity seeking men—saving men.

4-7. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses 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 which need no repentance. This was a very complete answer to the murmuring Pharisees. Where should the shepherd be but looking after the lost sheep? Is not that one of his first businesses—to seek after that which is gone astray? Does he not derive from it his highest joy? All the sheep that remain at home do not afford him so intense a delight as that one wanderer that his love has sought, and that his power has rescued. So Jesus Christ seems to say, taking them on their own ground, "You Pharisees are like sheep that never went astray. That is your own view of yourselves. You can never afford Me so much pleasure as these poor publicans and sinners that have wandered. When I shall find them, I shall have special joy over them. Why should I look after you? Am I not, first of all, called to look after the lost sheep of the house of Israel?" And thus He answered their complaints.

8-10. *Or 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? 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.* This was a second blow for them. "These souls of publicans and sinners are as precious as yours. If you are like pieces of money, so are they. I need not sit and look at you," says Christ, "like the miser, who counts his hoard which he has in the box, but I do what the woman did who had lost the piece. She could afford to leave the rest laid by in her purse, but she spent all her strength, her eyesight—all her diligent labor upon that one piece." Here we have the work of the Holy Spirit—only the Holy Spirit works through the church, who is the woman. It is her business to light a candle—to carry the light of the gospel. It is her business to sweep the house—often to stir up the dust by the bosom of the law. It is hers to seek diligently in every corner and cranny in the deserted and filthy places after that precious piece of money which has not lost a penny worth of its value through having rolled away into the mouse hole or lost itself among the cobwebs. She has to seek until she finds it. Christian diligence is not to stop short of conversion. We are not to *try* to bring men to Christ, but literally to bring them by the power of His eternal Spirit. And when the church finds her piece of money, she, too, has her merry-making. She calls together her friends and rejoices, and the Holy Spirit delights to view His own work in and through His church.

11. *And He said.* And here comes the grandest of the three parables—that which sets forth the eternal Father's love.

11, 12. *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.* He was not content to remain and share everything with his father. The other one would have wished his father to keep all that he had, only too delighted to be a guest in his father's house, but no, "Give me—let me have it myself—let me be independent—let me have something to call my own." Human nature—poor human

nature! It is not the true spirit of a child. Very ungenerous, ungrateful. Why did the father divide the living between them, but that it is God's why to allow men to go as they will?

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.* He could not have done that at home. His father's eyes would have been a check upon him. Man wants to get away from God because he wants to do wrong. At the bottom of all infidelity there lies a love of sin. Men quarrel with divine truth because that truth quarrels with them.

14. *And when he had spent all.* For there is an end to all carnal joy; man can only go a certain length. When he has got to the bottom of the cup, it will not spring up like a fountain and fill itself again. "When he had spent all."

14. *There arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.* Just when he needed all his money, then provisions were dearer than ever. When he had nothing to buy with, everything grew dear. He never had been, while he lived with his father, and never would have been, if he had stayed there. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." "He began to be in want."

15. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country. And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* There was a kindness in that, but it was a degrading kindness. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." He sent him into his fields to feed swine! A Jew, who could not bear the unclean animals—and he must feed swine! When a man gets discontented with the world, the devil and his friends generally suggest that he should do something worse than he has ever done before. They give him some gay amusement—some fouler sin than he has ever plunged into. They tell him that there is no hope, and therefore, he may have his entire fling, and go the whole length of his tether. "He sent him into his field to feed swine."

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat*—So he could not earn his bread, and he could not get it by charity. To what a state of destitution was he brought; but of all destitution in the world, the destitution of a sinner who has at last grown sick of his sin, and cannot find comfort anywhere else, is about the worst. The old nest is pulled down, and you have not got another. The pleasures of the world have fooled you. The joys and delights of ungodly society pall upon your taste, and you want no more of them, but yet you do not know of any other delight or any other joy—and dare not hope that there can be another joy for you!

16, 17. *And no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself*—He had been out of his mind all the while. He had been beside himself with sin. "When he came to himself."

17. *He said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?* "Still his child, though. Still he is my father, and I know that there is bread enough for me. Why do I not get it? How sad that I should starve, when in my father's house

there is so much." What a motive that is to a poor hungry soul to go to God, namely, that God has so much—so much that He feeds His servants till they cannot eat it all! They have bread enough and to spare. Why should His child, then, though a wanderer, die of hunger in a foreign land?

18-20. *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 came to his father.* It was a mercy for him it did not end in resolution. He came to matter of fact.

20. *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.* Then did he come to his father, or did his father come to him? Well, I think it was both, but still, chiefly that the father came to him. "When he was yet a great way off"—he had not gone half the distance—his father ran the bigger half of the way. He saw him! He had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him!

21. *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.* He was going on to say, I dare say, "Make me one of your hired servants," but his father kissed him on the mouth, and he never prayed that prayer. It was not a gospel prayer, and would not do, and so he stifled it with love! It was good as far as he did go.

22-24. *But the father said to his servants, 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.* Full of joy, intense joy, overflowing joy, sparkling joy! I love that old Saxon word, "merry." Some are frightened at it. I heard somebody the other day account it quite wicked to say, "A merry Christmas." Oh, that we had merry days all the year round, especially if we could make merry with such merriment as this! Do begin to be merry.

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"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."
Galatians 6:14.

WITH that, "God forbid," Paul makes a clean sweep of every other ground of boasting and casts himself upon the one only chosen object of his soul's glorying. And yet, if you will think of it, Paul had, after the fashion of other men, many things in which he might have gloried. If it had so pleased him, he might have boasted of his pedigree, for he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." He could trace his genealogy, as the pure Hebrews could, up to that great fountain of nobility—Abraham himself! If he had pleased, he might have boasted in the precision of the former ritual which he had practiced, for he could say that as touching the law of God, he had been a Pharisee—a man observant of the minutest points of the very letter of the law, careful for its doctrinal tittles, not allowing even the gnat to escape him, but straining after it with care. And yet the apostle did not care to boast, either of his pedigree or of his ritualism. He casts them both aside and though he had once gloried in them, he now counted them but dross, that he might win Christ and be found in Him! Surely, if the apostle had wished it, he might have gloried in his martyr life. He did once give a list of what he had suffered, and he added, "I have become a fool in glorying; you have compelled me." Had he not been beaten with rods, shipwrecked, subject to perils from robbers, perils from false brethren, imprisonment and stones? And yet you never hear him glory in that wonderful martyr life of his! Among the apostles, he was no less than the chief in that which he suffered, and yet he says, "God forbid that I should glory in it." He might have gloried in the revelation which he received. Who among us has ever seen or heard what Paul was made to see and hear when he was caught up into the third heavens to hear things which it is not lawful for a man to utter? He might, if he had chosen to boast, have boasted in this revelation, but he did not do so. "God forbid," said he, "that I should glory," and that, "God forbid," includes even that revelation!

Among scholars Paul might have taken an eminent position. He was well qualified to speak in the Areopagus, for even there, in that profound assembly, was probably not one with greater knowledge and of more subtle mind than he, who was once called, "Saul of Tarsus." Read the Epistles, brothers and sisters! Why, the apostle has the instinct of Bacon and the insight of Sir Isaac Newton! The man seems to have looked

through a question, where others would have looked round about it and have seen nothing. Yet, though he must have felt a human delight in the talents which God had given him—and must have known that he possessed them—he still says concerning them, "God forbid that I should glory." He seems to take all that he had, all that he did, and all that he was, and put it all away—and come forward with no other theme upon his lips, and no greater love in his heart, except this—Jesus crucified for the sons of men. Jesus to be great among the nations. Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb, to be made unto men their life from the dead, their salvation from going down into the pit. "God forbid," he says—that memorable speech, that eloquent declaration, that glorious self-denying, yet exalting resolve—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" We shall be brief upon each point at this time, but the first enquiry must naturally be—

I. WHAT IS THIS CROSS IN WHICH PAUL RESOLVED TO GLORY?

You need not to be told, my brothers and sisters, that Paul set no store by the material cross, or by the "sign of the cross." You know that the making of the sign of the cross, and the paying of religious reverence to that, is as great a superstition as the belief in witches and, perhaps, as men come to be enlightened, they will wonder how it is that some men could have thought that there could be more sanctity about a cross than about a circle or the parallelogram, for really there is no holiness in the sign of the cross, and I sometimes wish that some Christians would not countenance that emblem, since it seems to imply a superstitious reverence to that kind of thing. Paul meant no such thing. He would have abandoned in contempt any superstitious use of the cross or the crucifix, and he would do so now if he were here and I hope the result would be that, as at Ephesus they burned their conjuring hosts, so now men would put their chasubles, their robes and all their fripperies and upholstery together and burn them in one glorious pile as the result of the preaching of the true cross of Christ!

What did the apostle mean, then? He meant, in a single word, *the great doctrine of the atonement offered for sin by the Son of God upon Mount Calvary*. "The cross" is the short term for "substitutionary suffering," for "vicarious sacrifice," for the offering up of the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The apostle was never cloudy about this matter. Wherever he went, he preached that God was in Christ reconciling the world with Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. His declarations were always clear. "Him has God set forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins, only, but for the sins of the whole world." He was always saying that Jesus Christ took our sins and bore them in His own body on the tree—that He was punished instead of us, that the claims of divine justice were met by the death of the Redeemer; that He was made a curse for us that we might be enriched and blessed of God in Him—that He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Paul's great master-point was that Jesus actually suffered to

vindicate the divine justice by enduring, instead of us, the punishment due to our sins!

And he also meant by it *that gospel which springs out of the cross*, and which is contained in these few words, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Paul told the people that the Son of God was made man and suffered in human form to take away human guilt, and that whoever, the wide world over, would come and rest in what Christ had done, would be saved. This was the gospel which he proclaimed in every place. For barbarian and Scythian, this was the gospel! For the Greek and the Jew, the same! For the illiterate, for the learned, for the king and for the peasant, it was always his one theme—a bleeding Savior and a sinner looking to Him—a living Christ dying, that a dying world might live! This is that gospel which we preach from Sabbath to Sabbath, which will save your souls, and which you delight to sing of in words like these—

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

This was "the cross" which Paul resolved to glory in!

II. WHAT WAS THERE IN THIS PARTICULAR DOCTRINE OR FACT FOR THE APOSTLE TO GLORY IN AT ALL?

The answer is, first, that *there is glory in the fact, itself*. It is a fact entirely by itself, unique, unparalleled. The mythology of the heathens had invented many, many strange things, but among them all there is nothing so beautiful, even if it were not true, nothing so perfect in its imagery, as this—that God, the offended One, should give up His Only Begotten in order that justice might not be injured. At the same time, His mercy might have full sweep, that the Only Begotten should die that the offending ones might live! There is nothing like this in the whole range of human poetry! Men had fine poetic imaginings before, and there were prophetic declarations of the coming of Christ, and they prophesied some wonderful things, but of all the poets of all the nations, it may be said that they never conceived anything like this—the offended One dies so that the offenders might live! "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God first loved us." "Beloved, behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." That one fact that God descended from the royalties of heaven, that He might take upon Himself the servitude of earth in the form of man and offer Himself a sacrifice for sin, reveals the infinite wisdom, together with the infinite love of God, besides casting a brilliant light upon all His other attributes. It stands a marvel of marvels, a wonder of wonders, in which the believer may glory, glory as much as he will! You know we do not doubt about this fact. We hold it, no, we are sure of it, and it is a very great reality to us. I was passing, some years ago, a Socinian chapel in this great London of ours, and I saw an

announcement of the subjects upon which sermons were to be delivered. If I remember rightly, there was to be a sermon on the morning of one Sunday upon some political subject—and in the evening there was to be a sermon upon the crucifixion, but the word was spelt "crucifixion." And I thought, "Ah, just so, and though you may not mean it, it is just that with you—it is nothing more to you than a mere fiction, but to us it is real." We believe that the blood of Jesus really takes away sin. We believe that He really laid down His life to redeem us from our iniquity—and to us the most real, sublime, grand, soul-moving thing beneath heaven, and even *in* heaven is this—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and died that He might save them! The apostle, then, gloried in the fact as a fact.

And next, the apostle gloried in the fact *viewing the simplicity of it*—the simplicity of the doctrine which grew out of the fact. It is frequently said, "Oh, these evangelical preachers, these men that preach up Christ, these popular preachers—they are very shallow-brained men! They talk mere platitudes. They do not read the German philosophers, they do not go to the bottom of the thing and stir the mud—they are content with just telling the people really such plain and common things that you cannot expect enlightened people in this 19th Century to care to go and hear them." It is a very odd thing that they are the only people who do go to hear them! That only shows, I suppose, that there are plenty of people who are shallow, too. But we boast, if in anything, in the sheer simplicity of this truth of God that we preach. If the cross of Christ were a marvelous riddle, the answer to which none could guess but a philosopher trained for 50 years, if we understood it so, we should feel as if it were scarcely worthwhile for us to tell it, since there would be so few that could be benefited by it! But we thank God that we have a simple gospel to preach to you, because there are so many in this world who need saving quite as much as the wisest, but who could not be saved if the gospel were not simple. I thank God that when Christ is preached in the Union House, He is believed there, and when Christ is preached to the most benighted nation, He is received there! And He is just as sweet and precious to those who cannot read as to those who are the best educated. No, we do not, and never will, blush because the gospel is simply, "Believe and live." We think that every statement of great truth, before it can do good to the heart, must be simple. It seems to us that its simplicity is a part of its grandeur—that it is more God-like, to give us a gospel which can be spoken in few words by simple men, than to give us something involved and intertwisted—the meaning of which we would never be able to guess! We thank God, dear hearer that it does not need many minutes to tell you what you must do to be saved! Believe in Jesus, that is, *trust* Him—trust Him with all your heart! Cast yourself flat upon Him—you cannot fall any lower when you are down there! Cast yourself on His arms, rely upon His merits, and you are saved! God forbid that we should glory save in this very simplicity, which some persons so fiercely decry!

Paul gloried, and we glory, in the next place, *in the freeness and suitability of the gospel*. The apostle never found himself in a place where the gospel was not suitable. Sometimes some of you young men who are here tonight may have to go out to supply pulpits, and you may be apt to ask yourselves and ask one another, "Well, what subject shall I take?" I answer you—wherever you go, preach Jesus Christ—and that will suit every congregation! And if it does not, the congregation that is unsuited by it will not be suited at all—and they ought to have twice as much of it till they are suited with it! Preach up Jesus Christ! No matter how noble the audience, or how poor, still preach the atonement. Preach up the dying Savior, instead of men, and it never can be out of season. Those men who, for the sake of variety and freshness, run away from their Bibles, are like men who, for the sake of wealth, run away from a substantial business which brings them in their thousands in order to speculate where bankruptcy must be their only gain. Close to the cross! There is no such variety as in that one theme! It is like a diamond with a thousand facets, each one reflecting its own sweet light. You shall preach Jesus Christ to the angels in heaven throughout eternity and make known to them the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus—and you will never exhaust the theme! What a blessing, though, that this cross of Christ should be so suitable to every person we meet with! If you take the cross of Jesus Christ into the condemned cell, there is nothing else that is so likely to awaken that slumbering soul! If you take it to our criminals—alas, that there are so many—it is the only balm of Gilead to them! Go with it to the lodging houses, and the back slums, and the street corners of St. Giles's, or where you will, and this story of the man, Christ Jesus, who loved and died, touches all hearts!

You have heard of the Greenlanders. The missionaries thought they ought, first, to instruct them in the doctrine of the Trinity, so they preached away to them of the Godhead, but the Greenlander did not care about it. But one of them, while interpreting, I think, the third chapter of John, came across that blessed passage, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life," and the Greenlanders stopped him and said, Why did you not tell us that before?" "Oh! I thought I had better begin by telling you of some of the other truths of God." "But we knew all those, or could have guessed them—why didn't you tell us this before? "From that moment the good Moravians lifted up Christ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and the eyes and hearts of the Greenlanders began to look to Him—and Jesus Christ was the glory of that land! We may say of this doctrine of the cross, as David did of Goliath's sword, "There is none like it." It is suitable in all places, wherever we may be found.

Truly, brothers and sisters, Paul might well glory in the cross if you will kindly remember *the great results which are sure to come from its constant and faithful preaching.* There is no land where the cross has been lifted up, but is the better for it. Even those countries in which we

have been compelled to regard missions as a failure, have still received much blessing as the result. If the people have not been converted, yet still the bringing of the light of God into contact with their thick darkness has done something, though not all that we could wish. See yonder South Sea Islands, where the savage is clothed and in his right mind. Go tonight, if you can, on the wings of imagination, to the Bechuana villages, where Mr. Moffat labored among the Bushmen, about the existence of whose souls even there was once some doubt, and see what has been done there! Yes, and even in this land, with all our sins, how different are we from our savage forefathers, and how can Edinburgh, and London, and Glasgow tell you how the putting down of a district church or chapel has turned the heathen population of these days into a Christian community! This is the great lever to uplift the masses. Where Jesus is preached, signs and effects follow in which we may well rejoice. How many a home that was once filthy and miserable has been cheered and comforted, now that father is a Christian! How many a man who used to reel in and out of the gin shops or the public houses, now delights to sing another song, and to drink of other wines on the lees, well refined! What changes divine grace is making among us! How some of us could tell of them as long as we live, we, ourselves, being changed! We will then say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You know, as I was last night turning over this text in my mind, I shut my eyes and saw—for you see a great deal more with your eyes shut than with them open sometimes—as I looked I thought I saw a cross before me and it began to grow. I saw it as I had never seen it before. It grew upon me—grew every moment. I saw it go downward into the earth, and as its foot descended, graves began to open—for resurrection comes from the cross—and hell, itself, began to tremble, for nothing shakes the infernal kingdom like the cross! Then I looked up, and the cross had been growing till it reached up to heaven, bearing with it tens of thousands of redeemed souls, and I thought of that verse—

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time!
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

I turned my eyes lower and I saw its transverse beams, and these began to stretch to the east and to the west, and they took away the sins of all God's people and carried them into the place of forgetfulness, where they never shall be found, while a shadow, broad as the universe, seemed to fall upon creatures off all kinds! And wherever it fell, the shadow dropped with the benedictions of heaven. Oh, that crucifixion of the Lord Jesus—how deep, how high, how broad! The imagination cannot conceive it, but the soul delights in it!

And then, as I seemed to look with eyes closed, I thought I saw in my vision a flock of doves, fluttered and afraid, and well they might be, for there were archers after them and the sharp arrows all but pierced their breasts. No, some fell sorely wounded. And they flitted to the groves and they flew to the far-off sea, and to the wilderness, but the sharp shafts

pursued them everywhere, and the doves found no rest for the soles of their feet. At last one day they lighted on the cross, and they marked that every shaft fell short—and some that were shot at them with double force were splintered and broken—and fell upon the ground! Not a single dove was hurt, but all found shelter there. Lord, make me one of those doves! And may my soul escape the arrows of my spiritual foes. Let me find shelter on my Savior's precious cross, for there is shelter there, and there, alone!

And then the picture changed and I saw before me the whole earth, as it now looks, without rain, and it was all parched and browned, and seemed ready to be burned. The plants hung down their heads and the flowers seemed to be pining for the tears of the angels to drop down upon them from heaven, but nothing came. Yet I noticed that all along, wherever the shadow of the cross fell, it was all verdant as in spring, and every flower seemed as if it did drink in the dew and opened its cup towards the light that streamed from the cross. 'Twas all fertile there where the shadow of the cross fell, but all barren elsewhere. And is it not so? Wherever there is the influence of the atoning blood, wherever the cross is fully preached and received, every soul is blessed, happy and fruitful—but where it is not so, there is an arid waste on which the dew of heaven falls not.

And while I thought I saw before me a caravan, and there were camels, and hundreds of men, the drivers of the camels, and they were all hot, and panting, and fainting. They went to the well and rolled away the stone, but they found no water there. So they went onward, ready to drop at every step. Before them they thought they saw a cooling stream, but it was a mirage, and they were mocked. But I thought I saw them suddenly halt at the foot of the cross, and just at the bottom of it there sprang up a clear and crystal spring, and each one drank, and went on his way refreshed. And what are the sons of men, but a great caravan on the way to realms unknown? And where is there water for so much as one of them, except at the foot of the cross? If they drink there, they live! If they drink not there, there is nothing for them.

Many other things passed before me, but I cannot detail them now, for we have spent too much time upon this second point and must pass to the third. The third point, very briefly discussed, is this—

III. IF WE DO GLORY IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST, HOW SHALL WE PROVE IT?

We must prove it *by trusting in the cross*. The atonement must have our only confidence, or else it were vain to say that we glory in it.

We must prove it, next, *by holding fast the doctrine when others challenge it*. We must be confident about this vicarious sacrifice of Christ, let others say what they may.

We must prove it *by our zeal in propagating it according to the best of our ability*. We must endeavor, as much as lies in us, to tell the good news to others, that whoever believes has everlasting life.

But there are some here who are called to the ministry, and, therefore, to them let me say that we must prove that we glory in it most *by being prepared to suffer for it*. Any man who is called to the ministry may, if he will, take an example from yonder dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. There you see the cross above the globe. You must put from this point on, the cross above the world in all your calculations! To preach Jesus and to win souls—not to gain money or human applause—must be the way in which you prove that you glory in the cross!

But the principal way is *by constantly preaching about it*. What shall I say to young men who are about to enter the ministry that shall be more useful to them than this? Keep to the cross! Keep to the cross! Always preach up Jesus Christ! Always preach up Jesus Christ! I think no sermon should be without the doctrine of salvation by faith in it. I would not close a single discourse without at least something about believing in Jesus and living. Oh, that our tongues would speak of nothing but Jesus! Oh, that we were something like Rutherford, who is said to have had a squeaking voice on every other subject, but when he began to speak of Christ, the little man would grow tall and his voice become full, so that the Duke, who was one of his hearers, shouted, "Now, man, you're on the right string!" Oh, surely, this is a theme that might inspire the very dumb and make the dead to rise, to tell of Jesus Christ's most wondrous love!

I have thus, as well in the short time I had allowed, shown how we may glory in the cross. But if we do so, according to the text, *we are not to expect to go to heaven in silver slippers*, for the apostle adds, *"By which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* There are two crosses in that saying—there is the world crucified, there, and there is Paul crucified, here. What means he by this? Why, he means that ever since he fell in love with Jesus Christ, he lost all love for the world! It seemed to him to be a poor, crucified, dying thing, and he turned away from it just as you would from a criminal whom you might see hanging in chains—and would desire to go anywhere rather than see the poor being. So Paul seemed to see the world on gallows—hung up there. "There," he said, "that is what I think of you and all your pomp, and all your power, and all your wealth, and all your fame! You are on the gallows, a malefactor, nailed up, crucified! I would not give a fig for you! I would not turn on my heels to speak to you—all that you could give me would no more suit my taste than as if husks were given to me. Give them to your own swine and let them fatten thereon!"

You know the world is not crucified to "the successors of the apostle," and all others who preach merely as a profession. They get their living out of it—they are endowed by the world—the State or the church pays them! The world is not crucified to them. That is the change that has come over the times, but to the first apostle, the world was crucified. And now observe the other cross. There is Paul on that. The world thinks as little of Paul as Paul does of the world. The world says, "Oh, that harebrained Paul! He was once sensible, but he has gone mad upon that stubborn notion about the Crucified One! The man is a fool." So the

world crucifies him. It was something like the case of Luther, when he said, "There is no love lost between me and the Pope of Rome. He hates me and I also hate him with all my heart, and soul, and strength." So is it with the world and the genuine Christian. If he glories in Christ, he must expect to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and attacked. And, on the other hand, he will say that he would sooner have the world's scorn than its honor! He would sooner have its hate than its love, for the love of the world is enmity against God. Blessed are you when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's sake and the gospel's. Set your account, you Christians, upon rough weather and get seaworthy vessels that will stand a gale or two! Ask the Lord to give you grace enough to suffer and endure for that precious Savior who will give you reward enough when you see Him face to face, for one hour with Him will make up for it all! Therefore, be faithful, and may the Lord help you thus to glory in the cross of Christ. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 4:12-31; 5:1-4, 19-26; 6:1-11.

GALATIANS 4:12-31.

Verse 12. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are: you have not injured me at all.* He had told them the gospel, and other teachers had come in and alienated their affections. He says, "Now I am just the same to you as ever I was. I wish you would have the same love to me."

13, 14. *You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh you despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* He dwells upon that. They had been so enthusiastic about his teaching when he first taught them, that he feels grieved that now they have gone aside to other teaching—not because it injured him, but because it injured them.

15. *Where is then the blessedness you spoke of?* When you said that you were happy to live in Paul's days, glad to listen to so simple and plain a teacher?

15, 16. *For I bear you record that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* Ah! there are many who have incurred enmity through speaking the gospel very plainly, for the natural tendency of man is towards ceremony, towards some form of legal righteousness—he must have something aesthetic, something that delights his sensuous nature, something that he can see and hear, to mix up that with the simplicity of faith—and Paul was as clear as noonday against everything of that kind, and so the Galatians, at last, were angry with him. Well, he could not help that, but it did grieve him.

17. *They zealously court you, but not for good; yes, they would exclude you, that you might be zealous for them.* They would, if they could, turn you out of our love that you might run after them. These false teachers would shut us out of your hearts that your hearts might go after them.

18-21. *But it is always good to be zealous in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?* Will you not listen to what the law, itself, teaches? Here is a little bit from one of its first books, the book of Genesis.

22, 23. *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh.* In the strength of Abraham.

23. *But he of the freewoman was by promise.* In the power of God, born after both father and mother had ceased to be capable of becoming parents, born in the power of God!

24. *Which things are an allegory, for these are the two covenants: the one from the Mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which is Hagar.* Those that are under the law are the children, therefore, of the bondwoman—they are born slaves.

25. *For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.* It is old Judaism coming from Sinai, "This do, and you shall live," and all the children that are born under it are children of nature—they are not the children of promise.

26. *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* This is Sarah, and they that believe are the Isaac-children, the children of holy laughter, born according to the power of God.

27-29. *For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bears not: break forth and cry, you that travails not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has an husband, Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.* The child of Hagar could not stand the child of Sarah, and they that seek salvation by the works of the law, and by outward ceremonies, cannot endure the children of faith.

30, 31. *Nevertheless what says the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

GALATIANS 5.

Verses 1-4. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ had made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you*

whoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace. If you mean to have anything to do with salvation by works, get you gone—you are the children of the bondwoman!

Verses 19-21. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like*—A black catalog, but sin is very prolific. We must take care that we avoid each one of these works of the flesh, or else we shall give no proof that we are led by the Spirit of God and possess the grace of God.

21. *Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Read over the list. Put the question to conscience, "Am I guilty of such things?" If so, do not suppose that the holding of orthodox doctrine will save you, or that any kind of religious ceremony will save you! You must be delivered from these lusts of the flesh—these deeds of the flesh—or you cannot inherit the kingdom of God!

22, 23. *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.* Surely, neither human nor divine! These are things which are commended on all hands. But if we do not have them—if they are not found in us—then we have not the Spirit, for if we had the Spirit, we would bear the fruit of the Spirit!

24-26. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory,* A very common sin—wishing to shine. Whether we deserve to be honored or not, still wanting to be the lead horse in the team, and to take the leading place. "Let us not be desirous of vainglory."

26. *Provoking one another, envying one another.* If each would strive to do the greatest deeds of love and each were willing to take the lowest place, then this evil would never again be known!

GALATIANS 6.

Verse 1. *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.* When Christians fall into a fault, it is on account of their traveling slowly on the road to heaven. Hence the expression, "If he is *overtaken* with a fault." He would not have been overtaken if he had been traveling faster! If his heart had been quick in the ways of the Lord, he would have outstripped the temptation. Now, when a brother falls into sin, it is too often the habit to push him down—to cast him out and forget him. But spiritually-minded persons must not do so. We must seek the restoration of the brother or sister. Is there not more joy over the sheep that was lost than over those that went not astray? Have we not the best reason to deal tenderly with wanderers, since we cannot tell that we may not need the same generous offices for

ourselves? "Considering yourself lest you also be tempted." He seems to take it for granted that we probably would, if we were tempted as the other brother was.

2. *Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* Help each other. If you have a light load, take a part of somebody else's.

3. *For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* Mainly deceives himself. Other people generally find it out. It is no use estimating your fortune at so many millions, for it will not make it so! And it is of no use estimating yourself at a very high price, because it does not make it so. "He deceives himself."

4-5. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.* There are burdens of care and sorrow which we can help others to bear, but the burdens of responsibility each man must carry for himself. The load of service for the Master must be carried personally. And let us be glad to shoulder it, since Christ has done so much for us. And how else can we express gratitude but by serving Him?

6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things.* If he gives you spirituals, do not suffer him to lack for temporals.

7, 8. *Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap*—What the flesh always comes to, by-and-by—

8. *Corruption. But he that sows to the Spirit*— By faith in Christ—by being led by the Spirit—

8-10. *Shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, it we faint not. As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* They have a first claim upon us. They are nearest of kin. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let them have a Benjamin's portion!

11. *You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand.* Paul did not often write his own Epistles. It is thought that he had a defect of the eyes. He generally employed a secretary. When he did write, he wrote generally in great capitals. I suppose that is what he meant. "You see how emphatic my writing is—what great characters I have made in writing to you." Or he may have meant that for a letter, written by him, this was a lengthy one.

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"He is risen."
Mark 16:6.

OUR Lord always told His disciples that He would rise. They were astonished to hear that He would die at all—they did not think it possible that He could die by the terrible death which He often hinted at. Had they understood and really believed that He would rise again, they might not have been so surprised at His death. But as often as He spoke of it, their minds seemed to have been like their eyes, on some occasions—held back that they should not see! And if they perceived His meaning, it ran so contrary to all their ideas of a kingdom for a Messiah, that they could not grasp it as a reality!

Now one of the first things that strikes the reader of the chapter before us shall furnish us with our first head of contemplation tonight—

I. THE ALMOST UNIVERSAL POWER OF UNBELIEF IN THE CHURCH.

This is a good instance to illustrate a general fact, for our Savior had told them in plain terms that He would rise again. Yet on the third day not one that we know of expected Him to rise! When they were informed that He had risen, by eyewitnesses—persons whom they had been accustomed to treat as deserving of all credence, persons with whom they had been long acquainted—they, every one of them, were incredulous! They could not believe it, though it were testified to them again and again. As you read this chapter through, you meet with first one instance and then another of this general incredulity about a thing on which all ought to have been sound believers! You find, first, the women—very tender, very loving, always accustomed to minister to Christ's necessities in the days of His flesh—now their very love leads them to an unbelieving act! If He is risen and He said He would rise, what need of grave cloths? What need of precious ointments, and spikenard, and spices in which to embalm Him? 'Twas love that said, "Embalm Him," but 'twas unbelieving love that made them think the thing was necessary to be done! All through those tender hearts, wherein so much of heavenly ardor for Christ was found, there was also found this leaven of mischief. But the men—the stronger sex, will not they, also, their hearts being full of love and having walked with Christ, having strong judgments, many of them, having noticed and weighed what He said—will not they believe? No! Peter and John, though they went to the sepulcher, went there with heavy hearts, evidently with no expectation such as would have been excited by the belief that Christ had risen. The

whole brotherhood of the disciples appear to have gone altogether over to an unbelief of the thought that Jesus Christ would rise! But there were some favored ones—there were the eleven. These were the elect out of the elect, the spiritual lifeguard, the very bodyguard of the Savior! Surely, if faith is extinct everywhere else, we shall find it in them! They were in the Garden at His passion, some of them were on Tabor at His transfiguration, three of them, at any rate. They were in the chamber where He raised the dead. They had seen His miracles, they had, themselves, distributed the bread which by a miraculous power He had multiplied for the feeding of the multitude. They had seen Him walk the sea—one of them had, himself, walked on the liquid wave and found it marble beneath his feet when Christ had bid him come. They had marked the tempest hushed, they had seen devils expelled, many marvelous displays of divine power had they, all of them, beheld! These choice ones, especially those three mighty, those chosen three, would surely believe! Yet they also were tinctured with this same evil—they had not such a faith in their Master as they should have had. And now this was but, I think, a portrait of what has been, ever since—the great mischief in the Church of God. This sin of sins—unbelief—is still at this very hour too common among the people of God. Suppose I talk to the mass of God's people, the quiet, humble people, who go about their business and serve God in their households. Shall I find them all full of faith, giving glory to God? No, I am not long with some of them but I hear their doubts as to whether they are His or not! I hear some of them singing—

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

True, I see many of them happy and joyful, contented and trustful, but not always so, even they. Sometimes even these seem to give way to fears and suspicions—and they half think that He has forgotten to be gracious—will be mindful of them no more! Truly is it written, "If the Son of man comes, shall He find faith upon the earth?" He may look for it, and look for it long, for among His own believing people, yet is faith all too rare a thing—hard to be found! It is true it is in its essence always in the Church, but yet so feeble that oftentimes the fire is rather that which trembles in the smoking flax and almost expires, than the spark that seeks the sun, the Father, the flame from which at first it came! Now suppose I turn away from the mass of Christians and select for myself those that take office in Christ's Church, appointed by Him, gifted, and given, as the result of the ascension, to the Church as the Church's treasure? My brothers, what shall I say about deacons, elders, and such like in the Church of God? How do I find you? Do I not discover oftentimes in church officers a slackness of enterprise, a fear lest this should be too great a thing or that too venturesome? Have I not heard—though certainly I may say I have, by God's grace, not experienced—have I not heard that sometimes those that should lead the Church have held her back, and those that should be first and foremost to sustain the Christian ministry in every holy effort, have they not been, sometimes, a

very drag upon the wheels to hinder it? And if it is so in their official acting, I fear it is not much better in their own private capacity before God. Alas, O Israel, your captains are weak! Your mighty men tremble!

But suppose I select those God has especially favored and made the winners of souls? Do I find these at all times confident in the God whose gospel they proclaim? Are they always calmly reliant upon that eternal power which has ordained them to their work? We must, each man, speak for himself, but I fear the most of us might take up a wailing for ourselves and confess that we, also, too often must say, "Lord, I believe. Help You my unbelief." The prayer of the apostles is a suitable prayer for ministers, "Lord increase our faith," for if our faith is not increased, we cannot expect that the faith of the multitude will be! Christ's ministers ought to be to Christ's army a sort of spiritual Uhlans that ride on ahead to investigate the country—to take hold of it before the main body comes up. They should be the men to lead the forlorn hope! They should be first in the trenches whenever a citadel is to be taken by storm. Their hearts should never fail them—they should be men of large conceptions and bold designs—men to fall back upon the Infinite and rely upon the unseen! Are we always such, or such to such a degree as we ought to be? No, I fear that the chapter of church history which is being now written is, in the sight of God, much blotted by the unbelief of all His people. Faith there is—I bless God for it—and in some cases very eminent faith, but taking us all round, alas, we must make up a sorrowful confession of our shortcomings in the matter of our faith in the living God. Now, turning to the chapter again, we shall get our second point of consideration—

II. THE GREAT CURE WHICH OUR LORD PRESCRIBED FOR THE MATTER OF UNBELIEF.

As far as this chapter goes, it lies in the fact that He is risen. He is risen from the dead! You will observe everywhere here, where we meet with the unbelief of man, we meet with the fact of the resurrection of Christ brought in like light to subdue the darkness. Here are the women in difficulties—it is the resurrection of Christ that removes the difficulty! Who shall roll away the stone? The stone is rolled away because Christ is risen! The angel has taken away the stone door of the prison house because it was time that the captive should go free. Now here the Lord seems to tell us that the best and grandest cure of all our fear about difficulty lies in this, "The Lord is risen." You serve a living Savior. What is the difficulty? Is it a providential one? He is the Master of providence, for "the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God." That difficulty, then, which would obstruct you in your pathway to heaven, if you trust in Him, must vanish because Jesus lives! If the Captain of the host were dead, it would be an ill thing for us to be serving a dead Captain, but since He lives, girt with omnipotence, difficulties must vanish before Him! Does it happen that the difficulty which troubles us is one concerning our service to our Lord? Have we a hard heart to deal with in

the child whose conversion we seek in our class, in the Sabbath school, or have we prejudices that stop our way in the congregation that we address week by week—and that we hope to convert to Jesus by His Spirit? Are we called to plow an unthankful soil that breaks the plowshare? Is there something just now before us that looks like a gate of brass and a wall of iron? Here is the one comfort concerning it all—the Lord lives! "He is not here; He is risen." He is not dead! His power lies not paralyzed in the tomb! He lives and goes before you, leading the van of all the noble, of those who died for His crown and glory! On with you, then, in the name of God! Be this your might that Jesus lives! From now on, let difficulties be only rejoiced in as things to be overcome, as opportunities for glorifying Him by the exercise of our faith in Him, which will be followed by the revelation of His power! If unbelief raises difficulties, "The Lord is risen" is the cure for them all!

Suppose our unbelief takes the shape of fright. It does sometimes. It did in the case of these good women—they were frightened, we are told, in the 5th verse. We are told again in the 8th verse that they fled from the sepulcher, for they trembled. Now we may be frightened at a great many things. Some persons are so timid that they are frightened at nothing—their own shadow will frighten them! But there may be real matters that will cause us to tremble if we had not something better to fall back upon than ourselves. Now a frightened Christian is like a man out of his wits—he is pretty sure to do something that will make his danger greater! Self-possession, calm composure, a quiet mind—these have often saved lives and have frequently prevented the destruction of a cause that was just then in peril. If you can be calm amidst bewildering circumstances, confident of victory in the end, that will win half the battle, itself. If you can rest in the Lord, or, to use the words of Moses, "stand still and see the salvation of God," you will surely come out unscathed from the evil. Now the best cure for fright is the fact that Jesus is risen! Why, how am I to be afraid when He who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords is my shepherd and will surely interpose for my protection? If my Lord were dead, then were I unsafe, but while Jesus lives I am secure. "Because I live, you shall live also." Oh, what a grand sentence is that! "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." Who are you, then, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as the moth? Rest in your living Savior! "Fear not. I am with you—I am with you—be not dismayed, for I am your God." "I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you; the floods shall not overflow you. When you go through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." "I am God, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Come back, then, if you are tempest-tossed, terrified, trembling and frightened and, because Jesus lives, be quiet and in patience possess your souls.

I notice in the chapter that *the next form of unbelief is amazement.* These good women, in addition to being afraid, were amazed—could not

make it out. It was too great a mystery. How could it be? It troubled them—it troubled them. Now in all times of our amazement about great gospel truths, we shall always find the best way to get out of the amazement is to hold fast by faith to the veracity and truthfulness of God—and to hold fast to what we can understand—to a fact that has been proved better than other facts of history have been proved—the fact that the Lord Jesus is risen from the dead! It is generally when you are in trouble about some great doctrine—a bad thing to argue about that doctrine while you are troubled about it. Think more of what you do believe, of what you are sure of, than just now of that matter which staggers you. You will find that if you receive the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and rest in that as being a guarantee of your resurrection, you have the key of many other precious truths of God! And as one doctrine draws on another as the links of a chain, you will find your amazement at some of the most stupendous mysteries of the faith will be cured by your grasping the first simplicity and fundamental doctrine of the faith of the gospel, that the Lord Jesus, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, and dead, and buried, and the third day rose again in very flesh and blood—and ever lives, sitting at the right hand of God, reigning in exceeding power. You will not be amazed nor frightened. You will not be made to tremble, or be bewildered if you keep close to this—"He lives! He lives! This I know, and on this I rest."

Further, it seems that these good women were much *prevented in doing their duty by their unbelief*. They were told to go and speak to the disciples, but, at any rate, for a time they did not do so, for it is written, "Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid." Those tongues that, by-and-by, in calmer moments would bear such a sure testimony were, through their fears which sprang of their unbelief, quite dumb! They could not speak. Oh, and this is a complaint that is very common in the Church. I know some who could preach, but do not—and it is unbelief that silences them. And you today, perhaps, were in society where you ought to have spoken a loving and an earnest word, but you did not, and it was a wrong timidity that kept you quiet. And you have been many times in your life cast into positions where usefulness would have been very easy, but at the same time you found it difficult because you forgot that Jesus lives—you forgot that He lives to watch His people, lives to render them assistance when they are in the path of service! Oh, if we knew He lived—yes, knew that He was here—knew that He was close to us, that His heart never forgot us and His eyes were never closed upon us—we would be swift in the ways of duty and a stammering tongue would begin to speak! And the now unhallowed silence which spoils the Church and robs her of many a triumph, would be broken by our willing testimony and by our cheerful song! The best cure for the dumb devil that sometimes possesses us, is a belief in the living and pleading Savior!

Further on, as your eye glances down the chapter, you will see *unbelief connecting itself with wounded affection.* When Mary Magdalene

came to the disciples, she found them weeping, weeping for sorrow, men and women of God, a very mournful company, all weeping, weeping for a dead Savior—the dearest friend they had ever had, who first had given them spiritual conceptions and lifted them out of their former groveling state. He was gone—He was dead and they could not but weep. But they left off weeping, or would have done if they had known or believed that He was risen. It was the last thing they should have done, to be weeping. He rising, and they weeping! All the harps of heaven ringing out melodious praise—and those most concerned in the glorious fact still weeping! Every angel in heaven bending from the sacred battlements to look down upon a risen Savior with admiring gaze, and yet His own dear people who had known and loved Him, sitting down and weeping amidst the universal festival! It was very strange. Now oftentimes the same mischief happens to us. We lose a friend. Who among us has not? We lose a husband, a wife, a child. Very dear are these associations and when the ties are snapped, our heart bleeds, and sometimes we weep, and weep, and weep again until there is a lack of submission to the Savior's will, there is a lack of resignation to His divine purpose and decree. Now if we remembered that He lives, we would also remember that they, also, who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him, for if Jesus rose from the dead, so must all His people! We sorrow not as those without hope! We commit our precious dust to the earth, but it is only for a while. We lay it low, but we thank God it can go no lower! Corruption shall not consume, but refine this flesh until, when the trumpet sounds, the very body that we wept over shall rise again in sacred luster, fashioned in the image of Christ's own glorious body! Death is robbed of its entire sting when we remember this—the soul is in the company of the living Savior! The body, like Esther, is bathing itself in spices to make it ready for the embrace of the all-glorious Lord! The old, worn-out vesture is laid aside awhile, until God makes it fit to be worn in the high festivals of heaven! Oh, if Jesus lives, we wipe away the tears and we carry not our dead to their graves with sound of weeping and with the noise of lamentation, but with the sound of holy Psalms and shouts of victory. We lower the conquering champion into his rest in sure and certain hope that he shall rise to participate in His great Captain's everlasting victory! "Christ is risen" is the cure for wounded affections when the wound rankles through unbelief.

Further, remark that this blessed doctrine, that Christ is risen, cures us of the *difficulties we have as to conversation with heavenly things*. It is earlier in the chapter, though I mention it last. The angel appeared unto the women—two angels appeared to certain other women, according to Luke, and instead of speaking to the angels, they ran away. They were afraid and amazed. "Fear not," said the angels, "for we know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen." Now I think if you and I were in a state of full faith in the risen Savior, if we met an angel, we would not be amazed. If we saw an angel—if once again the spirits could put on the semblance of bodies and soon appear to the organs of our vision, I think if we were full of faith, we would avail

ourselves of the opportunity to learn something about them, and about the heaven they dwell in and, most of all, about their Lord! Oh, I think I would like an hour with some bright spirit to question him about some of those mysteries that, as yet, eye has not seen. If it were lawful for him to utter what, perhaps, he might not tell—if it were lawful for him to tell of some of the glories within the veil, and some of the mysteries of those streets of gold, and those walls of twelve foundations of precious stones, our inquisitiveness might take a holy turn! At any rate, if we might not ask questions, we would hold fellowship. We would be glad to see these spirits that are so near akin to us, for even now—*even now*—we are not strangers to them! They bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot against a stone, and we are come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn—we are come to the host of angels and to those whose names are written in heaven! We are come to that innumerable company, even now, by faith, and if we could get a glimpse of them, we would not be afraid.

Now it is a fact that Christ is risen that makes an open door between us and the spiritual world. A man in flesh and blood is gone into the skies! A man who ate a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb—a man that said, "Handle Me and see that it is I, Myself"—a Man of whom it is written, "He showed them His hands and His side"—a man who said to one of His acquaintances, "Reach here your finger. Behold My hands, and reach here your hand and thrust it into My side"—such a man is gone into the excellent glory and He has opened a living way by which our union with angels and with the angels' Master is complete! Oh, herein there is subject for spiritual minds to greatly rejoice—and the difficulties which unbelief would put in our way are swept away by the full conviction that the Lord is risen—is risen indeed!

But I must not dwell longer on that. The great power of unbelief receives its antidote in the blessed and well-ascertained fact that Jesus is risen. Now let us see still further—

III. SOME OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF OUR LORD'S RISING. We observe in the chapter that one of the first consequences of His rising was a more general, a more intense, *a more universal activity in the Church*. He said to them, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." We see again, "He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God, and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." From which I gather that if we did more fully perceive that Christ is risen, we should be, all of us, more active! It is very hard to get up enthusiasm for an idea—certainly in England it is—it may not be in some more mercurial clime among a more sensitive and responsive people—but here we do not generally get into a state of enthusiasm for an idea. But what men are there that are not moved to enthusiasm for a person? A man, a person, will always command more fully the activity of human hearts than will a mere doctrine or dogma! Bring before me in history the leading principles, and you will generally find that the principles did little or nothing until they

wore embodied in a man—and when some bold man represented the principles, then the principles opened the man's way to human hearts! It is so in the Church. I suppose some people are enthusiastic about creeds and about dogmas. I don't know, but I know this—the most enthusiastic people in all the Church are those that know Him, love Him, live with Him and serve Him! The enthusiasm of heaven seems to be about them. They cast their crowns at His feet and they sing, "Hallelujah," when they behold God and the Lamb! There is an adoration of persons, and their souls are moved by the presence of blessed and divine persons, and so in the Church it should be. We have a living Savior, a living Captain! He is not out of the fight. He still looks down upon us. He is still fighting with us in the grand old cause. Oh, who of us will be a laggard when the Captain's eyes are upon him? Jesus is looking on—Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, is looking on the course! Let us run with patience because we look at and are looked upon by Him. May this principle of Christian patience move every person here to do something, and continue to do something for the honor and glory of his Master!

But, in addition to this cause, we find that the presence of Christ *gave to the Church at that time miracles*. The risen Savior endowed them with unknown tongues, and they spoke, though they were uninstructed men, so that men understand them from every clime! They began to work wonders. Our faith leads us not to these, nor will it. This is wisely denied us. At the same time, though we work not miracles in the outer world, all true preaching is miracle working! Commonly to declare a doctrine, commonly to speak a thing well—all this may be no preaching as God would call it—eloquence, oratory, refinement, the putting of words well together—this is common to all mankind. After their measure, all may speak—after some sort. This is not God's work. But true preaching; soul-saving preaching; the Spirit's voice speaking through man—this is miracle working! You know, my brothers, there are some who cannot preach—they say they cannot preach the gospel. I mean this—they will preach sermons to God's living people, to God's quickened ones, and then they say, "As for you that are dead in sin, I have nothing, to say to you." That is their notion. They are very candid. God never sent them to preach the gospel and they acknowledge they cannot do it. Well, it is a pity that they should try, but another man whom God sends knows, as the other did, that the hearer who is unconverted is dead in trespasses and sins. He knows that ordinarily to speak to such people would be a very idle thing. He knows he dare not attempt it in his own strength, and that to say to the dead, to the spiritual dead, "Live," is, in itself, the extreme of folly. But he feels that God is with him, that God has sent him—and looking like Ezekiel of old, upon the congregation of sinners, as in the valley full of dry bones, he does not say—"I have nothing to say to you, you are dead." But bursting out in His Master's name, he says, "You dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord, 'you dry bones, 'Live!'" God sent the man and while he prophesies thus upon the bones, they come together, bone to his bone and live! The two apostles at the beautiful gate of the temple did not say to the lame man. "You are

lame. We trust in God's name you will get cured of your problem—we have nothing to say to you." No, they said, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" They bid the man do what he could not do, but as they bade him do it, the strength came to him to do it! And while we say to the sinner, "Believe and live," God sends the power of the gospel command, and they do repent, do believe, do live, do fly for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel! And to this day each Christian is a miracle worker in his own sphere, in the sphere of spiritual things! He opens blind eyes by God's power, and unstops deaf ears by Jesus' might. He, too, raises the dead. He, too, casts out devils, still in the higher realm, the realm of mind, the realm of spirit! And our ascended Lord has given us this—this power—we receive it entirely from Him because all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth! Therefore, we go and teach all nations—and that teaching works results!

I must not detain you longer, except to notice that in consequence of our Lord's Resurrection, *there is divine power, the highest degree of power concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ*. He was always God and now as God—man Mediator—all divine power is concentrated in Him. And this power is not laid up there to be idle—not as so much stored up ammunition never to be expended, for notice the last verse, "The Lord working with them." Is it not a delightful thought that Jesus is not a sufferer, but He is still a worker? "The Lord working with them"; redeeming work is done! Saving work is going on! "The Lord is working with them." We do not see it, but He is working. Often that power which is least seen is most mighty, and certainly in the Church that which is not perceptible by the senses is the strongest! Believer, if the conversion of the world rested with the Church—if the gathering of the elect depended upon us—it would never be done! But God makes us work for this end and so He first works *in* us, and then He works *with* us. How this ought to encourage us to work! This little arm, what can it do? But that eternal arm; what can it *not* do? This tongue, how feebly can it speak—but the voice of Him who spoke as never man spoke, how persuasively can it speak? Our spirits, narrow and limited, what can they effect? But His unbounded Spirit, what cannot He perform? Oh, let everyone here who has been serving his Master, bid farewell to everything like a discouraging or desponding thought! The great army of God is not defeated! It never can be—in the long run it must conquer! And even those parts of the divine strategy of our great Commander which looked like retreat, are only portions of His perpetual victory! He is fighting on, and will win the battle, even to the end!

It is a great consolation to the believer to know that Jesus lives, and lives in triumph! I remember, and I cannot help repeating what I have told you before—I remember when in an hour of the most overwhelming sorrow through which a mind could pass, this one thing restored and comforted me! After that dreadful catastrophe in the Surrey Gardens, when my mind gave way and my sorrow was extreme—when I had almost lost my reason for some three weeks and was desponding and

brokenhearted—I was alone, walking in solitude, mourning, and weeping as I did day and night. And all of a sudden there came into my mind, as though it dropped from heaven, this text, "Him has God highly exalted and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." You know the rest. The thought that crossed my mind was this, I am one of His soldiers and I am lying in a ditch to die. It does not matter—the King has won the victory—Christ has won the victory—Christ is to the fore. If I die like a dog, I care not! The crown is on His head! He is safely exalted." In a moment I was happy! My trouble was gone! I found myself perfectly restored! I fell on my knees in a solitary place, praising God who, in infinite mercy, had made that text to be a balm to my spirit!

Now there may be someone here who feels much as I did—disconsolate, cast down. If you really love Jesus, there is not a nobler balm for your care than this—He reigns! He is glorious! The government is not taken from His shoulders. Our King is no captive! Our Emperor has not yielded up His sword! Our Prince Imperial is not banished! Our Empire never fails; the city of Jerusalem is not besieged! There shall be no lack of bread in her streets! "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. God shall help her and that right early." Let the heathen rage! Let the people and nations be moved. Let the whole earth rock and reel, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea—God is our refuge and strength—our very present help in time of trouble. God reigns and the kingdom of Jesus is settled by an unchangeable decree. Therefore lift up your heads, you saints, for your redemption draws near, and even now clap your joyful hands and go back, again, to the conflict of life until your Master calls you home like true heroes, that henceforth you shall know no fear, and shall never turn your backs in the day of battle! God grant it may be so for His name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 16.

Though it is not without profit to sit over against the sepulcher of our buried Lord, we cannot leave Him there, even in thought. So let us go and look at the empty tomb and read of His resurrection.

Verse 1. *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* To finish the funeral which had been hurriedly undertaken at the close of the day.

2. *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.* Came to do needless action—to embalm One who was no longer dead—but since their love suggested it, their Lord accepted it. I have no doubt there is many a thing done by gracious people, or thought to be done, that may be, in itself, quite superfluous, but yet our Lord often accepts what His own people ridicule. So long as the heart sincerely meant to pay a loving homage, even though it is mistaken in some respects—even though it should bring

spice and aloes for one who is not dead—yet is it accepted. "They came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun." Another sun had risen. The Sun of suns had dawned upon the earth!

3. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us?* We often trouble ourselves about difficulties that do not exist.

4, 5. *And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man.* An angel in that form.

5-7. *Sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment: and they were frightened. And he said unto them, Be not frightened. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen: He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way.* After you have satisfied your own eyes, go your way.

7. *Tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you.* There are some beautiful touches in that short speech. "Tell His disciples and Peter"—the one that denied that he was His disciple—tell him—if you omit anybody else, do not forget poor Peter! And then that other word, "As He said unto you." Christ's words are always fulfilled, and if even an angel should come from heaven to tell God' people of some choice blessing that was coming to them, it would only be a blessing that Christ had already promised! "As He said unto you."

8-9. *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.* A wonder, therefore, of mercy! It is no surprise that she was first at the sepulcher, and no wonder that Christ should first appear to her. I believe that there are some who have risen up from the lowest estate who feel so much the power of love in their hearts because of what the Lord has done for them, that they are among the first to see Jesus when He is to be seen—and He appears to them first.

10, 11. *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.* It was what He said would be. It was what she declared had been. But they will make Mary Magdalene mistaken. Their own sister, whom they knew to be truthful, they would not believe!

12, 13. *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.* Well, it was a hard thing to believe that the crucified Christ had really risen from the dead, but surely with two more witnesses, they ought to have been ready to believe!

14. *Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen Him after He was risen.* When He had

upbraided them for their unbelief, He spoke to them in many ways, which the other evangelists mention.

15, 16. *And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.* There stands the commission, then—the grand summary of Christ's message to a perishing world! We must never alter it. We must not leave out the baptism, or put it before the believing, or leave out the solemn sentence with which it closes—though there are some that burn and hate very dreadfully when they get there! The Lord clear their throats and help them to preach the gospel as He bade them preach it—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

17, 18. *And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* And so they did. So long as the age of miracles lasted, their faith was proved to the world by such miracles as this! That age lasted long enough to convince the world when it could be so convinced. Now is there space for faith, and if we have less of evidence, day by day, yet have we all the evidence of all the ages to look back upon!

19, 20. *So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following. Amen.*

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THE WANDERING BIRD
NO. 3453

A SERMON
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"As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is
a man that wanders from his place."
Prov. 27:8.

SOLOMON spoke from observation. He had seen certain persons of a vagrant kind and he perceived that they seldom or never prospered. Moreover, he spoke from inspiration, as well as from observation, hence the wisdom of the philosopher is, in this case, supported by the austerity of the preacher. We may, therefore, take this proverb, first, as the dictate of human wisdom gathered by long experience—and then, next, as the testimony of divine wisdom, commended to us by infallible revelation. The principle it inculcates is alike applicable to the common affairs of life and to the higher pursuits which belong to our spiritual interests.

I. THIS IS THE DICTATE OF WISDOM.

In the common affairs of life we believe Solomon to be correct in his statement that, "As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." The unrest of that man's mind and the instability of his conduct that is constantly making a change of his position and purpose, foretells no success for any of his adventures. Unless he makes the change very wisely and has abundant reason for it, he will make a change for the worse, as the bird does that leaves her nest. Some make a change of their country and fly from their native shores. This is not an ill thing for men to do, for thereby nations have been formed and deserts have been peopled. When a man finds it impossible to provide bread for an increasing family in this country, one of the wisest things that he can do is to cross the sea and seek profitable employment in another land. But there are some spirits of such a roving caste that they seem never to be satisfied at home. They feel persuaded that if they were under other skies, they would succeed, whereas, as a matter of general fact, a man who cannot prosper in England will not prosper anywhere—and many of those who have gone abroad would be but too glad to get home again! Without taking great counsel from God and weighing the matter, long, it is not good for a man to leave the Christian privileges of this country, let alone other considerations. It is ill, I say, to turn aside from the place where sanctuaries are so numerous and where the gospel is so clearly proclaimed, to go abroad where there may be some pecuniary advantages, but where there must be much spiritual loss. Let the man take anxious thought before he goes, or else,

perhaps, when he finds himself in Australia, he will long to be in New Zealand! And when he does not prosper there he will pant for the United States, and, not getting on there, he will, perhaps, be wanting to came back to Old England—and so he will spend the best of his days in vacillating as to where he shall spend them!

The same is also true with respect to a *change of occupation*. Some persons are one thing, today, but you do not know what they will be tomorrow. Evidently they were not cut out for this and, therefore, they think they must have been ordained for that, and as they have not thrived in one line of business, they feel certain that they must have made a little mistake—and that if they could get into another line, they would prosper. Well, when a man is in error about his calling, if it really is not his calling, let him leave it—but let him first be sure that it is not his calling, for otherwise he will sin against the express words of inspiration. The apostle Paul says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called"—that is to say, the occupation or profession in life you were engaged in when you were converted need not be rashly abandoned! Therein you may enjoy communion with God. But if you go running before the cloud and, with presumptuous self-will, get out of the path that Providence has assigned you, you will be sure to smart for it. It is ours to follow, never to lead. Where we clearly see our way, there let us go; and unless we have that way clearly manifested to us, let us abide still in our nest.

This also applies to those who want to be *always changing their situation and their acquaintance*—employers never satisfied with their employees, and employees always discontented with their employers. We know many who say, "There are so many temptations in the place where I am—I will try another." Well, I do not know, dear friends, that you are right. The temptations that trouble me I would rather endure than encounter any fresh ones. I may know something about my weakness in the present trial, but I cannot know how I might stagger under another! I would recommend you to be rather leery of changing your trials. To exchange one trial for another is all the relief you will get in this world. All is vanity under the sun! The whole creation groans together. Amidst sorrow and sighing thus universal, our lot is cast. From the sick man's bitter experience, as Dr. Watts describes it, we cannot escape—

"We toss from side to side in pain,
But 'tis a poor relief we gain
To shift the place, but not the pain."

You may change your position over and over again, but you will always be exposed to the temptation. Until you get beyond yonder azure sky, you will never be out of gunshot of the devil. Evil spirits molest every rank in life. The poor man is sorely beset with grievous hardships, and the rich man is encompassed with seductive snares. He who toils with his hands may have some cause to complain, but he who toils with his brain will become the victim of a sorer complaint. Should you fly to the utmost verge of the green earth, temptation would still pursue you!

Everywhere, while you are in the body, you must keep guard, for temptations and trials are the common portions of all who dwell on this earth! Be not in a hurry, therefore, to fly from one scene of temptation to another. If God ordains that your lot should be altered, be it so. It is yours to accept His allotment either with resignation or with gratitude. But be not hasty or heedless in running from one place to another, lest in yielding to the impulse of a moment, you forfeit the comfort of a lifetime.

It may be that these remarks are peculiarly applicable to some people here present. I cannot tell. When talking about such homely things, our words have sometimes proved to be like an oracle for the guidance of those who have come up to God's house to inquire in His temple. At any rate, dear friends, when the mind is unhinged, or the feelings chafed, it is not easy to exercise a wise discretion. Wait upon God for guidance as to any change in life you may determine, and if the two things are equal—to remain where you are, or to move elsewhere—choose to stay where you are, for the chances are, speaking according to man's judgment, in its favor. Reason seems to say that as it is unwise for the bird to wander from her nest, so it is not desirable for you to wander from your place.

Still keeping to the common use of these words, let us now turn them to another account. This is most certainly true in changing one's religious service in the cause of God. We have a niche, perhaps, in which God has placed us, and we have had some little honor in filling it, but, by-and-by, another sphere of labor opens up before us and, like children easily charmed with novelty, we think we could be more useful in doing something else and leaving our old work. Let us be very careful in this matter, for, "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." I admired one thing greatly in our deceased friend, Mr. Worcester, who for so long a time kept the gate outside. When I once asked him whether he could not be serviceable to the church as an elder, he said that if he were elected to it he would decline the office, "Because," he said, "I can do my work as a gatekeeper, but I do not know what I could do as an elder." So he resolved to stick to the work in which he was acknowledged to do good service. I would have each Christian do the same!

Some brothers we know have such an itching to get into the pulpit that they are impatient of any other office than the preacher's. But there are many in the pulpit, now-a-days, which had been better for all concerned if kept out of it. They were excellent people at prayer-meetings. They were very serviceable, indeed, to give a little address, now and then, at a cottage meeting. They would have been useful deacons, exemplary visitors of the sick and, perhaps, good city missionaries. But they thought within themselves that the pulpit ought to be blessed by their distinguished abilities, and so they crept up the pulpit stairs as little to their own comfort as to the church's edification! And now, had

they but the wisdom and the humility to come down, again, never more to mount them, it would be well! If you are really called to the ministry, then, in God's name, do not stand back from it! And if a new sphere of labor opens to you, accept it, resting on your God who can make His strength perfect in your weakness. But be not forever panting after the highest seats in the synagogue—do not always want the uppermost place at the feast, lest, when the King comes in, you should have, with shame, to take a lower place! Wait till the King says, "Friend, come up higher." Never go up higher till you have the King's friendly admonition that the higher place is yours by a call other than your own choice, remembering that "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place"—from his place, from his proper place in the Church of God, his proper position in the ranks of the Lord's hosts!

Again, I will use it as *a proverb very often applicable to ministers*. There may be some here to whom this may come as a powerful rebuke. It is a crying evil just now, especially in our own denomination, that ministers are changing their places. The good old ministers used to occupy one charge for 50 years—and the people used to love them and to hold fast to them. They did not think of moving, they never spoke of resigning any more than fathers speak of resigning their fatherhood because their boys and girls are sometimes disobedient! They weathered the storm. They knew that all parts of the sea are rough, so they did not need to get out of one bay into another as soon as a little storm came on. I do not know but that some preachers are better moving—and probably they would be better if they were moved off altogether. I think when a man remains in service at one place for only about two years; he has need to question whether he was called into the ministry at all. God does not generally plant trees in His vineyard that need shifting every two years. God's trees are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He has planted. They can stand on the bare mountain's brow and see the ages of mortals swept away into the tomb. And so a God-sent minister may stand many years in one place and see man-made ministers swept away like generations of lichens and mosses, because they have no divine life in them. I love to see a Christian minister, I must say, standing fast in his place. We are not to get into a great pet because there was a little disagreement at a church meeting, or turn round offended because some deacon will not be quite as pliable as we wish, or because the neighborhood does not seem to increase, or because there are not quite so many conversions as we want. No, sirs, if God shall move us, let us move—but if He does not move us, let not the devil do it! Do you know what happens when the bird wanders from her nest? Why, there are her own eggs in the nest, and there is no bird which can sit so well on the eggs as the bird that laid them!

And so a Christian minister should remember that there are some young converts who are his own spiritual children. They are of his own bringing in, through divine graces and, ordinarily speaking, there is no

man who can by any means nurture the young converts like the man who was the means of their conversion! It is well for infants to be brought up by their own mother, and it is a good thing for young converts to be fed under their own spiritual parents. I should not like to trust mine to anybody else for any great length of time. There is always a fear, when the parent bird is away, that the eggs will grow cold and addled, so that when she comes back she will find that she has lost all her trouble. And so, when the minister leaves his people and goes away to some other place, there are many of those who did seem to run well who will turn back. This is a sad result—a tale of wasted labor. Besides, the bird knows that, however uncomfortable its nest may be, there is no other nest in the world as comfortable as the one which it has made itself. And the Christian minister must know that there is no other church so comfortable for him as the church which he was the means of forming! "I dwell among my own people," said the Shulamite. That is my happiness, and my joy, to dwell among my own people, and if any man should say to me, "Is there anything in life that you desire? Would you like me to put a good word in for you to the king, or to the captain of the hosts?" I would answer, No, there is nothing I desire under heaven but to dwell among my own people! If I may but seek their good, and see the Church of God prosper here, it shall be all that I ask of my God this side of heaven! Brothers, let us who are in the ministry, then, as far as possible, cling to our churches and to our fields of labor, remembering that "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place."

This is equally true of our hearers. Oh, there are some hearers who are sad, sad vagrants. We can have no objection to our hearers going to listen to other ministers, if they can be edified thereby, for the bird that sits best on the nest must come off, sometimes, especially if there is any food to be had elsewhere. Hear anybody that can profit you! I am sure nothing will make me gladder than to know that you are anywhere as long as your souls are fed. If a Church of England minister preaches the gospel in your neighborhood better than the Baptist minister does, do not go and hear the Baptist! And if you find either Baptist or Independent treating you to free-will instead of free-grace, do not listen to them, but seek out the Presbyterian and hear him, if you find him more sound in the faith, for, after all, your souls must be fed! That is a matter of necessity. Where you can have all the points of the truth of God, prefer it, prefer it infinitely! But if you cannot have them all, give your chief care to those which possess the greater importance. Seek first, in this case, those things which make most for your soul's prosperity. But what I do not like is this—certain people will join a church and then after about six months will join another church, and then another, and then another! They ought to have no moss on them, and I suppose they have none, for they have certainly been rolling stones! And then, if the minister should die, how many there are who are off, directly, for now

that the church is in a little difficulty, they will all get out of it. Brave sailors these! They want to get into the boat when the ship is in a little bit of gale, and they leave the Church of God just when their help is most needed. Oh, they will come and join the church when the church prospers—yes, any quantity of them—but I wonder, if the pastor went away, whether we would find them all remaining faithful? Too many in our London churches are a sort of flying camp, always flying from one place to another—a set of gypsy-Christians, who have no settled abode and no "local habitation," and are about as respectable as the gypsies with whom I have compared them! Now, never let this be said of any of you who love your Lord and who, consequently, love His Church, but, when you are united with His people, say—

"Here would I make my settled rest,
While others go and come.
No more a stranger, or a guest,
But like a child at home."

You shall find that, after all, your wandering shall do you but little good, while in permanent adhesion to the church, and a diligent casting in of your whole efforts into the cause of God, shall, through the Holy Spirit, give your soul prosperity!

But now I shall take my text in another way and try to use the general principle in another sense.

II. SOME MEN WANDER FROM THEIR PLACE IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.

Where is the "place" for a *sinner?* The place for a sinner is always at the foot of the cross, looking unto Jesus! Alas, then, the tendency in us all is to be looking for evidences, signs, marks, experiences, divine graces and I know not what! Having begun in the Spirit, we are so foolish and so bewitched that we try to get perfect in the flesh! We know that at the first our only comfort came from simply depending upon the finished work of Jesus, and yet we are so mad that we try to get comfort from that poor flesh of ours, which has already been our encumbrance and will be our plague till it dies! Now the moment that a Christian wanders away from his place—that is, from the simplicity of his faith in Jesus—the moment he departs from that standing upon the solid rock of what Christ did, and what Christ is, and what Christ has promised—that moment he is like a bird that wanders from her nest! The bird away from her nest has no comfort. The instincts of nature make her feel, during her incubation, that the nest is her proper place. And when the Christian gets away from the cross, the newborn instincts within him make him feel that he is out of his proper position. The cross is the true rest of a Christian! We are like Noah's dove—there is no rest for the sole of our feet, except in the ark. We may search the world around and fly over the great waste of waters, but there never shall be found rest for us anywhere but at the cross! I confess I sometimes get into that sorry state of feeling, rather as a Christian professor, or a minister, than as a sinner saved by grace—but I find that I have to come back to that same place, and to sing the old ditty over again—

"Nothing in My hands I bring!
Simply to Your cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress,
Helpless, look to You for grace."

There is no living comfortably, there is no living with the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit in the heart if we at once wander from the simplicity of our confidence in Christ!

Further, there are many *believers* who also wander out of their place. What, now, is a believer's place? A believer's place is on the bosom of his Lord, or at the right hand of his Master, or sitting at His feet, with Mary. Now some of us have had times in which we did come very near to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, some of you never woke in the morning without thinking of Him, and all day long a sense of His presence was in your heart. How you grudged the world the hours you had to give to business! And when you locked up your heart at night, you always gave Jesus Christ the key. Oh, how sweet ordinances were to you, then, because you could see Christ through them, as through windows of agates and gates of carbuncles! How delightful were prayer meetings and similar gatherings, because you saw Jesus there, and talked with Him! But what about your present state? Perhaps, my dear friend, you have wandered from your place. You are not living near to Christ as you used to do. Hence ordinances have but very little comfort in them—they are dull and tedious. And services which were once as marrow and fatness to you, have now become as dry bones. Your closet, too, is much neglected. Your Bible is not studied as it was. You have lost your first love and, I appeal to you, have you not also lost your first comfort? Are you not like a bird that has wandered from her nest? Believe me, there is no solid joy, no seraphic rapture, no hallowed peace this side of heaven, except by living close under the shadow of the cross, and nestling in the wounds of Jesus! Oh, that we should be so foolish! The bird does not forget her nest, but we forget our Lord! We need to say with the Psalmist, "Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!" We need to cry tonight—

"Return, oh heavenly Dove, return!
Sweet Messenger of rest,
I hate the sins that made You mourn
And drove You from my breast."

We have wandered from our place, you see, for our place is at Jesus' feet with Mary, or on Jesus' bosom with John, or at Jesus' lips with the spouse in the Canticles, saying, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." But roaming here and there, we are like a bird that has wandered from her nest.

And *does not this wandering imply a lack of watchfulness?* Do I not observe the Christian who was so jealous of himself once that he did not try to put one foot before the other for fear he should take a step awry? He would not even talk without saying, "O Lord, open You my lips!" But now he thinks that he is sure to stand—and he forgets to guard himself

with jealousy. He thinks, perhaps, that his experience has made him so wise that he will not fall into his former errors, and so he gets a carnal confidence and forgets to stand upon his watchtower day and night and watch against his foes. Do you know what sometimes happens to the bird if it leaves its nest? Why, while the bird is away, the cuckoo comes and drops its egg in, and so the poor bird, when it comes back, has to hatch its enemy! And oftentimes, when we are not watchful and permit the enemy to take an advantage over us, Satan comes in and drops some foul temptation into our nest, which our hearts help to hatch and which will give us trouble all our lives! As sure as ever we wander in the matter of watchfulness, it will be for our hurt. We may sleep, but Satan does not. Never was he detected napping yet. There is slothfulness among believers, but there is no slothfulness on the part of their adversary! He always watches, going "about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Though you should leave off watchfulness, he never will. Oh, Christian, do not leave your nest, for you do not know what may come of it, what good things may be destroyed, or what bad things may be deposited while your heart is away!

Some Christians, too, wander in a yet more melancholy manner as to its outward effect, *for we see them wander from holiness.* Unhappy church that has in it many such inconsistent professors! But, alas, they are too common in the world. They "did for a time run well; what, then, did hinder them that they should not obey the truth?" The root of the matter was scarcely in them, for they brought forth fruit only for a season and, by-and-by, they withered away. Ah well, if there is a Christian here—a real Christian—who has backslidden and gone into the world, he will never be happy in his sin! A reprobate, after making a profession, may, perhaps, go back and be comfortable, but a Christian never can! Tell me that you are happy in your sin and I tell you at once that you are *dead* in sin, for he who puts on guilt must cast off shame. You are in your own element—like a fish in the water, you will find it suits your constitution. As a bird could not be happy down in the depths of the sea—it would drown unless it were soon delivered—so the saint of God is wretched in the depths of iniquity—he must speedily perish unless he is brought out. If he falls into sin through infirmity, or is dragged into it through the force of sudden temptation, he yearns to be delivered and groans and cries unto God till, once more, the bones that were broken are made to rejoice! If you wander from holiness, you wander from your place. I have known some people who, in order to avoid trouble, have committed a trespass. A Christian man, for instance, has kept his shop open on Sunday to prevent bankruptcy, and a mass of troubles rolled in upon him ten times heavier than those he had sought to avert! We have heard of some who have done violence to their conscience just once. In sheer despondency they shut their eyes and swallowed the bitter pill. It did not take five minutes to do it. Their friends said it was wise. Ill advisers told them it was necessary. They

thus attempted to extricate themselves from some trying position. But the consequence was that to their dying day the worm of conscience gnawed their soul! They have made the rod wherewith God has scourged them. Mind what you are doing, then, lest in wandering from holiness, you prove yourself like a bird that wanders from her nest! Oh, how blessed it will be if you and I shall be kept by mighty grace simply relying upon Christ, constantly communing with Him, watchful against the inroads of temptation and persevering in holiness even to the end! Without this there can be no comfort for us.

III. THE PERSUASIONS TO MAKE ALL OF US WHO ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS CLING CLOSE TO HIS NEST.

Consider, dear friends, the joy which you and I have had when we have been clinging close to Christ. Where else can such sweetness be found as we have found in the love of Jesus? Will a man leave the cool, flowing waters from Lebanon to go and drink of the muddy river of another place? Shall a man turn away from the bubbling fountain to seek out for himself a broken cistern? Oh, let it not be! We who have fed on angels' food cannot be content with the husks that swine eat! Let us say, with Rutherford, "Ever since I have eaten the wheaten bread of heaven, my mouth has been out of taste for the brown bread of Earth, which is full of grit and gravel. I can no longer find sweetness in this world's joys, for I have tasted of celestial joys that are beyond all that earth can give." Let the joy we have had in Christ compel us to cling to Him!

Think again of *the sorrow we have felt whenever we have wandered.* You and I have had backsliding times—let us mournfully confess it. And what wretched times they have always been! What have we ever gained by going away from our Lord, but broken bones and sorrow of heart? As we have been burned, let us dread the fire and, as we have had to smart for our wanderings when the watchmen have plucked off our veil and smitten us, let us henceforth cling close to our Beloved. What reason has He ever given us to be discontented and go away? Has He been unfaithful to us? "Have I been a wilderness unto you?" He asks. In what respect has He grieved us? Has He ever smitten us in His wrath, or treated us harshly for our follies? Never has a friend behaved better to His friend than Christ has behaved to us and, as we can never find a better Savior, let us cling to Him all our days! Or can you think that the outlook is dreary? When we think of the joy that is yet to come, we have a yet stronger motive to cling to the Savior. We may have to walk with Him today when the snow blows in our face, but oh, what will it be to walk with Him in the sunshine? It may be hard work to keep pace with Him. Faint may be our heart and flesh and blood are frail, walking, as we now do, with Him through the mire and dirt, but what will it be to walk in silver slippers upon the golden pavement of the celestial city? It is not so easy to stand with Him in the pillory, when the multitudes are hooting Him, but oh, how joyous it will be with Him when the angels are rending

the heavens with acclamations and all the saints are casting their crowns at His feet! To be with Him in His trouble is not very sweet to our natural feelings, I know, but what will it be to be with Him in His triumph? To be partners in His cross—from that we may shrink, but to sit with Him upon His throne—for that we must eagerly long!

Well, as we cannot be crown-bearers without being cross-bearers, let us espouse His cross as we would enjoy His crown. Yet be it known that His cross drops with myrrh, and that they who carry it will find it so sweetly perfumed that they shall love the very cross, itself, because Christ has touched it! From this nest let us never wander because of the "rest" which "remains for the people of God." Wander from this nest?—I think *we cannot if the love of Christ inflames us*—if our love to Christ sustains us. What? Wander from Him who died for us, that we might never die? Who lives for us, that we might always live? What base ingratitude is ours that we do not cling closer to Him! Can we give Him up? Christians, He gave you the light that cheered your darkness—and can you turn away from the brightness of His face? With pitying eyes He saw you when you were lying in your blood, an outcast all forlorn, and He said unto you, "Live," and can you ever forsake Him? He passed by you, He looked upon you, He spread His skirt over you, He covered your nakedness, He swore unto you, He entered into a covenant with you and can you now prove treacherous? He redeemed you, He opened His veins that He might pour forth the purple drops of His precious blood as the price for your inestimable ransom—can you turn away from Him? "Despised and rejected of men," as He was, will you hide your face from Him? And while He is still pleading for you, will you cease to plead for Him? Now that His chariots are making haste to bring Him in the glory of His second advent, will you turn away from Him when His kingdom is so near? Shall the wife leave a husband who cherishes her with utmost tenderness? Shall the child neglect its parents, under whose roof his every need is supplied? Shall the limbs of one's body abhor the head? Such strange quirks were not half as unnatural as for a Christian to turn vagrant and forsake his Savior! Ah me, unnatural and brutish as it must seem, you and I would do this and more, also, did not grace prevent! The love which has made us one with Christ must keep us one with Him, or else we shall never hold on our way. Be it, then, your constant prayer, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." Let this be your heart's cry, "Abide with me," for unless He abide with us, and make our hearts His nest, we shall never abide with Him, but shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest!

Perhaps I speak to some poor bird which has wandered from its nest. You are a stranger and you have strayed in here! You recollect a nest in some happy family circle, where prayer was known to be made. You remember the nest in which you were known to nestle—a little village church where you worshiped God with dear kindred. But you have wandered from your nest. You have lost your friends! You have gone into

the world—you are a sinner. You are conscious that you scarcely dare to face the home of your childhood. You have gone away from your old haunts, for you are ashamed to continue in them. You have wandered from your nest. And do you mean to wander on? Is yours to be forever the flight of a bird that has no roost? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests"—will you never have a place to lay your head? Are you condemned, like the unclean spirit, to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none? Are you a pilgrim who shall never have a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God? Are you like the phantom ship of which the mariners talk, which flits across the sea but never reaches a port? No, friend, you are not so to account yourself, though the devil has told you that there is no hope! Though he has driven you to desperation and persuaded you that you are given up of God and man—it is not so. It is not so! The eternal Father, bending from high heaven, looks down upon you and by these lips talks to you! Little as you were thinking that you would be found out, He says to you, "Return, return, return!" 'Tis He who makes you say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." He meets you, prodigal! He falls about your neck. He gives you the kiss of reconciliation. He cries today to the messengers of mercy, "Take off his rags and bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and let us eat, drink and be merry, for he that was dead is alive, and he that was lost is found." The bird has come back and has found her nest! And as the mother bird is happy when that little fledgling which she thought had fallen on the ground, or had been swallowed by the hawk, comes back, and she covers it with her feathers, and bids it nestle under her warm bosom, so is the eternal Father happy! And as she rejoices, so, no—*infinitely more*—does the eternal Father rejoice when the wanderer comes back to Him and finds comfort in His love!

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust in the Father's grace as manifest in the Savior's wounds, and so you shall find an eternal nest from which you shall never wander till you shall build your nest in heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 23:13-28.

Verses 13-15, *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this man unto me, as one that perverts the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him.* They were judges not at all inclined to favor Him, but yet, though His accusers were mad against Him, nothing could be brought before these two judgment seats which

would hold water for a single moment. Holy and harmless was Christ and, therefore, His accusers knew not what to say against Him.

16-23. *I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas! (Who for certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified.* Never did man's enmity to God become more clear than when God, in human flesh, descending upon an errand of mercy, must, nevertheless, be hunted down by these cruel cries of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Man would be a Deicide if he could. "The fool has said in his heart, 'No God.'" To get rid of God—to get rid of God, even in human form, is the enmity of man's heart! He will have it if he can.

23-26. *And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* Fit type of all Christ's followers, who must expect to carry Christ's cross, and who should be happy and honored in carrying it after Jesus.

27, 28. *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.* He had the siege of Jerusalem before His mind, and, therefore, in tender pity He bade them save their tears for other sorrows.

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CIRCUMCISION AND UNCIRCUMCISION
NO. 3454

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 1915,
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"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."
Galatians 5:6.

MAN appears to the most superficial observer to have, at any rate, two parts—his outward bodily form and constitution—and his inward, invisible, but essential self. There are some persons who care nothing for the inner man, who think that to educate the body and to have it in the finest state for athletic exercises is sufficient, but these persons are very few and very foolish, for the commonsense of mankind now holds that the mind must be trained, that the mental faculties must be put into healthy order and that the inner man must be cared for as well as the outer man. Who shall venture to say that the flesh is more important than the soul? He would be foolish who would attach no importance to the body. "Verily, bodily exercise profits a little," says the apostle, though it may be but a little. We are not to despise the body, nor to neglect it. We are not to consider it as a thing utterly unworthy of our regard in any respect. "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit" and, therefore, are neither to be despised, nor to be defiled? But, still, wisdom tells us that the inner man is more important than the outer and that we must care for that at all hazards, and see to its interests, come what may of the interests of the body.

Now true religion I may compare, in this respect, to man. *It*, too, has its two parts—the outward and the inward. I suppose every religion must have some outward way of displaying itself. Even our Quaker friends, who give up both baptism and the Lord's Supper, yet show their religiousness, even more conspicuously than most of us do, by a certain form of dress. And if there were nothing else, the mere sitting still in the meeting house for an hour would be an outward form—and I believe it is one which has a tendency to become as formal as any other method of worship. All religion, whether true or false, must have an outward part to it, that is, its body, and this outward part of religion, the body, is not to be despised, but is to be cared for and thoughtfully observed. But the tendency with most men is to put the outward form of religion into the

highest place and to think the most of it, just as I have said some think more of the body than they do of the mind.

Now this is all idle and foolish, for the outward form of religion, after all, is nothing without the inward spirit. No, it is worse than nothing—it is hypocrisy! It is an insult to heaven and is more likely to bring a curse upon those who practice it, than it is to obtain for them a blessing! Inward worship, when it does not show itself outwardly, is acceptable to God, for, "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"—and spiritual worship, when it does show itself outwardly, is equally acceptable to Him, for He receives it for the sake of the Spirit which gives it life. But outward religion without the inward spirit is always to be classed under the list of offenses rather than of excellences, for we believe an outward worship which does not carry the heart with it, to be abhorrent to God—

"For God abhors the sacrifice
Where not the heart is found."

Yet, understand, the outward is to be observed, but without the inward it is nothing!

And now for our text. The apostle first speaks about the outward part of religion, and then he tells us what the inward part of it is. In the first place we will have a few words on—

I. THE OUTWARD PART OF RELIGION.

Paul here speaks of it after that fashion. He says, "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything." Before our Savior came into the world, circumcision was a thing of meaning. It was the seal of the covenant. God had ordained it to be the outward token of the inward possession of certain remarkable privileges with which He had endowed the seed of Abraham. But after Christ came, circumcision lost its force and availed nothing—for this reason only—namely, that it had lost all spiritual meaning and was no longer the type of spiritual blessings and benefits. The Savior had been pleased to institute other ordinances which better set forth the spiritual truth which He came to reveal, and circumcision, therefore, having no more any spiritual teaching in it, became a dead thing and the apostle says that it avails nothing. Of course, it was, in Paul's day, the outward mark of a firm believer in Judaism. The man who still held to the old faith was not to be led away by the innovations, as he supposed them to be, of Jesus of Nazareth, but still held that it was essential, first and foremost, that the seed of Israel should bear in the flesh the ordained mark. But the apostle said that "circumcision avails nothing." He put it on to the side. But what is remarkable, as showing the force of the apostle's meaning, is that he should have added, "Nor uncircumcision," for while there were some who said, "I have received the seal of the covenant—I am circumcised"—the apostle said to them, "It avails nothing." "Oh," says another, but I, being

a Jew, refuse to be circumcised. I, as a Jew, have come out and said that my children shall no longer be initiated into the Jewish faith according to the Jewish custom. I have repudiated it—shall not I be saved? I have no faith in the customs of my fathers—surely it is well with me, for by this I have declared myself to be a follower of the Savior." "No," says the apostle, "it makes no difference! You who are circumcised get no good by it and you who are uncircumcised get no good—neither the one nor the other is of any good to you!" He sweeps away the whole of the Jewish ceremony, both in its observance and in its non-observance! And so he gives it a twofold blow and lays it dead!

Now I do not think that the apostle meant here to speak merely of circumcision, but of all other rites and ceremonies! I believe he would have us understand that while there is any spiritual meaning connected with them, they are valuable just as circumcision might have been valuable while there was any spiritual meaning connected with it—but that when we are not believers, when we merely receive them outwardly, without knowing their spiritual meaning, or comprehending and receiving the spiritual grace which they typify, they avail nothing—they are of no service, and that, indeed, in and of themselves, they are of no use whatever apart from that "faith working by love." Whether you were sprinkled in your infancy, or have been immersed as believers, supposing you not to have been believers, that immersion is as much a mistake as your previous sprinkling! You have not received any benefit from either, for there is nothing in either. The true essence of the thing lies in the faith which works by love, and if you have received it without faith, you have received nothing at all! You have received only the mere outward ceremony and there has no good come to your soul. You may have come to the Lord's Supper. You may have received it kneeling, or received it standing, or received it sitting—if you have received it by faith, you have been enabled by faith to feed upon Christ to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. But if you have received it without faith, you have received nothing! No, you have done worse than that, for you have eaten and you have drunk condemnation unto yourselves—you have taken the bread of the children, not being a child, and so you have stolen from the Father's table! You have entered into the court of the priests without being a priest and so you have committed the sin of Uzza—you have ventured to perform a sacrifice for which you were not fit— and it is a marvel of God's long-suffering mercy that you have not received a curse for having intruded where you were never called! If you have come to baptism and to the Lord's Supper with the faith which works by love, you have doubtless received benefits by the ordinances—but if you have come without that faith—baptism or no baptism avails nothing whatever! There is nothing in any of those outward forms and ceremonies in

themselves! They are only a dead and killing letter, a mystifying ceremony which drags men down to the things which are apparent. But when faith comes, it quickens them and makes them live—it transforms them into blessed means of grace and then God, in them, communes with the soul. I think it would be difficult to say too broadly or too strongly that outward ceremonies profit nothing in themselves. I know we are likely to be misunderstood, and that there would be some who would say that they would neglect these things altogether. If you wish to misunderstand us, you will. We wish to speak very plainly, but if we were misunderstood in that point, we would not regret it so much as we would if we were misunderstood upon the other, namely, that the outward form of religion is nothing but death, the mere letter, and not the spirit, and that only true vital faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can really bless the soul!

Now let us try to bring out this thought still more fully, that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything"—that is to say, that outward forms do not avail to change the life.

The change of the outward life is a very great part of salvation. A man cannot be saved from a sin in which he still indulges. It is clear that if a man is saved in the Scriptural sense, he is saved from his sins. The drunk becomes sober, the harlot becomes chaste, the unrighteous become religious. Now it is a matter of common sense which I will put to anybody—whether there is any tendency in an outward ceremony to make a thief honest, or to make a drunk sober? Whether, in fact, sprinkling, or immersion, or receiving bread, or drinking of wine. *These have no any tendency, in themselves, to produce any sort of moral effect* upon the man. When St. Francis Xavier went to India, he converted thousands of people, and made them Christians—and how do you think he did it? Why, by having on his belt a little pot of water and a large brush—as he went along, he sprinkled the people with the water, and they were christened! They were Christianized, baptized, and he put them all down as converts. Very well, legitimately so they were, I have no doubt, as much benefited by that as people are by infant baptism, and as much as people are by immersion, if they are immersed without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! We laugh at the thing when it is done on a large scale, and wonder that people can receive it—but we may equally laugh at it with scorn in any one individual instance! My dear hearer, if you could really prove that an outward ceremony changed men, oh, how diligently would we practice it! If the consecrated wafer really does make men holy, oh, turn your houses into ovens and let there be bakers in every street! Happy bakers who can convert the minds of men! Happy wheat that can be ground so as to change sinners into saints! But where is the connection? Where is the connection between bread and the conscience? Where is the connection between water, either in drops or in

floods, and the heart, the affections and the reason of man? Oh, beloved, we know better than this! How is it, then, that men's minds can cling to such superstitions? "You must be born-again" in order that an effect may be produced upon your minds and hearts! You must know another influence than that which is outward! There must come upon you an unseen and invisible power which shall enlighten your understandings, control your souls, change your affections and so make your lives to be different from what they were! But oh, these outward things are but clumsy appliances! You might as well turn gas upon a fire to put it out, as try to save a soul by these outward forms! Circumcision and uncircumcision—neither of them avail anything in the moral life of man—and everybody knows that!

But, then, it is equally true that *they do not do anything to comfort a real awakened and quickened conscience.* I have no doubt that a great many people do derive a degree of comfort from going to church and chapel. You come here and sit in your pews and are very comfortable. Perhaps some of you go to sleep, but that does not lessen your comfort, but rather increases it. If the sermon were never so dull, perhaps it would be all the better for you, but it prevents your being quite as comfortable because it happens to be personal, and to be plainly and boldly spoken. I know there are hundreds and thousands of people in this country who would be greatly troubled in their minds if they did not go to church or chapel twice on Sundays—and they get comfort in this because their conscience is dead! If their conscience were really awakened, they would understand that there is no connection between conscience and outward forms. A conscious sinner, an awakened sinner, never can be lulled to sleep, again, except by that same voice which first awakened it! Conscience finds peace concerning sin when it finds sin laid upon the Savior. It gets peace concerning guilt when it sees Him smarting and bleeding unto death. When faith comes, conscience has peace with God through Jesus Christ, but I am certain that no conscience which God ever awakened from the dead found peace through baptism, or through the Lord's Supper, or through any outward form! The conscience which is once awakened cries, "These things are good enough for saints. They may minister comfort to them, but I need salvation itself! I need Christ Himself—not things about Christ, but Christ—not merely to worship with His people, but to be one of them! "Putting aside the crucifix as it was held up to his eyes in his dying moments, and refusing the last unction, a dying monk cried out, "Tua vulnera Jesu! Tua vulnera Jesu!"—"Your wounds, O Jesus! Your wounds, O Jesus!" And this is what every awakened conscience will have to cry! It must be the blood of Jesus, not the sacramental wine! The washing of the bath that was filled with His atonement—not any outward

washing for the cleansing of the flesh! The reception of God the Holy Spirit into our souls, as a priest coming into a temple! The receiving of the love of Jesus into our hearts as an altar fire into a censor! The receiving of the love of God, Himself, our Father, so that we can say—

"Abba Father! Cry
With an unfaltering tongue."

It is all this which the conscience needs and it will not be satisfied with anything short of this. "Faith working through love" will quiet the conscience, but all else that you can do is but as singing a song to one that is of a sad heart—it yields no comfort to the soul.

If a man were very hungry, very hungry, indeed, I can imagine that if a person should say to him, "Sit down. I am going to play you a tune," he would answer, "Oh, but give me something solid! Give me something substantial!" What would the other say? "Not pleased with music? Come, then, I will give you some painting. Look at that window, there, is not that finely done?" "Give me something solid! Oh, give me something solid!" "Well, but here comes a procession—are not these gentlemen very prettily arrayed? Is it not a gaudy show, worthy of any baby?" "Yes," replies the man, "but I need something solid! I can eat neither processions, nor painted windows, nor music! I need something solid." "Oh," says the man, "but I must give you a rule to live by—here is one which was settled long ago by bishops—will not that satisfy you?" "No. Your rules and regulations may be all very good, but I need something solid, something to receive now." Now the guilty conscience has an awful hunger within itself that cannot be satisfied with ritualism of the best and finest sort, but the conscience cries, "I need something to satisfy me! Tell me, how can God be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly? That is the question. Tell me, how can God punish sin and yet forgive it? Tell me, what is to become of me while I am covered with all these iniquities? Tell me how I can get free from them." Well, the gospel comes and says, "The Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all who believe on Him, and the moment you believe in Him you are completely saved! Your sin is gone, you are a child of God, your feet are on the Rock of Ages and you can never perish." "Oh," says the conscience, "that is what I need! That is the very thing I have been longing for! Here is the gracious God turning to me and saying, 'I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities.'" Ah, may God give us such a spiritual hunger as that, and there will be no fear that we shall ever be mystified about circumcision or uncircumcision, for we shall feel that neither of them avail anything! If we once get the faith that works by love, we shall be satisfied with favor and filled with the goodness of the Lord!

But now it remains for us to say that, as outward religion neither changes the morals of men, nor gives peace to an awakened conscience, *so neither can these outward things avail to take us to heaven.* You will be

deceived at the last, rest assured of that, if you rest on anything which only concerns these eyes of ours, these hands and these feet. If you are depending upon the things which are seen, they are, every one of them, temporal—they cannot be of any use to you when you come into the land of the things that are not seen—which are eternal! Oh, soul, if you rest upon a mortal hope, or a mortal thing, or an outward ceremony, or an outward form, you are resting on that which cannot have any efficacy in the unseen world! And when your soul comes to the grave and you look across the narrow stream of death into the dim eternity, you will then have no hope! It is very strange how God makes liars tell the truth. The priests do not pretend to offer you any hope, for what do they tell you? Do they ever say that these ceremonies will take you to heaven? Not they! It seems as if God would not let Satan fabricate the lie, perfectly, for he has left a weak part in it. Where does the best believer in outward ceremonies go? Ask the priest, and he will tell you that he goes to "purgatory!" Did not Cardinal Wiseman go there? Did they not put upon the lid of his coffin, "Pray for the repose of his soul," and was not that a proof that they believed he went where he needed to be prayed for and where he had no repose for his soul? Do not all the mightiest and greatest men of that church go there? Do not even the Popes go there? It is a poor consequence—that is all you can get, if you get anything! They cannot offer you anything better than this! But oh, if you get the "faith working through love," I will tell you what you will have—you shall have a good hope through divine grace, not of "purgatory," not of the "*limbos patrum,"* but of being with Christ in heaven as soon as your eyes are closed in death and, confident of this, you shall come to your dying bed, you shall lie there as long as God is pleased to spare you in your sickness, without doubt or fear! And when the last hour comes you shall have grace to die, if not triumphantly, at least hopefully! You shall have preludes of the everlasting song, foretastes of the coming glory and you shall die with some such song as this on your lips—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
Now shall my labors have an end
In joy, and peace, and Thee!"

It is singular, and strangely indicative of a trembling conscience, that those who preach up circumcision and uncircumcision dare not offer heaven—but those who declare that salvation is by faith in Jesus can boldly say to every trembling sinner, "Fear not! If you believe in Jesus when you die, yet shall you be with Him in paradise, 'for there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' for they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for

we shall see Him as He is." We shall not be in "purgatory," but we shall be with Him, for His prayer to His Father for us was, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

Thus have we said enough to show you that the outward form of religion avails nothing. Now we come to speak, in the next place, concerning—

II. THE INWARD PART OF RELIGION.

The text tells us that the inward part of religion is "faith working through love." Now what is faith? In one word, it is trust—the trusting of the soul in God's promise made in Christ Jesus. My faith is that which enables me to believe that God is true, to believe that He sent His Son in the flesh to suffer for my sins, to believe that through the merit of His blood and the virtue of His holy life, I am saved. To trust in Him to save me—this is faith. It is not the faith of God's elect to merely believe dogmas and truths, to believe them to be true, but to rest upon them, to trust in them, to repose one's soul thereon! The very essence of Christianity is trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But mark, we are told that *this is faith of a certain kind*—it is "faith working through love." It is not a faith that merely talks, much less a faith that goes to sleep, or a faith that bolsters men up in presumption and makes them live in sin, but a faith working through love, a practical faith. It is a faith which has arms and hands—not a crippled faith—but a living thing which cannot help working! It is not a frozen river that is like stone in its bed, but rolling on, increasing and swelling until it comes to the sea. It is a living thing, a working thing! My faith is no faith at all if it does not operate upon my daily life. If I believe that Jesus Christ has saved me and I trust in Him, there are a great many things I cannot do which other people can do—and many things that I love to do which other people would not do and do not wish to do! If my religion never comes across me when I am in the shop, and stops me, and never comes to me when I am in the market place, then it is a religion which is not worth a button—and the sooner I am rid of it the better! It must be a working religion, practically operating upon the entire man. And this is the way in which it operates—it operates by love. It works by making us love Christ for what He has done for us. It works by making us love God, so that we say, "Lord, what is Your will, for we wish to submit to it"? And this makes us cheerful, happy and resigned. It works, in fact, by making us love the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not love Jesus, then your faith is no faith, for the very sound of His name is precious to those who have true faith! It works by love to Him who Himself loved us and gave Himself for us! It works by love to God, who gave His Son—

"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn.

Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return."

Then faith also works by love to *the brothers and sisters*. A man has no faith if he does not love faithful men. It is a mark of the child of God that he loves the rest of the family. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren"—not only the brethren who happen to be called by our denominational name—that is very easy! A hypocrite can do that—but all the saints! Whenever, as St. Basil used to say, we can see anything of Christ, there we ought to give something of Christian love, so that genuine faith loves all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and desire the good and prosperity of all the branches of the vine. And, mark you, this faith will work by love, even to your enemies! If you are a genuine Christian, you will love those who do not love you. It is very little to love our own relatives, though there are some who do not do even that. But to love our enemies is the mark of a true Christian—to be prepared to bear and to forbear, to endure, but never to inflict, to be reviled, but not to answer, not to rebuke, but to heap coals of fire upon the head of our foes by endeavoring to do all that we can for the good of those who do us ill. It was said of Thomas Cranmer, "Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn and he will be your friend and give you help." And it was said of another, that if you wanted to get a favor from him, the best thing you could do was to do him an injury, because then, when you asked him for anything, he was quite certain to say, "I will do it for you because you have been my enemy." Let us seek for something of the same spirit! Let us love even those who are unlovable and who love us not.

Then I may say that one mark of this faith is that *it loves sinners*. God deliver you, as a church and congregation, from that unloving spirit which never cares for the souls of men! I believe that to be an accursed theology which makes a preacher say, "I have preached to the living people of God. As for the dead, I have nothing to say to them." A theology which dries up the milk of human kindness makes a man a cynic towards his own kind. And to have no care for his own flesh and blood is a theology that never came from heaven, but from a very different quarter! I have seen the dupes of this theology callous about the conversion of even their own children! And I have heard them boast that they never speak to their children about religion—boasting of it as though it were not the most disgraceful thing that could be said! The Christian that cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen and a publican! We have heard some of these say that God will do His own work and, therefore, they never speak about Christ, and though this were not degrading themselves below the very basest idolaters, for even an idolater will speak well of his god and endeavor to bring others to bow before his blocks of wood and stone! But these persons, stupefied by a

fatalism which is far more Muslim than Christian, leaves undone the work which God would have them do and which, if they had genuine faith in their souls, they would do! May God give us not a frozen faith like that, but a faith which works by love to the souls of sinners! You do not love Christ if you do not love sinners! He came into the world to seek and to save them, and if you do not try to bring them to Him, you do not know Christ! How dwells the love of God in you if you have never cared for poor dying men?

So, then, it seems that the very soul and essence of true religion is this—the possession of a trust in Christ which, through the passion called, "love," affects my whole being, moves me to the greatest activity, and restrains me from sin. Now, dear friends, have you got this faith that is working through love? "Oh, I am not baptized," says one. Now I never asked you that question! I did not indeed. I only asked you, Have you got the faith working through love? "Oh, sir, I have been baptized." I did not ask you that! I asked if you have got the faith working through love? "Well, sir, I am a member of the church." What does that matter? That is not the point—the point is, have you the faith working through love? If you have got that, you are going to heaven! If you have not, you are on the high-road to hell! If you have the faith which works by love, you may have a great many errors, you may make a great many mistakes, but your face is towards Jerusalem and you will get there! But if you have not the faith working through love, you may be as orthodox as the Bible, itself, and you may be sound in theology as the Holy Spirit—and yet, even if all this were possible—you could never enter heaven if you have not the faith working through love. That is the essential thing, the one thing necessary.

I was struck, when thinking over this text, to find that in the next chapter (Galatians 6:15) you get this truth in another shape. By comparing one text with another, you often get fresh light, and here you have it—"For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but"—but what? The faith working through love? No, "but a new creation." Well, then, these two things must be the same! My having the faith working through love implies that I am a new creation! Now some of you have been puzzling yourselves about whether you have been born-again, whether you are new creatures. Have you got the faith working through love? If so, you are a new creature, for you never saw a man in a natural state who had faith working through love! He may have faith, a faith which makes him tremble like the devil, but the faith working through love to Jesus Christ, no hypocrite ever did have or ever could have! What are you to apprehend, my dear friends, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ and are trusting in Him? Do not let the devil perplex you by saying that perhaps you have not experienced regeneration, perhaps you have not felt this and have not felt that! You are right, and

must be right, if you have the faith working through love, for, according to the Scriptures, that is so evident a proof of being a new creature that it is tantamount to it! Hear how our Savior puts it. There were some who wanted to do the work of God and who said, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" What do you think Christ said to them? Did He say, "You must feel this, or feel that," and so on? No! He said, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom He has sent." This is the greatest work that God ever does—to make a man believe in His Son! Wherever a man is made to believe in Jesus Christ and to trust Him, you may see the finger of God. You may imitate 20 things in religion, but you cannot give a man true faith—it must be an act of grace. No dead sinner ever did trust Christ! No unregenerate soul ever possessed faith working through love! And it may stand to you as a certain evidence of the new birth, if you have got faith working through love.

As I studied the subject farther, I was struck to find that in another text (Colossians 3:11) you get the same sentiment—"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." Now there are some who say, "I hope I am a new creature, but I am sometimes afraid whether Christ is mine." Well, but it is the same thing! Christ is all and in all to you, and you are the very same people who are new creatures, and who have faith that is working through love! Then, dear heart, if you are trusting in Christ, Christ is your all-in-all, and you need not say—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious doubt.
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His or am I not?"

You are His, if you are trusting in Him with the faith that is working through love! Oh, I think there are some of you who can say, "Well, I do trust Him. I have nowhere else to trust. I cannot trust in myself. I dare not rely on my prayers. I cannot depend upon any mortal thing, but the Lord knows that I do rest upon the blood of Jesus Christ. I am not deceived about that and, what is more, I do love Him, not as I want to love Him, not as I ought to love Him, but I do love Him. The sound of His name is sweet to me. I could not live without it and when I am at a distance from Him I cannot be happy. There was a time when I could be very happy and very contented without the Savior—when I could enjoy the theater, the ballroom and all the pleasures of the world, but I cannot now. It is all emptiness and vanity—vanity of vanity! I must have Christ! If others can do without Him, I cannot. I must have Him."

Well, then, dear soul, He is yours! He is your all-in-all. I spoke last Sunday of the limpets at the seaside, sitting on the rocks. It does not prove that the rocks belong to the limpets because the limpets sit there,

but in your case you are just like a poor little thing flying to Christ—and that proves that Christ belongs to you, that He is yours in this world, and will be yours in the world to come! Then if I take hold of Christ, I know that He is mine! There was never a sinner who took Christ and then found that he had made a mistake. The woman who came to the Savior and touched the hem of His garment, and asked to receive a cure of the Savior, did not take the cure away, but He said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." If you can get Christ, Christ is yours. Trust Him with your soul, now, sinner! You have no qualification. You have no goodness. You have no merits. Perhaps you have no good feelings, nor anything that is commendable. Well now, trust Him! Do you believe that He can save such a sinner as you are? Can you do Him the credit, sinner, that such a lost and almost condemned sinner as you are can be saved by Him? If you have the power thus to believe in Him, it proves that you are saved, for you could not thus have believed unless He had visited you and given you grace to do it! Can you do it now? The greater you feel your sin to be, the blacker you persuade yourself that you are tonight, the more can you honor Christ by casting yourself wholly on Him!

He who has no disease cannot honor the physician by saying he believes he can cure him, but he who has a disease through and through him, so that he is given up—when he says to the physician, "Sir, I believe that you can exterminate this disease and make me a healthy man"—does honor to his physician by his faith. You great sinners, you black sinners, you lost, ruined and undone sinners, the Lord help you now to trust Christ, and then you will honor Him, and give Him glory, and that is the best proof that He is in you and that you shall be with Him in the day of His appearing! It is faith that is working through love that is the grand thing, and that is the same thing as being a new creation, and the same thing as having Christ to be our all-in-all.

May God give this to those of you who are seeking it, so that, having begun in the spirit, you do not end in the flesh, but walk in the liberty wherewith Christ shall make you free. Amen.

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD
NO. 3455

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1915.

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

"I have a message from God unto you."
Judges 3:20.

CAN there be a person here present to whom God has never sent a message? Possibly the question may startle you. The very thought of the great invisible God sending such a message seems to you strange and unlikely. To me it is far more surprising that anyone should imagine He has never done so! Is He your Creator? And has He who made you launched you forth on the tempestuous sea of life to drift in solitude without compass or guide? We know that He has made you immortal—is it possible that during that short life which is a preface to eternity, upon which that never ending period depends—is it possible that He has left you without any sort of communication? Does it seem likely? You call Him, "Father," because He is the Author of your being—can He be your Father and yet have no concern for your well-being—never have spoken to you, never have sent a message from His great Throne to your hearts? How improbable this sounds! Is not the question open to another solution? The truth of the matter, I think, is that you have been deaf to God's messages! He has often desired to correspond with you, no, He has sent some communications to you, but you have resented and rejected them. Is it not likely that He has often spoken when you have not heard and that He has drawn near to you and called to you when you would not listen to Him? I think, from the analogy of nature, this looks like a correct statement of the case. It cannot be that God has left the world—it must be that the world has left God! It is not possible that God has ceased to speak to the soul. Surely the soul has ceased to listen to God, to acknowledge His messages, or to reply to them! I believe, my dear Hearers, and I especially address my remarks this evening to those of you who have not yet received Christ by faith and love into your hearts—I believe that the most of you, although still without God and without Christ, have had many messages from Him. Let me remind you of some of them. Then, let me admonish you that the Gospel, itself, is a distinct and direct message to you. And finally, let us occupy a few minutes in endeavoring to consider how we ought to treat that message.

I. WE HAVE NOT BEEN WITHOUT MESSAGES FROM GOD.

This Bible is in the house of every Englishman. You can scarcely find a house so poor that it does not now contain a copy of the Word of God. If

your Bible could speak to you—or rather, if you would listen to what it says to you—you would hear in the chamber where that Bible lies, the words, "I have a message from God for you." Do but open it, look down its pages, let your eyes glance along its sacred verses and I think it would not be long before it would have communion with your spirit, and this would be its voice, "I have a message from God for you." I am sure that each one of you would read some verse that is personally applicable to yourself, perhaps more applicable to you than to any other man! There is some one special Book in Scripture which was prepared specially for you. There is an arrow there that was intended for your heart—some oil and wine fitted to relieve your pain and heal your wounds! Whether your case is that of carelessness or of despondency, that Book says, "I have a message from God for you." Shall I chide the indifference which neglects the Book? Shall I rebuke the levity which had rather turn to a novel, or to any frivolous magazine, than to this momentous volume which appeals to you as with the voice of God? Scarcely need I do so! Each man must be conscious that it is the height of guilt to slight the King's proclamations and pursue the common and ordinary things of everyday life as if no Royal Mandate had been issued! How much more when it is the voice of Him that speaks from Heaven! Your unread Bibles shall rise up in judgment to condemn you! Attempt to alight from the railway car while the train is in motion, you are liable to a penalty of forty shillings. Do not say you are ignorant of the law! It was posted in the carriage that conveyed you. The angel of Time might surely write with his finger upon the dust of your Bibles the sentence of your condemnation! Beware, you who refuse to listen to Moses and the Prophets! If you will not hear them, you will not be converted, though one should rise from the dead and admonish you of your peril!

Other messengers you have had. Some of them have come to you in golden type—their words have been sweet as honey. I will call them *bountiful Providences*. I know not what you would call them. Perhaps a vein of luck. Have you been favored with success in business? A prosperous wind has filled your sails. In your families you have had welcome mercies. Children have been given you. Those children have been restored from beds of sickness when your heart has been sick with anxiety. In your own health of body you have not been strangers to God's choice favors. Moreover, you have had times of gladness and of merry-making. Your hearts have held their festivals. The streets of Mansoul were illuminated, the houses decked with fair colors and the streets of your mind strewn with flowers! On those days did not these mercies seem to say, as they came trooping along down the streets of your soul, "We have a message from the Lord for you"? Oh, if you would but listen, each one of these parental gifts would have said, "My son, give Me your heart." Surely such mercies should have been like the bonds of love and the cords of a man to have drawn you! Ought not the kindness and compassion extended to you in Providence to have led you to say, "How can I grieve

such a God? How can I provoke Him to anger? Does He not deal generously with me and lavish His treasures at my feet? How shall I forget Him? I will celebrate His favor with sacrifices of thanksgiving. I will bind my offerings to the horns of the altar."

Other *messengers have come to you draped in black.* Their garments have been torn, sack-cloth has been about their loins, and ashes on their heads. They have spoken in hoarse notes, but solemn tones, and though they have not led you to repentance, their admonitions have stilled your pulse, chilled your blood and forced you to pause and think. Remember that sickness—fever, or cholera, or diphtheria—which prostrated your strength, disqualified you for your daily labor, or your ordinary business and summoned you in the quiet of your chamber to look back upon the past and look forward to the future? Can you forget the season when life trembled in the scale and the physician knew not which way it would turn—that hour, that silent hour, when they trod the room with gentle footsteps and the nurse closed not her eyes through all the still hours of the night? Then the noisy watch uttered the only sound that broke the silence of that room! Do you not remember those diseases that laid hold of your vitals and said, "We have a message from God for you"? And some of you have escaped from manifold perils by sea and by land, from shipwreck and from fire! You have been preserved in accidents and catastrophes in which others have died. All these strange, these terrible things, spoke to you in righteousness when you were careless and unconcerned! They had a message from God for you. Oh, deaf ears that will not listen when God speaks to you in such solemn tones and strikes you while He speaks that He may compel you to listen!

Another dark messenger has come to you. *Death has bereaved* you of friends and comrades. Those with whom you were most familiar have been suddenly called away. Have you not been startled by the news that a neighbor or acquaintance with whom you chatted a day or two ago is dead? "Dead?" you said. "Why, he was in my shop only a few days ago! Dead? Why, He seemed to be in good health, strong in body, vigorous in mind, full of plans and projects. I should have thought of any man dead sooner than he!" Do not you recollect the time when you heard the bell toll for a near relative, and when you stood over the open grave? Ah, then, when the dust fell upon the coffin lid, and the words were uttered, "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes," each of those thundering morsels said, "I have a message from God for you!" Walk the cemetery and while every grave tells of our common mortality, how some graves speak to us of the precarious tenure by which our frail life is held! In all, what a warning message we may hear! Turn over the list of the friends of your youth, the companions of your healthy manhood—and you who have grown gray call to remembrance the names of those old acquaintances of yours who have passed from this land of shadows to the bar of God—let the ghosts of the departed start up before you and pass in solemn procession before

your eyes! Then let each one say, with all the pathos of their final exit, "I have a message from God for you!" Among them all, is there one who learned anything of vice or scoffing from you, young man? Is there a soul among the lost that you first led astray? Man, you who have blasphemed—are there some now regretting their bitter doom whose ruin you helped to precipitate? Oh, you base deceiver, are there those whom you did delude? Are there those whom you did ensnare who have gone their way before you to feel the terrible remorse and are waiting for the grim time when they shall look on you with eyes of fire and curse you because you lured them on to their eternal destruction? Those ghosts, of all others, must be the most startling! And their fingers of fire must point the most fearfully and make one feel that they have, indeed, a message from God to us from the place of torment! Let the remembrance of them make you pause, and think—and turn from your sins to the living and true God!

But though these messages have too often been unheard, the Lord, who desires not the death of a sinner, has sent to us by other and equally useful messengers. Oh, in what kind ways has He been pleased to select *the persons who should bring the tidings to us*. The first messenger that some of us had was that fond woman upon whose breast in infancy we hung. We should never breathe the word, "mother," without grateful emotions! How can we forget that tearful eye when she warned us to escape from the wrath to come? We thought her lips right eloquent—others might not think so—but they certainly were eloquent to us! How can we ever forget when she bowed her knees, and with her arms about our neck, prayed for us, "Oh, that my son might live before You"? Nor can her frown be erased from our memory, that solemn, loving frown when she rebuked our budding iniquities! And her smiles have never faded from our recollection, the beaming of her countenance when she rejoiced to see some good thing in us towards the Lord God of Israel! Mothers often become potent messengers from God. And I think each Christian mother should ask herself in secret whether the Lord has not a message to give through her to her sons and to her daughters. And did you despise that messenger? Had you the audacity to reject God when He spoke in this way, when He selected one so near and so dear, who could speak so well, and could talk to that tender instinct which respects and hallows a mother's love? Could it be? Ah, thus it has been up till now with some of you! God has spoken with other messengers to you. Was it your sister? Did she not write a note to you because her timidity would scarcely let her speak? Or, perhaps, it was a friend. It may have been that young man you ridiculed and called fanatical—you know how soon you shook off the impressions which those pointed remarks of his seemed to make upon you at the time. Or, possibly, it was a tract that met your eyes. Or a book like Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, or Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, or Alleine's *Alarm*. Through these printed appeals God spoke to you!

Yet, again, it might have been through some preacher of the Gospel. God's ministers have been God's messengers to many thousands of immortal souls. Within this House of Prayer, sometimes, there are many who hardly know how to keep their seats when we try to ply the conscience with all the arguments of the Truth of God and seek to move inactive souls by some of the thunderbolts of the Almighty! Oh, how many men here have been rebuked and rebuked, times without number, but still they go on in their old sins? Take heed, take heed, men, for if you refuse God when He speaks by His servants, and by His Providence and by your friends, He will one day speak to you by a bony preacher who will deliver his message so that you must hear him! You know from where my text comes? "Ehud said, 'I have a message from God for you.'" It was a dagger which found its way to Eglon's heart—and he fell dead! So shall Death deliver his message to you. "I have a message from God unto you," he will say, and before you shall have time to answer, you shall find that this was the message, "Because I, the Lord, will do this, prepare to meet your God, O Israel; thus says the Lord, cut it down; why cumbers it the ground? Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Oh, may you hear the other messengers of God before He sends this last most potent one from which you cannot turn away!

I have thus sought to refresh your memory by reminding you of the many warnings you have received. The intent of them all has been to awaken your conscience. But now, in the second place, we admonish you that—

II. THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD IS, IN ITSELF, A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO YOU.

Oh, how passing strange are the reasons, the extraordinary reasons why many people attend our churches and chapels! Some people go merely because everybody else goes. Others go because—well, perhaps it helps their business a bit! Some go when they happen to have fashionable clothes in which they like to make an appearance. Ask the large majority of men and women why they go—and even the best of people, were they to be candid, tell you that they suppose it is the right thing to do—it is their duty. But how few go with the idea that God will speak to them, there, and that the Gospel preached there will be a message from God to their souls! And, I am afraid, there are some ministers who hardly think that the Gospel is intended to come personally home to the people. They talk, as I read of one the other day, who said that when he preached to sinners he did not like to look the congregation in the face, for fear they should think he meant to be personal, so he looked up at the ventilator because there was no fear, then, of any individual catching his eye! Oh, that fear of man has been the ruin of many ministers! They never dared to preach right at the people. We have heard of sermons being preached before this and that honorable company, but preaching sermons *before* people is not God's way! We must preach sermons *at* the people, directly

to them, to show that it is not the waving of a sword in the air like a juggler's sport, but it is the getting of the sword right into the conscience and the heart! This, I take it, is the true mission of every minister of Christ. It is said of Whitefield that if you were the farthest away from him in a throng, where you could but hear the sound of his voice, you felt persuaded that he meant to speak to you! And of Rowland Hill it is said that if you got into Surrey Chapel, you could not hide in a corner there! If you did manage to get into a back seat, or were squeezed tight into the windows, you would still feel persuaded that Mr. Hill was addressing you and that he had singled you out for his expostulations as though no one else were present! Surely this is the perfection of preaching. Should it not be our aim to find men and make them feel that at the present moment they are, themselves, addressed? That there is a message from God to the soul?

Now, my Friend, the Gospel is a distinct message directed to you. I know it speaks to your neighbor and tells him that he is fallen. That is for him, not for you, to think of. Your portion is that which singles you out and tells you that *you* were in Adam when he sinned. That you fell in him and that as the result, your nature is corrupt! You are born in sin and prone to commit sin—there is no good thing in your natural disposition! Whatever seems good in your own eyes, or the eyes of others, is so tainted by the inherent vice of your own depravity that it cannot be acceptable in the sight of God! When we preach to sinners, never think that we mean the riff-raff in the streets. The Gospel, which saves a sinner, is a message from God to YOU! Think of your own sins and the evil of your own heart! I have heard of a woman who refused to believe that she was a sinner, and her minister, convinced that she did not know what she meant, thus exposed her folly. He said to her, "Well, if you *are* a sinner, of course, you have broken God's Law. Let us read the Ten Commandments and see which you have broken." So turning to the Decalogue, he began to read, "You shall have no other God before Me." "Did you ever break that? "Oh, no! Not that she knew of." He proceeded, "You shall not make to yourself any engraved image," and so on. "Did you ever break that? "Never, Sir," said she. Then, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." "Oh, dear, no," she had been very particular on that point. She did not know that she had *ever* offended in that respect in her life! "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." "Oh," she said, "I never do any work on a Sunday—everybody knows how particular I am about that." "Honor your father and your mother." "Yes," she replied, she had been quite perfect in this matter. You might ask her friends if she had not been. "You shall not kill." "Kill anybody?" She wondered how the minister could ask her that! Of course, "You shall not commit adultery," must be passed without a question. "You shall not bear false witness." Much of a gossip though she was, she swore she never did backbite anybody in all her life! And as to the idea of coveting, well, she might some-

times have wished that she was a little better off, but she never wanted any of anybody else's goods—she only wanted a little more of her own.

So it turned out, as the minister suspected, that she really was not a sinner at all in her own estimation. It is marvelous how people who indulge in general confessions of sin attempt to exculpate themselves of each and every particular offense. Whatever the indictment is, they plead, "Not guilty." But the condemnation which the Gospel pronounces upon all who have transgressed the Law of God is a message from God to *you*! Oh, I would have those of you who have not fled to Christ feel and realize the terrors of the Law! How stern its precepts! How dreadful its penalties! How Divine its sanctity! And remember—it is a message from God to YOU! Where is the possibility of escape from the justice it metes out, the judgment it pronounces? I think I hear the cry of spirits lost without hope—mark the worm that never dies and witness the agonies of conscience never appeased—while the remembrance of opportunities haunts them and the wrath of God stirs the fire of remorse that never shall be quenched! Of that appalling spectacle I might speak at length to you, but I will not. Oh, my dear Hearers, I would have you remember that this is a message from God to you! As sure as you live, unless you repent, the everlasting burning must be your portion forever! You must make your bed in Hell if you continue in unbelief! Do, I pray you, forget your neighbor for a while. Think not of anything that is applicable to the person sitting next to you. To you, to your own self, is the thunder of God's threat sent—"If you repent not, you shall all likewise perish." If you turn not from the error of your ways, God will not turn from His righteous indignation. Your *destruction* slumbers not, though you are ever so drowsy! His wrath will burn like coals of juniper—forever and forever it will abide on you!

But *the Gospel tells of a Substitute*. It informs you that Jesus came and suffered in the place of the sinner. It says that He died for those who trust Him. It assures you that whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Have you no anxiety that the Gospel should be a message from God to you? It will be of no use to you that Jesus died, unless He died for you. If He took your sin and carried your sorrow, it is all well—but though He should have died for all mankind, except you, by that omission you would perish! We know that He died for Believers. "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." The vital question is, "Do I believe in Jesus? Have I trusted in Him? Do I depend, now, upon His finished work? Having no other refuge, do I trust in Jesus, sink or swim? Do I commit myself to the tide, relying on His merits, expecting thereby to be borne on safe to the haven of His Glory?" If so, then there is evidence that He died for me. I am free from condemnation! He paid my debts—I am clear from the charges of the Law, for He bore my punishment. I am acquitted by His mediation. Therefore, being justified freely, I may go on my way rejoicing! But of what use is the Gos-

pel unless it thus becomes a message from God for *me*? Oh, the delight, dear Friends, of those who recognize the promise of God as a message of love to them! Hundreds of times did I hear the Gospel preached. I heard of pardon, full and free. I heard of a complete righteousness that wrapped the sinner from head to foot. I heard of full deliverance from the penal sentence of the Law of God. I heard of adoption, of communion with Christ, of the sanctification which the Spirit gives—but what were all these privileges to me when I had no interest in them? It was as though one should take up the title-deed of an estate and begin reading it in a social party by way of interesting them! What more dull—what more heavy reading? How the words are multiplied! How those lawyers seek to say the same thing over and over, till no flesh living can endure them! Ah, but, my Friend, if that title-deed refers to an estate which has been bequeathed to *you*, all those words delight you! Their repetition seems to clench your title! You like to have the thing made out in proper legal form. Your eyes sparkle over that little sketch in the corner. You take notice of the stamps and you are specially taken up with the signatures! Matters that would be of no interest at all under other circumstances seem to be exceedingly precious to you viewed in the light of your inheritance! It is just so with regard to the Word of God. When we come to read the Book and know that it confers blessings on us, our joy is full to overflowing. To us the message is sent. By us the message is received. The complete salvation it announces is ours! We are wholly saved from every peril, through Jesus' blood. We are delivered from sin. We are endowed with a righteousness, not of our own performing, but of His imputing. Thereby we are adorned—

"With the Savior's garment on,
Holy as the Holy One!"

With what ineffable joy does this message from God make glad our spirit!

Be sure, of this, my Friends, let our case be what it may, *the Gospel preached is a message from God to our souls*. The hypocrite cannot long attend upon the means of Grace without finding that its doctrines are very heart searching. They pierce his thoughts. They hold a candle up to him and if he would but look, they would expose his desperate condition. The formalists, the men who delight in ceremonies, cannot long frequent God's hallowed courts where His true ministers proclaim His name, without perceiving that there is a message from God to them! The most careless spirit will find in the Word of God a mirror held up to his face in which he can see a reflection of himself. There have been many messages like circulars from God to us, but the Gospel, faithfully preached, is a private and personal communication.

A minister once sent his deacon to attend a certain anniversary service. The discourse turned upon Diotrephes, who loved the preeminence. That deacon's character was aptly described. He did not, however, agree with the preacher. He was, himself, a Diotrephes, though he failed to detect his own portrait for, with apparent indifference, he asked

a friend of his if he supposed there were such persons existing as those who had been described in the sermon? "I cannot think," said he, "who the preacher could have been aiming at." So his friend said. "Well, I think he must have been intending you and me." No better answer could have been given! I like each hearer to make the application to himself.

But Mrs. Jones thinks sometimes that Mrs. Brown must have felt very strange in one part of the sermon. And Mrs. Brown thinks that if Mrs. Smith had looked at home, she must have known that that which was said was meant for her—whereas the real truth was that it suited all three of them, and there was something meant for each, as well as for all! Take heed to yourselves, my Beloved. Be like the young lad who, when he was asked why he attended so earnestly, said, "Because I am in hopes that one of these days the Truth of God I hear will be blessed to my own salvation."

Brothers and Sisters, if you were thirsty, you would not stand by the rippling brook and marvel how it flowed on, to the river, and the river onward to the sea. You would not let your meditations be wandering to the meadows which it made green, or the mills which it turned, or the cities which employed it in mercantile industry! No, you would just stoop down and drink—and *then*, perhaps meditate on those grand uses it served. When there is a cry for bread in the streets, it is of no use telling the people that there is a large stock of wheat in the Baltic and that there has been a fine crop this year in the United States! Each man wants bread in his own hands and in his own mouth! It is amazing how personal people become when the thing has anything to do with money. I never knew a man short of cash who was relieved by the intelligence that there were millions of bullion in the bank. A little in his pocket cheered him more than the much that had accumulated at the fountainhead! How is it that people are not personal with religion? Why are they not looking to get, every man, a full share in the capital it represents? How is it they do not turn everything that comes in their way to God's account when the Gospel is preached? Why, when tidings are published, do they not say, "Lord, is this a message from You to me?" Now to close, my last point is this—

III. IF THERE IS SUCH A MESSAGE AS THIS FROM GOD TO US, HOW SHOULD WE TREAT IT?

Let the minister entertain this question. He ought to deliver it very earnestly. God's message is not to be preached with marble lips—it must not drop from an icy tongue. It ought to be spoken very affectionately. God's message is not to be announced unkindly. The kindling of human passion should never stir us. Rather let the Divine Flame of God-like affection burn within our souls. It should be proclaimed very boldly. It is not for the minister of God to smooth the stones, or pare down any of the angles of the Gospel! He should be tender as a lamb, but yet bold as a lion. It is as much as his soul is worth to keep back a single word! He

may have to answer for the blood of souls if he trims in the slightest particular. The withholding of any part of a sermon which should have been delivered, should he refrain himself lest he offend anyone, may bring down upon him a condemnation that he knows not how to escape—and he may have to, throughout eternity, bewail that he had God's message and did not deliver it! I always feel quite easy in my own conscience if I have preached what I believe to be the Truth of God. If you send a servant to the door, you give him a message. If the person at the door should be angry, the servant would say, "It is of no use being angry with me! You should be angry with my master, for I have given you the message just as he gave it to me." And if they should be angry with him, he would say, "I would much rather that the stranger at the door should be angry with me for telling the message, than that my master should be angry with me for keeping it back, for to my own master I stand or fall." I think the minister of God, if he has preached faithfully, may say, "Well, I have delivered only what my Master told me! If you are angry with me, you must remember that you ought to be angry with my Master, for it was my Master's message, but it is better for you to be angry with me than for my Master to be angry with me!" Baxter said, "I never rebuke myself for not having used fine flowery language when I am preaching, but I have rebuked myself full often for lack of earnestness in what I have delivered." So we, each of us, must humble ourselves before the Lord on account of our coldness in this matter. Yet we must not handle the Lord's message deceitfully, but go on boldly to deliver the message which God has given us, remembering that we only have to give an account to Him. There lives not a man under the cape of Heaven that should be so free from the fear of his fellow creatures as God's minister! To him, prince or peasant, peer or beggar must be alike. To him, kings have no crowns, and queens no thrones. He speaks to men as men, going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature! And being God's ambassador to men, he must go right on and speak as he gets utterances from his Lord!

Yes, but if this is God's message, the minister has not only to think how he should treat it, but you have to think how *you* should treat it! And *I have to ask those who are unconverted what they mean to do with it.* What do you mean to do with God's message? Of all the bad things to do, do not do this—do not say, "Go your way for now. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." Do not say that! Better to say, "I despise the message and I will not obey it." Talk not like the procrastinators, for procrastinators are the most hardened of men. To promise they will do—it quiets men's consciences, whereas, if they deliberately said, "I will not," perhaps conscience might be awakened and they might be led to do it. No, say either the one thing or the other! If it were possible for you to meet an angel on your way home—the thing will not occur—but if you could meet an angel and he should stop you, and should say, "Now, Man, not a step further until you have given me an answer!

God commands you to believe in Jesus Christ. He tells you to trust Him with your soul—will you or not?"

Suppose you were placed in the same position as King Antiochus. When the Roman ambassador met him and asked him whether it was to be peace or war, he said he must have time to consider. The ambassador, with his sword, drew a circle in the sand. "Give an answer," he said, "before you move out of that circle, or if you step out of it, your answer is war." I think there is such a phase in a man's life when he must give an answer. I know what that answer will be, unless God the Holy Spirit makes you give the right one, but you must give it one way or the other! And if the man says, "No, I will give no answer," yet if he answers not beyond that appointed hour, it is war between Him and God forever—and the sword shall never be sheathed, nor go back into its scabbard! He has thrown down the gauntlet by refusing to give a decisive pledge of obedience! The Lord has declared eternal war against him—peace shall not be made forever.

Before you go farther, which shall it be? Do you say, "I love my sins. I love the world, I love its pleasures. I love my own righteousness. I will not trust Christ"? That shows your depravity—look at the consequences and tremble! But if, from the depths of your soul, you say, "God be merciful to me a sinner. I would be saved!" Then trust Christ and you are saved now! Believe on Him—believe on Him, now, and you are now forgiven! Oh, may the Savior of His own Grace give us your salvation as a seal to our ministry—and to Him shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:119-126.

Verses 119-121. *You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. Therefore I love Your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors.* Eastern kings cannot often say as much as this, but David had been a just king. This was for his comfort when he, himself, came under unjust treatment. "I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors." It is of the same tenor as another prayer—"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." God often deals with men as they deal with others—"With the forward, He will show Himself forward." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." May our conduct be such that, though we plead no merit, yet we may dare to mention it in prayer.

122. *Be surety for Your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.* As nearly as I remember, this is the only verse which does not mention the Law or the Word of God. Here you have a "surety," and that is something even better! If the Law fails us, the Surety stands us in good stead. How I like to think of God, the Surety of His people! When there is a trial

against them and the oppressor is heavy upon them, they can come to God to be a Surety for them in the great action of life. "Be surety for your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me." My Master is Surety for His servants—His servant is sure enough.

123. *My eyes fail from seeking Your salvation, and for the word of Your righteousness.* I have looked until I have looked my eyes out! I am weary with waiting, with watching, with weeping—"My eyes fail for seeking Your salvation." Some do not even look for Him. Here is a man who looked until his very eyes gave out!

124. *Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes.* He is a just man. He can plead that he has done justly, but he does not ask to be dealt with according to justice—"Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy"—as far as anyone of us can get. If you have been greatly sanctified, have walked very near to God, I would still not advise you to go beyond this prayer—"Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy." Singular is the next sentence—"And teach me Your statutes." It is a great mercy to be taught the ways of God, to understand His way, to understand the practical part of it, the statutes. To be made holy is a high honor, a great privilege. When you are seeking great favors of God, ask for great holiness!

125. *I am Your servant.* He called himself, "servant," many times before. And in this wonderful passage this is the third time. He is delighted to be the "servant of God." He says little about being a king! He says a great deal about being a servant—"I am Your servant."

125. *Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies.* You know, generally, a teacher finds the teaching—the pupil has to find understanding. But here is a prayer—"Give me understanding." The last verse he asked to be taught. Here he asks to have an understanding given to him. What a God we have to deal with! And when we are taught of the Lord, how effectually we are taught! He not only gives the facts, but gives the understanding with which to get at their meaning!

126. *It is time for You, LORD, to work: for they have made void Your Law.* When men begin to exercise a destructive criticism upon the Word of God, it is time for God to work! When God's Law is held in small esteem, when men go their own way, call vice by the name of pleasure, "It is time for You, Lord, to work: for they have made void Your Law."

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

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

"PEACE BE UNTO YOU"
NO. 3456

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1878.

"And as they thus spoke. . .Peace be unto you."
Luke 24:36.

WE like to know how a person used to act, for we think we can infer from that how he will act. That is not always correct, however, for men change. But in our Savior's case, if we study His life, we may very well infer from what He did, what He will do, because He never changes! And this is a comfortable reflection for us at this time, that in the days of His flesh, while He was yet on earth, He loved the company of His people! If He changes not, then He still loves the company of His people. He did reveal Himself, then, to one. He will still speak comfortable words to His people when they are alone. One by one will He reveal Himself to them. He did speak graciously to two. Where Christians converse on holy things, they may still expect that Jesus will Himself draw near. But more frequently He lingered longest and revealed Himself most in the assembly of His people. Where the eleven were met, where many were gathered together, there the Savior came, not once, but twice and often. Learn, then, that we may expect Him here tonight! Peter, and James, and John are representatively here. Here, too, we have some of the goodly women—the Marys and Marthas are here. They are waiting for Him. Their hearts are longing for Him. He is the same now as always. Brothers and sisters, we may expect Him! He will come to His old haunts. He will come and deal with His people as He did before. Twice, at least, we have it on record that our Savior came to His disciples when they were met on the first day of the week—from which I gather another comfortable thought, that as this is the first day of the week, we may for another reason expect Him to be here, to put honor on what now is the Lord's Day. He, at least twice, for so it is on record, came to His disciples and, standing in their midst, said, "Peace be unto you." On this first day of the week, this Lord's-Day, at eventide I trust—I hope, no, I *expect*, that you will feel Him here, and I pray that to each one of His people those soft words may come with divine power, "Peace be unto you."

Without further preface than these words, let us draw your attention first, to *what He said.* Secondly, *when He appeared to say it.* And thirdly, of *what came of His appearance at the saying of it.*

I. OUR LORD'S GRACIOUS SPEECH.

What did He say? He said, "Peace be unto you"—four words, each full of meaning. May I not view those words in four lights? Was it not first *a salutation and benediction*? Thus He introduced Himself, "Peace be unto

you." It was His good wish—more, it was His fervent prayer! He breathed peace upon them expressive of His goodwill, His love, His intense desire for their highest good. Peace is the highest gift He can impart. Said the apostle, "Grace, mercy, and peace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ." He had given them grace and mercy—He now gives them the highest benediction, peace! Did He not mean more than that? In a second light it was a benediction. "Peace be unto you." He had been into the invisible world and He had returned from it—and He tells them that there was peace reserved for them. He had passed the veil with His own blood. He had offered up His sacrifice. He had said, "It is finished." He had received the token that it was finished by His being raised from the dead. And now He comes to them with the marks of His crucifixion still upon Him, and He tells them there is peace—it is done—"The war is over, the conflict is concluded—My bloody sacrifice and glorious resurrection have made peace between you and God." "Peace be unto you." It is the declaration of what He had seen and heard of the Father as the result of His death; a benediction and a declaration.

Was it not also a *fiat?* By a fiat I mean that kind of word which God spoke to the darkness when He said, "Light be," and light was. Here they were in trouble and Jesus said, "Peace be," and before long peace was. It is always with Jesus to speak the Word of power, for He is, Himself, the Word of power. He is God's Word—the Word that built the heavens, the word that establishes the pillars of the universe, and when He speaks thus, it is not a mere wish, it is not a mere prayer, it is not a mere declaration, even, of a fact—it is the fulfillment of wish and prayer, and the application of the fact! "Peace be unto you." Before long they did receive the peace which He thus authoritatively gave them.

But may I not view it in another light, namely, *as an absolution?* Think a minute, and you will see it is so. These were they who had forsaken Him—there was one who had denied Him! Out of them all, there was no faithful spirit there at all who proved to be faithful in the hour of danger. Like cowards, each one had cared for himself and deserted his Lord. They had slept while He agonized. They had retreated while He advanced. They had, every man, left their Master to seek each man his own. And now what does He say to them? Do they stand as culprits? Is He about to accuse them? Do they stand as deserters? Is He, as a captain, about to condemn them? No, that one word seems to say, "It is forgotten. It is forgiven." My only word to you is, peace, peace, peace. I know your weaknesses. I know your deep regret. I know how you lament that you served Me thus—regret no more, at least be not depressed with such regrets, for lo, My only return to you is this, I give you My, "Salem," My salutation—My word of goodwill, My sweet word of love. I have not revoked My legacy, though I might well have destroyed My last will and testament. I said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." I confirm that will now, risen from the dead. You shall see I have not cut you off from My affectionate regard. I, risen from the dead, declare what I declared when your love was warm and your resolution was rather to die

with me than to desert me. I give you the same as I gave you then, "Peace be unto you."

Now I think there are some sweet things rolled up in those brief thoughts which I have given you. The text itself has richness in it. Now, my brothers and sisters, the second thing, and briefly, is—

II. WHEN DID JESUS STAND IN THE MIDST OF HIS DISCIPLES, and say thus, "Peace be unto you"? When? Perhaps in considering the time, we may get some comfort and be led to hope that He will say the same tonight. Well, when did He come? Well, first, *He came when they were quite unworthy of His coming*. We have already told you how they had served Him. Cowardly—they had deserted Him! But though there was no one there that could have even thought, much less said, "I deserve the Master's company," yet He came. Oh, I think we are, many of us, in the same plight. Looking back upon the past, we cannot feel that we deserve any love visits from the Savior. We dare not put up a plea on that ground. We are very unworthy—we are very unworthy—but that is no reason why He should not come. They were unworthy, but He stood in their midst and said, "Peace."

Now note, next, that *they were very unprepared*. They were not looking for Him! They had not come together that night with any expectation of seeing Him—I am sure they were not, for when He did come, they were afraid and thought they saw a spirit! They were least of all expecting Him to come. Well, and my sister, you came in here unprepared. Do not excuse yourself, but yet do not despair about seeing your Lord! Brother, you came here perturbed, troubled. Your soul is not like the lake when it is still, which, like a molten mirror, reflects the stars above. But Jesus Christ can come and mirror Himself in your heart, first smoothing it with the word of peace. Yes, yes, it is wrong to be unprepared for Christ's manifestation, but it is a thousand blessings that our unpreparedness does not keep Him away! I may expect to see Him, though unfit and unworthy. Come Savior, come, I beseech You, pass not by me. I might have feared You would if I had not seen that, in the case of the eleven, their unpreparedness did not bar the door. Oh, let not my unpreparedness keep You away!

Note, further, that our Lord came to them when *they greatly needed Him*. They had got into a disorganized, demoralized state as a group and they were, every one of them, almost ready to give up their faith. The third day had passed, and they had not yet believed in His resurrection, though it had been witnessed to them. They were foolish and slow of heart, and I do not know what they might have done the next day, for he that is slow of heart and unbelieving today may go to something worse, if worse may be, tomorrow! And they needed Him—they needed Him and there He was in the midst of them! Courage, then, my brother! You need Him—you may expect Him! Sister, you need Him—oh, how much! How much do I need Him—how would a visit from His love kill many of my sins and quicken all my graces! The physician comes not only when he is sent for, but when he knows he is needed. The Good Physician does so

especially! It is not so much our sense of need as our need, itself, that often brings Him. We frequently do not know our need until He comes, and we see our need in contrast with the supply. Well, then, unworthy and unprepared, yet needing Him, we may expect Him! He will come if we cry out for Him. In our very midst He will stand tonight and reveal Himself!

Moreover, it was a time when *they were exercising what spiritual light they had*—let that be remembered. They were in a low state, but they had met together. They had loved together. They were showing that like a flock of frightened sheep, they were running together, hardly knowing what else to do. They did at last get near one another. There is something that Christ loves in that. That was good—there was something hopeful there. Well, we, at least, have got together in the same way. I know you said, "Well, I don't know that I can do much in praising Christ, but I will go where His people are. Perhaps if I cannot praise, I shall still get a blessing, for all that." I know you often do so on the Sabbath. You say on the Saturday, "I am glad it is the last day of the week, that I may go where my brothers and sisters are, and while I come, to get a blessing. I especially feel when I come to prayer-meeting:"—

"There my best friends, my kinsmen, dwell.
There God, my Savior, reigns."

Well, the Lord Jesus loves to come where we love to be in His name! That helps to bring Him. So I have another good hope, that as we have come together, come together with no other end but that of stirring up what life we have, and of pouring out before Him what grace He has given, and of seeking more, that we may expect to see Him!

More than that—on that occasion when He came, there were *some of them who were testifying of what they knew.* Two of them were telling how they saw Him in the breaking of bread at Emmaus. And while the two spoke, Jesus came! Now here stands one witness who can bear testimony that there is a living Savior, and a real one, and that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit! And as you hear that testimony, and many of you are recording in your souls your, "Amen," to it, I hope He will stand in our midst and again say in spiritual language, "Peace be unto you."

Once more, though, I say they were in a low state—*they were all lamenting their Master's absence.* I do not think, of all that company, there was one but what had a heavy heart and was sad because Jesus was not there. If you had turned to Peter and said, "Peter, would you like to see Him?" He would have said, "Oh, for another look on those dear eyes, even though it broke my heart again." And John would have said, "Oh, for another leaning of my head upon that bosom, if I might be permitted such a favor." And everyone, by dear remembrances of the past, would have said, "Alas, we have lost everything in losing Him! Take away the sun out of the skies, rather than take Christ out of the circle of our fellowship." Now, dear friends, have you, you lovers of the Savior—have you missed Him and are you now saying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him"? Well, our mingled notes shall reach Him and He will

come and stand tonight in the midst of us, and we, again, shall rejoicingly honor and worship while the King sits at His table with His people. But time flies, and, therefore, I give you but the bare outline of the rest of my sermon.

III. WHAT CAME OF IT?

What came of His appearance and of His speaking of peace? If you will look at the chapter when you are at home, you will see that, first of all, when Jesus came *He banished all their doubts*—He said to them, "Why are you troubled? Why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Now, if He comes here tonight, in the midst of this assembly, that is just what He will say to you troubled ones. He will say, "Why are you troubled?" You, perhaps, might answer, "Perhaps there is cause enough for it," but He will reply to it, "All things work together for your good." "When you pass through the river, I will be with you; the floods shall not overflow you." "Cast your care upon Me." "Why are you troubled?" And He would then ask you the very question, "Why do those thoughts arise in your hearts?" You would have to guiltily, perhaps, confess what those thoughts were. You thought He was too hard! You thought He had forgotten you! You thought He was not true, after all—that He did not love you. You thought He would fail you. I will not tell you all your thoughts, but they have been evil thoughts—and if He is here tonight, the blush will mantle on your cheeks while you will say, "I will never have such thoughts, again, but I will from now on say, 'Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.'" There is one cure for evil thoughts like this—the vanished Savior manifested to the eyes of faith!

Then our Lord next proceeded *to reveal Himself*. Being present—which He might have been, you know, and yet they might not have known Him—He now went to reveal Himself and make them see Him. This is what He did. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." Then He proves His kinship with earth, His real manhood, for He took a piece of broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and did eat before them all. Now even so will He do tonight. If He were here tonight, it would be no use to you if these scales were upon your eyes—He will take them off! Those harder scales on an earthbound heart, He will take them off. Oh, I have been amazed, my brothers and sisters, I bear witness I have sometimes been amazed when the Lord has taken away the stone out of my heart, to feel my own sudden tenderness! I have even sat at that table, sometimes, and dealt out the bread and wine to you, and longed to be but a dog beneath the table, to eat but a crumb that fell from it—and all of a sudden I have felt His nearness and rejoiced with unspeakable joy! And oftentimes in preaching, when my spirit has felt like a frozen brook, His grace has thawed my heart! Is not this what the Spouse meant when she said, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib"? Now it is the presence of Christ that quickens us. Let the prayer be put by each one, "Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your Word.

Yourself, the Word, draw near to me and I shall be quick to perceive You, to embrace You, to rejoice in You this night."

Then the next act of our Savior was to proceed *to inform their understanding*. You observe He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. Nearness to Christ is an education. Get near to Jesus and you will find that the Corpus Christi is the true college! He who knows the body of Christ has got the body of theology, the body of divinity—the true theology of the Word of God. He that knows Him has understanding. With all your getting, get understanding! And from Him you shall get it, for He is wisdom. And is He not the truth of God? And is He not the incarnate wisdom? With Him God took counsel before the earth was. There is no studying the Scriptures that becomes so useful as when we study them with Christ to turn over the leaves for us.

Then the next thing was *He refreshed their memories*. Perhaps I ought to have mentioned this before because it occurs first. He said to them, "These are the words I spoke to you." Tonight, perhaps, if Jesus is here, you will remember those other times when you have seen Him—

"His former visits we recount,
When with Him on the holy mount."

Yes, you will say as Jesus is here, "I do remember You and the love of Your espousals. I do remember other sweet seasons when I was with Your people, and my heart glowed at Your love." You will look back, some of you gray-headed brothers and sisters in Christ—you will look back, perhaps, 50 years, and remember when Jesus first looked in at your soul. Dear memories! Perish all else but the relics of Christ, the traditions of His presence in my spirit—these will I hand down from year to year and record them forevermore! Nothing like this to set the memory right, the immediate, actual presence of Christ, even at this moment.

And then, beloved, in addition to all this, the Savior's thus appearing *showed them their true position*, for He told them that they were His witness of these things. When they saw Him, they felt they were something more than mere lookers on, they were to be tellers and testifiers to others. I hope we shall feel this, tonight, that we shall go out from our seats and from the communion table, saying, "I have seen the Lord, and I will be a witness in my own family—I will be His witness in the court, or the street, or the city where I dwell. I have seen Him and shall I close my mouth concerning Him? No! His presence has opened my mouth, that I may show forth His praise. I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of His righteousness, even of His only."

And last of all, that blessed presence *created intense joy*, though there was wonderment about the joy that mingled it with unbelief, and we read, "While they yet believed not for joy." They were very, very glad. If you had seen them go into that house, and seen them come out, you would not have known they were the same men! Yet they were no richer, no healthier, no more favored, *but they had seen the Lord*, and they were glad! It is especially recorded by John, "Then were the disciples glad when they had seen the Lord." Oh, there will be singing here! There will

be music in your hearts! You will trip home with merry feet if Jesus Christ does come! Come, then, dear Master! You have bled for us. You have loved us with an everlasting love—'tis but a little thing comparatively that we ask! Your relationship to us binds You to grant it! You will not be a stranger to Your own flesh! You will not hide Yourself from those who are members of Your body, of Your flesh and of Your bones! Your delights were with the sons of men and You have not changed. Oh, if ever You did reveal Yourself, reveal Yourself to us tonight! Melt us down under the glory of Your presence! Dissolve us with the superlative majesty of Your love and we will worship and bless You forever and ever!

Now I have said nothing to those of you who know Him not, but I will say these words and have done. His worth—

"His worth if all the nations knew,
Surely all the world would love Him too."

God bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32; JOHN 17.

PSALM 32

"A Psalm of David, Maschil"—that is to say, an instructive Psalm—"Maschil." I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to Divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience, either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

Verses 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Twice he says, "blessed." He had felt the weight of sin. He had been sorely troubled, but now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die," he counts himself doubly blessed—blessed, not the man who has never sinned! Blessed is he who, having sinned, is forgiven. Not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered. Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew, it sounds very much alike. The sacred, "Kophah," the cover which covers sin so that sin is hidden, even from the eyes of God Himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man who knows that divine covering! "Blessed," he says "is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." All along, after David's sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile. You know the dodges that he had resorted to, to cover up his sin—he tried to play some of his tricks on God, Himself, but he felt it was a mischievous and foolish thing to do. He was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned, he remained insensible for nine months—until he received the divine rebuke—but it was not so. He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy, and he was trying this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it. He ought to make a clean breast of it and confess it before God. He ought to give up his crooked ways, his ideas of excusing

himself—and when he had done that, when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too—then he got the double blessing. "Blessed, blessed!" If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up! I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ and the free grace of God! The two things go together, guilt and guile! The two things go out of us together—when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed. Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin, and yet was not right with God.

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* A wanton glance, and the sin with Bathsheba; where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? There was such groaning that his very bones grew old, as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die. "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me." God was dealing with him! God with His hand pressing him heavily, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, "My sin is always before me." Oh, the misery of sinning to a child of God! Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin! The worldling may, but the believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper that will fill his veins with burning poison.

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* When he tried to pray, it was a dried-up prayer. He tried to make a psalm, but it was a dried-up song. He tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God. His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer, in David's country, was a very droughty thing, indeed. Every human thing despaired, the grass seemed to turn to dust—it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God, you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up—and you will be like a parched, withered thing. "Selah"—time to stop, time to have a pause in the music—he was on so bass a key, he now had need to tighten the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD: and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* He must come to confession—full, spontaneous, unreserved—there must be a resolution. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord"—a firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin, yourself, and to tell the Lord that you see it, and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is, "I said, I will confess, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." God took away the sin! Yes, the very pith and marrow of it, "the iniquity of my sin." Take the bone away and the marrow of the bone, too! "You forgave the iniquity of my sin"—it has all gone, wholly gone—by one stroke of God's divine grace the sinner was pardoned! Selah again

6. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* "For this" (because of this and for this blessing) "shall

everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found." The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of His mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when You may be found. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him." The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David's country—the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected. And here he says that when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God's people shall be saved. They shall come, but they shall not come near unto them. Let me read those words again. If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, He that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him."

7. *You are my hiding place: You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* "You are my hiding place"—precious words! "You are my hiding place"—not, "You are *a* hiding place," but, "You are MY hiding place." A man who is beset by foes does not stand still and say, "Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there," but he runs to it! Beloved, run to your hiding place this morning, each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ! Run to Him and say, "You shall preserve me from trouble." David has come up out of the roaring to the singing. All day long he roared, and now all day long he sings! He hears songs everywhere! He lives in a circle of music, his heart is so glad! Well may he put another, *"Selah,"* for he has struck the strings very joyfully and they need tuning again.

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eye.* And here the speaker changes—"I will instruct you." I have forgiven you. "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go." I have restored you back to the way. Now I will teach you in the way you shall go. "I will guide you with My eye." Your own might lead you astray. "I will guide you with My eye." I will be on the path, I will fix My eye upon you. "I will guide you with My eye."

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* "Be you not as the horse," not only David, but all of you! If God will guide you, be guided! If He will teach you, be teachable! If He will be gracious to you, be gracious towards Him!

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." David had found that out—his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery! He shall have a bodyguard of mercy. God will be gracious to him, tender to him and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

11. *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous." Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. "Be

glad in the Lord"—you may always be glad in Him! Here is an unchanging source of joy! "Rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy." Here is the man that was silent, but now has gone as far as shouting! Is it not enough to make him rejoice? Twice he was blessed, in the first and second verses, and now he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been compassed about with mercy—why, he must be glad! "Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." God bless you in the reading of his Word.

JOHN 17.

Verses 1, 2. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You. As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Here we have the two doctrines of a general and a particular Redemption. Through His death, Christ has power given Him over all flesh, but the distinct, special objective is the salvation of His own—"that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* To know God in the sense of being acquainted with Him—loving Him—abiding in fellowship with Him—this is life eternal! To know God in Christ Jesus is to be saved, indeed!

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* Which no other man could ever have said—not even Adam in his perfection, for his work was not finished—and, alas, how marred it was before it came near to finishing! And the most gracious man that ever died could not, in his last moments, say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do," for it was still imperfect. There were many things which he would wish to have done, and many errors which he would wish to have rectified. But our Lord is more than man, and rises to this point—"I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

5. *And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was.* "I have disrobed Myself to be Your Servant. Clothe Me again with the garments of My majesty. Let me come back to the palace when I shall have passed through the stream of death." So far is the prayer for Himself. Now He prays for His people.

6, 7. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* "They have not accepted Me as a human teacher on My own account, unsent and uncommissioned, but they perfectly understand that there is a union between the Father and the Son. The things that You have given Me are of You."

8. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* There are great depths in these words. One of the greatest of German divines always refused to preach

from this chapter, for he said he felt that few of God's people had a sufficient measure of faith to understand it. And when he came to die, he had this read to him three times before he fell asleep. There is a world of wonderful mystery! Though the words are short and plain, yet the sense is fathomless.

9. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours.* There is an intercession of Christ which is for all the world, but His choicest intercession—His effectual prayer—is for His own. Nothing, perhaps, makes men so angry as this statement! They cannot endure that God should dispense His gifts according to His own will—but so it stands true!. There is an intercession in which none have a part but His own. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours."

10, 11. *And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.* They, therefore, will be left. The shepherd will be gone. They will seem to be like orphans with their best friend departed.

11-13. *Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* He asks not only that they may be kept and so unharmed, but that they may be comforted, and so made glad. O sad hearts, hear your Redeemer's prayer for you—and do not doubt that it is answered—"that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

14. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* If nobody hates you for being a Christian, are you a Christian? If you find that you run with the general herd, and swim with the current, can you be a follower of that Christ who was despised and rejected of men?

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.* Not that they should shut themselves up in monasteries and convents. That is not the prayer of Christ. "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil."

16-19. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* Sanctify Myself—consecrate Myself—set Myself apart—for their salvation that they also might be sanctified, consecrated, set apart through the truth of God. Now comes a third part of the prayer, in which He pleads for the whole church—for that part of it at that time not saved—for the unborn ones—for us.

20-21. N*either pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Our Savior knew how apt we would be to split up into sects, and to be divided into parties, and so He prays again and again that we may be one! Cultivate the spirit of Christian affection. If there are divisions, let them not come through you. Contend earnestly for the faith, but also let us love one another.

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.* Surely the passage seems to culminate here. These words rise like the peak of a mighty Alp almost out of our sight into the clear brightness of heaven—"have loved them as You have loved Me." Now, believer, you cannot fully comprehend this, but believe it—that as surely as the Father loves the Son, as and after the same manner He also loves you—without beginning, without measure, without change, without end! "You have loved them as You have loved Me."

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.* Let us read that wonderful passage again—"that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them."

26. *And I in them.* Sacred, mystical union! May our souls enjoy it day by day!

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Pilate said unto them...Let Him be crucified."
Matthew 27:22, 23.

THIS morning [See Sermon #678, Volume 12—PRAISE YOUR GOD, O ZION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org.] we heard the shouts of "Hosanna!" It was very delightful to us to behold the multitude marching with the King of Zion through the streets of Jerusalem, welcoming Him with glad acclaim. But the shouts of "Hosanna" had hardly died away before they were followed by the cruel note, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Or, as the text puts it, "Let Him be crucified!" Clearly in this case the Vox populi was not the Vox Dei. The one is fickle and shifting, the other is fixed and steadfast. The voice of the people is changeable as the wind. The Word of the Lord is firm as a rock, and it endures forever. The multitude will always be found fitful and vacillating. They will enthrone a man, today, and chase him from the streets tomorrow. Take but small account of human applause. The breath of fame's trumpet is a poor reward for a life of toil to serve one's generation. Care not for it, O you of noble spirit! Heed not the world's frowns and court not its smiles. When you are flattered by its approbation, or calumniated by its persecution, remember that men's temper and disposition vary like the climate and change like the weather! Hosannas turn into execrations. The idol of one hour is the aversion of another.

The point, however, to which I shall endeavor to draw your attention tonight (and may the Holy Spirit assist us) is of far more importance than the prattling gossip of the vulgar crowd. In this sad and brutal cry, "Let Him be crucified," I observe—

I. A VERY STRANGE ILLUSTRATION OF THE ASSERTED DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

I have heard till I have been sick of hearing, I have read till I am weary of reading, all sorts of praise passed upon it. I know not what a grand and noble being the creature man is in the estimation of certain lackadaisical divines. They seem to make this their chief end—to laud and magnify their own species! The drift of all their preaching is to please men's ears with their rhetoric and to delude men's judgment with their flattery. And as for their logic, it exalts the ideal of man, while it ignores the actual sinner. It sets up the image and says, "Behold what a splendid intellectual creature man is!" We look around and fail to catch a sight of the individuals they portray! I hesitate not to say that he who praises man does the opposite to glorifying God and is as far as the poles asunder from testifying to the truth of God. The truth, as we learn it in

the Word of God, is most uncomplimentary to man—it rolls him in the very dust, ranks him with the worms, makes nothing of him—yes, less than nothing! So desperate is his moral condition that it adjudges him as his only fit place, the lowest pit of hell as the due reward of his deeds. But inasmuch as they thus praise human nature, I would like the admirers of it to look a little while on this scene—where humanity gathers around the Savior, Christ the Lord, and cries, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

And, first, what do you say to this dignity of human nature, in that *it does not know God*? This is taking the sin at the lowest point, for had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Through ignorance they did it—ignorance, alike, on the part of the rabble and their rulers. It is the best excuse that can possibly be afforded for their cry, their cruelty and their crime. But what an excuse! How humiliating! Here were men who did not know the God that made them! Why boast of intellect—the keen perception of the human mind—in the face of such imbecility? They did not know the God that fed them! "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib," but Israel did not know her Lord, her King, her God! He came with a thousand prophecies to herald Him, and He answered to them all! The simplest Sunday school child reading through the Old Testament can see that the Christ of the New Testament is He of whom the seers and the prophets spoke in vision by the power of the Spirit! But here was human nature left to itself with the book in its hand, and totally unable to decipher the evidences or recognize the Messiah! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. You call this "bright-eyed human nature," and it cannot see the sun! You talk about its superior intelligence and yet that which was an axiom to angels, *they* could not discern! Angels knew Him—how could they fail to know Him? But these eyes of men are so blinded with the mire of prejudice and the love of sin, that though the Godhead shone gloriously through the manhood of Jesus, they could not—they *would not* perceive Him to be the Christ! And they put the Son of God, the Heir of Heaven, to an ignominious death! Talk no more of wisdom! Boast not of your sages! Cry not up your philosophy and your deep knowledge! Oh, the bat has brighter eyes than you, and moles see more than do those men who, groveling in the earth, fail to perceive the Lord! Men knew not God, Himself, when He was incarnate in human flesh!

The sin, however, was of a deeper dye when men said, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Clearly, human nature *hated goodness in its most attractive form*. A flattering preacher once closed a glowing period with some such words as these—"O Virtue, you fair and lovely object, could you descend among men, and appear in your perfection, all men would prostrate themselves before you as a deity, and you would be beloved of all mankind."

What monstrous assumption! What an extravagant perversion of fact! Virtue *did* descend into this world and was incarnate! That incarnate Virtue they hailed not as "God," but as "devil." Instead of worshiping Him, they hounded Him even to death, and nailed Him to the tree! In our

Lord Jesus Christ there was perfect virtue. You cannot detect an error! No, neither an excrescence or a deficiency; yet virtue consists not merely in abstaining from harm, but it involved the exercise of every faculty in doing good. His character was matchless and His goodness was set in the most attractive sphere, for, mark you, it was not virtue in majestic mien, like that of Lycurgus, enacting laws and administering the prerogatives of government. Or like that of Moses writing upon the tables of stone, statutes and ordinances of infinite verity, having the sanctions of God with consequences of faithful indemnity or of fearful penalty. Christ's was virtue in the attitude of lowly service with the emotions of tender sympathy, proving itself by acts of unfailing benevolence. He did not come to tell men they must do this and that, but He came to show them and to teach them how to do the will of God from the heart! It was virtue irradiated with pity, adorned with patience, bejeweled with richest love—forever and ever kindly affectionate. His was benevolence more rare, for it was unique. Never was there greater love than that of Christ!

Sometimes virtue becomes repulsive to men because of its sternness—they cannot bear a perfect law if, like that of Draco, it should be written in blood. But here was Christ, all affable and amiable—a man among men! He was with them at their wedding feasts and with them at their funeral rites. He was to men, a brother, and He showed and proved Himself such indeed. Yet, for all that, virtue thus comely, thus embellished, thus familiar in the habitations of mankind, He was disliked, abhorred and hunted to the death! Sometimes men oppose goodness if they see it in high places—they will envy the rank and, therefore, forget the virtue. But here was the Christ of God in lowliness, wearing the peasant's garb—eating the bread of the people—poor, yes, so poor that He had not even so much wealth as the fox that has its hole, or the bird that has a nest where to lay its head! Surely virtue which condescended to such a condition ought to have secured the admiration of mankind! And Christ had laid aside all His princely power. He did not come as a king with sovereign rule, to compel men to do His bidding. Sometimes men will revolt against that which seems to coerce them. They say they will be drawn, but they will not be driven. But Christ was no driver. As a shepherd goes before his sheep, so He gently led the way. And yet, perfect, immaculate virtue—virtue enshrined in everything that was attractive—without anything that ought to have excited animosity. Incarnate virtue; How did it fare? Hear then, O you that boast of human dignity, and the glory of human nature!—This Holy One was made the central objective for all the arrows of malice and of spite! He in whom these excellences were exhibited had for His medal of honor the cry, "Let Him be crucified." O poor fallen human nature—what do you say to this?

I impeach humanity again of the utmost possible folly because, in crucifying Christ, *it crucified its best friend*. Jesus Christ was not only the friend of man, so as to take human nature upon Himself, but He was the friend of sinners, so that He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The only errand that Christ pursued in life was a

disinterested one. Everybody could see that. He neither hoarded wealth, nor gained high places in the government! Neither did He seek popular esteem. He saved others, but for Himself, He reserved nothing. He gave up all for the sons of men. Yet when they could clearly see that the lost and most self-denying of all philanthropists was before them, they treated Him as a criminal, and nailed Him to a cross! What a friend He was to those who conspired against Him as a foe! How generously He had espoused the cause of those very people who now turned upon Him and said, "Let Him be crucified!" He had healed their sick. He had raised their dead. He had opened the eyes of their blind and He had restored the withered limbs of their paralyzed. For which of these things did they crucify Him? He was always the people's friend, the champion of the populace. He came to break oppression, to set the captive free—and all that heard Him must have known that He was the great prophet of liberty, the up lifter of the fallen, the destroyer of everything that was oppressive, unjust, or even unmerciful. Still, though never man was such a friend as He, this stupid world, this worse than swinish world, must put its best friend to death! O humanity! Blush for yourself, lest angels blush at your impiety and even devils laugh at your infatuation!

Then there was this about human nature—*it destroyed its best instructor*. The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the confession of His enemies, was too sound to be disparaged and He was too wise to be entangled in the meshes of their controversies. He never taught tyranny. Commend me to a single sentence in the whole of Christ's teaching that would make a despot sit more steadfastly upon his throne. He never taught anarchy. Find, if you can, a single word that would make men burst the bonds of righteous fidelity and lead lawless lives. He taught no asceticism that would denude life of wholesome pleasure or healthful enjoyment. Far, far was He, on the other hand, from teaching any libertinism that would tolerate anything that is unclean, unchaste or impure, in word or deed. His teaching was for man—instructing him in what was best for him to do, how it was best to do it and in what was necessary for his own good that he should eschew and avoid. "Never man spoke like this man!" I was in the Hall of Philosophers a little while ago, where were the busts of Socrates, Plato, Solon, and all the great men of former ages. But if they were all put together, of what small account were the maxims that they taught mankind for the promotion of real happiness and true goodness? Why, the sum total is nothing in comparison with that one sermon of the Christ of Nazareth which He preached upon the Mount! That one sermon put into the scale outweighs the wisdom of Greece and Rome! And yet, when the man had come who unselfishly, lovingly, tenderly, wisely would lead our fallen race into the paths of holiness and onward to the goal of perfect happiness, what did humanity do but grind its teeth, gather up its weapons and say, "Away with such a fellow from the earth—it is not fit that He should live!" Alas, human nature! How demented and imbecile you are! The very beasts might lay claim to more sagacity and shrewdness than you have! Then, too, those who boast of human nature, might, perhaps, say that the

multitude on that occasion were not so much to blame as the priests, for the priests persuaded the people. Yes, sirs, I grant you that. But I suppose priests are human, though I sometimes question it. Surely, if ever a man comes to be near akin to a devil, it must be when he assumes to be a priest, and to have the power to open and to shut the gates of heaven and hell!

I would rather any day a man call me a demon than a priest! There is something so degraded, so detestable in the profession of a priest that my soul loathes it! I would tear off the last rag of priestcraft that ever stuck to my flesh and feel it to be like that tunic of fire which burned into the flesh of the heroes of old. Away with it! But what must men be—what must human nature be that it submits to priests? I say you degrade human nature further when you say they put Christ to death because they submitted to the persuasions of the priests. It is true, but where is the manhood of man that he will be led by the nose by a fellow man who chooses to put on a strange, uncouth garb, and feign himself the messenger of God while he perverts the oracles of God and teaches lies? When will the day come that human nature will prove itself to have pure mettle and manly spirit in it by shaking off the horrible iniquities of priestcraft? Set this crime down to priestcraft, if you will. The priests do conspire—they always did and always will conspire to set the people against God, and against Christ! But where is manhood that it should put itself beneath the foot of such a thing—a thing that men call a priest? Shame on you, human nature that you should became so abject as to be the football of a priest and submit yourself to an order which sacrilegiously usurps divine authority and insolently tyrannizes over human conscience!

I must close this indictment against human nature with its vaunted dignity by accusing it of *wanton cruelty in slaying a defenseless man*. Who ever thought it to be other than dastardly to strike a man who will not defend himself, or to smite one who, being smitten, only turns the other cheek?

Cowardice! Cowardice! Cowardice, craven, base, lies at your door, O humanity! The Christ who was like a sheep—harmless and defenseless—was treated as if He had been one of the wild beasts of the forest! Who could have had the heart to smite Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? O humanity! If I stand at the bar to impeach you, I scarcely know where to commence the indictment and, having commenced it, I know not where to close it! How fallen, dishonored, infamous are you, O humanity! Low, depraved, heinous, indeed, have you become that you could put the Messiah, Himself, to death, and crucify the Lord of Glory! Passing onward, I shall now occupy a few minutes as I—

II. ENDEAVOR TO CLOSE THE DOOR AGAINST CERTAIN SELF-RIGHTEOUS DISCLAIMERS.

I think I hear one and another of you say, “But I would not have done so. I will not allow that my nature be so corrupt or abandoned.” Listen,

friend! Is not your self-esteem a little suspicious? Of whom were you born but of a woman, as they were? Your circumstances may be somewhat different. Praise your circumstances, not yourself, for had you been in their circumstances, you would have done the same! It is suspicious, I say, when a man begins to say, "I am better than these." Why, this is just what those very persons, the priests of old, pretended! What said they but this, "We will build the sepulchers of the prophets whom our fathers slew, for had we lived in our fathers' day, we would not have slain them." And by that very speech of theirs—that self-righteous speech—the Lord Jesus said that they proved that they were the true sons of their fathers! When men begin to plead that they're so much better than others, that they would not have done such things, the suspicion crosses one's mind that they know not what spirit they are of. Certainly they are rather proud in heart than humble in mind.

But now what would you have done if you had been there? A French king who once heard this story said, "I wish I had been there with ten thousand of my guards! I'd have cut the throat of every man of them." Just so. No doubt that is what he would have done—and in so doing he would have crucified the Savior in the worst possible way, for he would have implicated the Savior in a bloody massacre—which had been to Christ a worse crucifixion, if worse could be than which He suffered. Out spoke the man in the truth and honesty of his soul, and he confessed that he would practically have crucified the Savior. "But," says one, "I would have spoken for Him, had I been there." Yes, and do you speak for Him now? "Well, I would not hear Him maligned," says one. But suppose your life depended on it, or your office, or your fame? I will tell you what you would have done—you would have spoken for Him, like Pilate, and washed your hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See you to it." You would have gone no farther than that, I guarantee you, unless your heart was renewed—unless Christ had changed your heart, and I am not dealing, now, with renewed human nature, nor with changed hearts—I am speaking of that which is originally in us men. And if we had gone as far as Pilate, I fear there is not one of us but would have gone farther!

To come to close quarters with you, dear hearer, if you are an unsaved, unregenerate man, I will ask you what you have done already! Perhaps I speak to some here who have made a sneer at the gospel. You have been accustomed to ridiculing it and when you have heard of anyone who has been peculiarly bold in the service of Christ, without inquiring whether your verdict was true or not, you set him down at once as being a hypocrite, a fanatic, or a fool! Now, I ask you whether that spirit which leads you to malign the Christian is not precisely that spirit which led others to condemn the Christ, and to say, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" In one age they nail men to a cross of wood. In another age, when they cannot do that, they hold them up to contempt—the spirit is just the same. There lived a man a hundred years ago in this land whose whole life was spent in the service of Christ—a man of gigantic talents who attracted thousands to listen to his ministry—a man who never

spent a farthing of worldly pelf, but lived to win souls, to feed the poor and bless the sick. Now that man, Whitefield, was so abused, traduced and slandered, that even Cowper, when he sung his praises, had to begin them thus—

"Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek,
I hide a name a poet must not speak)."

Though he proceeds to speak highly of him, he does not mention his name, except under the Greek form. And so there have lived in this world men of whom the world was not worthy—and the only return they have had has been abuse. What is this but the same spirit which crucified the Lord? But you tell me you have persecuted nobody and you have ridiculed nobody? I am glad to hear it, but what is your standing, now, with regard to the Christ of the gospel? Are you trusting in Him? Are you relying on Him as your Savior? Have you given up all your good works and are you depending upon what He has done? Do you answer, "No"? Then I tell you, you are crucifying Him! You are rejecting Him in the point on which He is most jealous—you are setting up yourself your own savior in opposition to Him—and this is to Him a worse grief and a direr insult even than the nailing of Him to the accursed tree! Oh, but you say you have not set up any righteousness of your own! You don't think at all about the matter—you don't care about it! Be it so, then, according to your own admission! Albeit the Pharisees would give 30 pieces of silver for Him, you would not give a penny for Him—that is the only difference! You have the gospel brought to you and when you hear it, you criticize the speaker—that is all. You have the Bible, and when you get it, you bind it in morocco—and put it on a shelf and never read it. And, perhaps, many of this congregation, though living in the land of gospel light, are quite ignorant of what the gospel is. Oh, sirs, is not this to crucify Him? This is to ignore Him and this is not only to kill Him, but to bury Him! You have wrapped Him in the winding sheet and laid Him in His grave as best you can. You have, in fact, said, "It is nothing to me. I care not for His book, nor His people, nor His cross, except it be an ornament after the way of the world's church—but as to the essence, and marrow, and truth of the thing—I will have none of it." Oh, this is the cry of many, and while they so cry, let them not self-righteously hope to excuse themselves!

But I address some tonight who would shudder at all this, and say, "Oh, sir, I have neither persecuted His people, nor thought lightly of Him. Neither have I been negligent concerning Him, for oh, I long to be saved by Him. I seek His face day and night and confess my sins into His ear, and I ask for pardon through His blood." Beloved, I am glad to hear you say this, but I must ask you a question, too. Have you ever doubted whether He could save you? Do you doubt now whether He is willing to save you? Ah, then you crucify Him, for there is nothing that so grieves Him as that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive! This touches Him in the heart. This pierces His heart as with a spear, for you to think that He will not, or cannot, pardon you! Be guilty of this no longer! Satan told you it was humility—no, but it is dishonoring your

Savior! Come, poor awakened sinner, full of guilt, and full of fear, and say, "I do believe! I will believe that He is both able and willing to save me!" Then, but not until then, may you be able to say, "I have not crucified Him." Now I shall leave that, more especially to address—

III. THOSE THAT HAVE CONFESSED THE SIN OF CRUCIFYING CHRIST—AND HAVE RECEIVED PARDON FOR IT.

Beloved, we are coming to the table of the Lord. With what profound emotions should these meditations fill our breasts as we observe this ordinance? When we remember that our sins did crucify Christ (for He would not have needed to have died if we had not sinned), we ought to think of it with deep repentance—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail.
And unbelief a spear.
"'Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head!
Break, break my heart, yes burst my eyes,
And be my coldness dead."

Oh, what a sorrow to think we stabbed our friend in the heart. For our sake He died. There was a little bit of poetry some of us used to repeat at school, "The death of Gellert." When the Welsh chieftain found that in hot-blooded haste he had slain the hound that had saved his child, he wept right bitterly. That was for a dog. If you went home tonight and found that you had by some mischance killed your friend. And he had died—and by his death had saved your life—I know you would treasure up his memory. But it is the Christ of God that you and I have murdered by our sins! They say, in old tradition, that as often as ever Peter heard a cock crow, he was accustomed to weep. And as often as we come to this Table, we might very well be accustomed to weep, too, to think that our sins made our Savior bleed. Then what a holy jealousy should stir within us! If my sins did this, by God's Holy Spirit's help, there shall be an end of my sins! Away with you, you murderers, I will not spare you—neither the pleasurable sin, nor the profitable sin, nor the fashionable sin, nor the little sin, as men call it! I cry, "Revenge!" against my sins, and slay the murderers, too! Oh, ask for grace tonight that you may put sin to death!

And, once more, when we remember that our sins crucified Him, how it ought to waken in our souls a devout resolution that we will crown Him! Did they say, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"? Then our voice shall be still louder," Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!" And does a ribald world still say, "Crucify Him!"? Then we who have received the second birth will say, "Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!" The world still clamors, "Crucify!" Go forth, you sons of God, and proclaim the coronation of the Christ who once wore the crown of thorns! Blush not and be not afraid to defend Him before His adversaries, for He will soon come to put His adversaries to shame, and on His head shall His crown flourish forever! I would, coming to this table, tonight, speak thus to my heart—O my soul, was Jesus put thus to suffering for you? Then what

can you do for Him? Have you an unbroken alabaster box in all your possessions? Then bring it out now! Can you not devise some new way by which you might serve Him, so as to bring yourself to the pinch to bear much sacrifice with stern self-denial? Come, my soul, do something that you may glorify Him! Give to His cause. Help His poor! Speak to His wounded ones! Console His distressed people, lay yourself out for Him. Are there any members of this Church that are doing nothing for Jesus? Oh, I pity you, my dear brothers and sisters, if you are idle! But while I cannot suggest to you what to do, I pray the Lord to put it into your hearts, tonight, to do something more than you have ever done to honor Christ! You need not tell anybody about it—the less said about it the better. Go and do it, not letting your left hand know what your right hand does! Go and weave some crown for Him, though it is but of the poor fading flowers of your heart's love. Go and honor Him! You cannot wipe out the dishonor you have caused Him in your former estate, but you can do something—you can bring Him honor as long as you have any being by bringing others, through the help of His blessed Spirit, to love and honor Him! God grant us a refreshing season at the Communion—may we have the company of the King, Himself!

Now are there any here that confess their guilt in the death of Christ? Then let me say to every sinner here, if you will look to Him that was pierced, you shall live! There is only one look at Jesus that is needed to give you pardon! "He that believes on Him is not condemned." You have nailed Him to the cross—now look at Him! Moses hung the serpent on the pole—then looked, himself, and bade all Israel look. I, who had my share in crucifying Him, do look tonight! He is all my salvation—I trust in nothing else. Look you, then—yes, look you! God help you now to look, each one, and you are saved! God grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 1:19-33; 19:1-16.

JOHN 1:19-33

Verses 19-28. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, Who then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? that we may give an answer to those that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands one among you, whom you know not: He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am unworthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was*

baptizing. Was that the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan? It is said to have been so, and truly this is the place where we cross the Jordan, too—come out of old Judaism into the true faith of the revealed Christ!

29. *The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.* I think I hear the Elijah-like tones of that son of the desert, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

30. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me.* Ah, how infinitely before John! How before him having no beginning of days, before him in His exalted nature, before him in His superior rank and office!

31. *And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come baptizing with water.* It was by baptism that the Christ was to be known. John knew more of Jesus Christ than anybody else, yet he did not know Him to be the Lamb of God until he had baptized Him.

32, 33. *And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.* I doubt not that John had assuredly guessed that Jesus was the person, but he had nothing to do with guesses—he was a witness for God, and he could only speak as God revealed things to him.

JOHN 19:1-16.

Verses 1-3. *Then Pilate, therefore, took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews!* Just as they were gathered to say, "Ave Imperator"—"Hail emperor"—so imitating that word which they applied to Caesar, and applying it to Jesus in mockery, "King of the Jews," the utmost scorn was thrown into the last word, "of the Jews." There had been a general tradition that there should arise among the Jews a king who would subdue the nations—and the Romans jested at the very thought that they should be conquered by the leader of such a despised race as the Jews! And so they said, "King of the Jews."

3, 4. *And they struck Him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and said unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.* That is the second time he said it. He had declared it before—in the 38th verse of the previous chapter we read, "I find in Him no fault at all." And now again, "That you may know that I find no fault in Him." "Then came Jesus forth"—you can see Him going down the steps out of Pilate's hall into that same courtyard—"wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them"—"Ecce Homo"—"behold the man." He does not call Him, king—he only gives Him the title of man. As if to say, "How foolish are you to think

there is any danger from Him—look at Him in all His suffering and shame."

5, 6. *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, You take Him and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him.* That is the third time. It was well that he who had the principal hand in the slaughter of the Lamb of God should make his report that He was "a Lamb without blemish and without spot" and, therefore, fit to be presented in sacrifice before God. For the third time he acquits Him! The Jews answered him, "We have a law"—it may not be your law—"and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the son of God." This is a reviving of the charge of blasphemy which they had brought against Him in the palace of the high priest.

7, 8. *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.* It shows he was afraid all along—the coward—the vacillating coward—and now a fresh superstition seizes upon him! He believed, as a Roman, in many gods. "What?" he said to himself. "What if, after all, I should have been torturing a divine Being, a God who has come among men in their likeness?"

9, 10. *And went again into the judgment hall, and said unto Jesus, Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, Do You not speak to me? Know You not that I have power to crucify You, and have power to release You?* And he trembled with fear, "and went again into the judgment hall," taking his prisoner with him—you can see the two sitting there alone—"and said to Jesus, 'Where are You from? Tell me now, what is Your character, Your origin, Your rank?' But Jesus gave him no answer." Pilate's day of grace was over! He had had his opportunity, but that was now ended—there was no answer. It is a very solemn thing when God gives no answer to a man—when a man turns to Scripture, but there is no answer—when he goes to hear the voice, but there is no voice from the oracle for him! And when he even bows the knee in prayer, but gets no answer. The silence of the Christ of God is very terrible. "Then said Pilate unto Him," with all the pride of a Roman in his face, "Do You not speak to me? Don't You know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release you?"

11. *Jesus answered, You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.* "You have the power to execute the sentence, lent to you from heaven, but he that brought Me here, and laid the charge against Me, even Caiaphas, as the representative of the Jews, has the greater sin." And then the Blessed One closed His lips, never to open them again until on the cross! From this time, "like a sheep before her shearers," He is dumb. Notice that even though that word is the word of the Judge who judges Pilate, who judges the Jews, yet there is a strain of the gentleness

of His character about it, for though He does virtually declare Pilate guilty of great sin, yet He says there is a greater, and while there is no apology for Pilate, yet He puts it softly.

12. *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend: whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.* One of the Herods had put upon his coins the name, "Caesar's friend," and so they quoted the title which one of their kings had taken, and they tell Pilate that he will not be the friend of Tiberius. Here was a sore point with Pilate. He knew that just then Tiberius was gloomy and morose, too ready to catch anything against his servants—and the man by whose influence Pilate had come into power had just then lost all influence at court. So he was afraid it would be his disgrace and discharge as governor if the Jews brought a charge against him to Tiberius. Therefore he trembled.

13. *When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.* The usual form of the Roman judgment place, in the open air, with a stone pavement, and a raised throne.

14, 15. *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.* "To crucify your king." In bitter sarcasm—"You call Him king, and ask to have Him crucified?" "The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.'" Verily they thus proved the truth of that word, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes." And here He was sent of God! He had come at last, for the scepter has evidently departed from Judah, and these men are crying, "We have no king but the alien monarch, the all-conquering Caesar."

16. *Then he delivered Him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away.*

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REDEEMING THE UNCLEAN
NO. 3458

A SERMON
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"And every first-born of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck."
Exodus 13:13.

WE read to you in the former part of the service the origination of the law of God by which the first-born, both of man and beast, belonged to the Most High. That law seemed to be a very admirable memorial of what the Lord did, and also a very just requirement on the part of God that the first-born, whom He had so miraculous delivered, should be His through all time.

But the difficulty arose as to how some beasts, which were counted unclean by the law, could be offered to God at all. There were many animals necessary to man, useful for draught, and so forth, but not coming under the list of clean animals, such as divided the hoof and chewed the cud. Among the rest, the donkey, useful everywhere, but most of all in oriental countries, was counted unclean. How, then, could it be dedicated to God? How could the first-born of the donkey be given to Him? Our text solves the difficulty. An exchange was made. A lamb was offered instead, and then the donkey, of course, was redeemed. But if the owner did not sufficiently value it to give a lamb, instead, then the neck was broken and the animal destroyed.

The teaching of the text is just as follows. It is fourfold and I think we shall have to bring out each fold. Of course, it is typical of something to do with ourselves and Christ, and our standing before God. And the first observation is this, that—

I. AS THE DONKEY, BEING UNCLEAN, WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, EVEN SO, UNRENEWED MAN, BEING UNCLEAN, IS ALSO UNACCEPTABLE BEFORE THE MOST HIGH.

Did it ever strike you that man, according to the Jewish ceremonial law, is an unclean creature? Nothing was clean, according to the law of Moses, but that which divided the hoof and chewed the cud. Now man fails in one of these, and by the law he is put down as a sinner, as being on a level with the unclean beasts. What a wonder the gospel does for us when, being redeemed with a price, we are said to be the sheep of God, the lambs of Christ's flock, so that therein we bear the same name as the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and we are raised from the condition of the brute, into which sin brought us, and are made to sit far above

principalities and powers, in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus! Lost by sin through the law and placed in the very depths, man, by grace through Jesus Christ, is lifted up to the very heights!

But we return to what we started with, namely, that man has become, through sin, like the donkey—a creature incapable of rendering acceptable service to God. For, in the first place, *every man has already broken the law of God* and, as God accepts no service but that which is, like Himself, perfect, no unrenewed man is capable of rendering perfect legal obedience such as God can accept. His law is like a superb crystal vase. If it is whole, it is whole. But if it is chipped or cracked in the smallest degree, the law is broken. It is like a great golden chain which is precious and useful while whole, but the snapping of one link breaks the chain. So, unless a man could keep God's law without any defect or transgression, it would not be possible that he could be accepted by the Most High. Now there is not one of us but has certainly broken some command. I fear we have, all of us, broken all the commands! If not in act, yet in word or in thought, so that before God's bar we ought to plead guilty to every count in the indictment and should not hope to be accepted by our works. What a condemning text is that in Isaiah—"We are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"! He does not say that all our *wickednesses* are so—no, these are worse and baser, still, but all our *righteousnesses* are—that is, the best thing which unrenewed nature can possibly produce is nothing better than the rag which is too filthy to be seen, but must be cast away and burned in the fire! Yes, you that seek to be justified by your good works, you may pant, and strive, and wear out your lives in energetic failures, for success is entirely impossible! You cannot thus, while you are what you are, produce a righteousness that God can accept, seeing that you have already sinned.

In addition to this, *man's heart is alienated*. We would not, ourselves, accept a service done us by an enemy, or that is done without any motive of repentance. No, since the very essence of obedience lies in the yielding up of the heart—until a man's heart is made new, till he loves the God whom he has despised, all that he can do is but the false serving of a hypocrite, the dead service of a formalist, or the forced service of a slave—and none of these can God accept! Do you think when the ungodly man repeats a prayer, and his heart is absent, that God accepts the prayer? I tell you that that prayer is, in itself, a sin and a great provocation against the Most High! When the ungodly man stands with God's people and pretends to be one of them, repeats their creeds and declares himself to be a believer in the things which he does not believe, he does but lie before God and the things he says cannot be received by Him. All outward, external religion, in which the heart does not join, so far from being received by the Most High with approbation, must be viewed by Him with utter abhorrence. How is it possible, then, for a man who loves not God to be accepted before the King of Kings?

In, addition to this, there is no service which unrenewed man can render *which is not defiled with sin, even in itself*, chiefly with one sin, namely, self-righteousness. If a man works works of righteousness with the idea that he is meriting a reward, thereby, to whom is he a servant? I answer, not to God, but to himself! If I obey, or profess to obey, the law of God, but my whole motive is that I may save myself, and that I may get happiness unto myself, evidently self is the reigning principle. I am not truly obedient to God as the great delight of my spirit. I do not love Him with heart, and soul, and strength, but I love myself, and cover up this selfishness with the pretense that I love Him. Oh, you that are thus striving to serve yourselves under some spiritual garb or other, you cannot serve the living God, do what you will! Your holiest service will be an offense, a smoke in His nostrils, and He will put away your best things as being offered with strange fire and, therefore, not to be received!

Once more: *By very nature, man is so obnoxious to the wrath of God that it is impossible for God to accept him as His creature*. Kings would not delight to be served by men with foul hands who left defilement everywhere. Yet such are we! We would not like to always have before our eyes, in our servants, some dreadful disease, some disgusting leprosy and yet such is the disease of sin. "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." I have heard that text quoted, "You cannot look upon it but with abhorrence." That is true, but it is put still stronger. The prophet puts it that He cannot look upon it, that He cannot endure it. He is a consuming fire towards sinners and what He will do with the finally impenitent is, so He says, "tear them in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver," for out of Christ, God cannot tolerate the ungodly! Not for a single hour would He spare this world were it not that the Mediator comes between—otherwise the immaculate perfection of the eternal God could not endure sin to be anywhere within His reach. He would sweep the universe clear of every rebel with the broom of destruction! He would, once and for all, ease Himself of His adversaries and shake Himself from His enemies, even as a man shakes the dust from his feet!

Now what a very solemn truth of God this is! Do not think that it is *my* statement. It is really the teaching of God's Word, that the unregenerate man is an unclean man and cannot be acceptable to God. "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." The unrenewed man is corrupt! He is dead in trespasses and sins! Now this is meant for some of you. It is meant for some of you who are very excellent and amiable people, and very moral. It is meant not for the vilest of the vile, alone, but for all classes and conditions of men—for the professedly religious people, too. Unless your hearts are right before the Lord and you have believed in Jesus, you cannot, you never can, strive as you will, be received before the Most High any more

than the donkey could be acceptable upon the altar of God! But now we advance to the second truth of God which is in the text, namely, that—

II. THE SERVICE OF MAN, WHICH GOD CANNOT ACCEPT, IS, NEVERTHELESS, GOD'S DUE.

God could not receive the donkey because it was unclean, but still it belonged to God for all that. God's claim extended over all the first-born, clean or unclean, and that claim must be maintained. Sinner, you cannot serve God—you are too sinful! Your heart too evil—your service too impure! But still, God's claim upon you for a perfectly holy life has not ceased. It has not lost its power, nor bated one jot or tittle of its just and righteous force. It has been laid down by some theologians as being almost a self-evident truth that God will require no more of a man than he can do—but this, by every thoughtful mind—will be soon discovered to be a self-evident lie instead of being true—for God's law is not changed by our being changed! Whatever God demanded of man when he was perfect, He demands the same thing of him now that he is imperfect! The law of God is holy, and just, and good. If it were ever too severe, then God was not righteous in making it. And if He alters it to suit us, what is that but the cutting down of His integrity and the disfiguring of the tables of His own perfectly pure and holy statute book? It cannot be! You, in common life, know very well that a man is sometimes bound to do what he cannot do. If a man is in your debt and he tells you he cannot pay you, you do not consider that his not being able to pay exonerates him from the debt. He is still in your debt. If he could have paid when he entered upon the debt, it was a debt—but now that he cannot pay it, it is still a debt! True, there are ways in which he can get cleared of the debt, just as there are ways of salvation by which a man may be delivered from sin, but still, the debt is none the less a debt because the man cannot pay it. Everybody knows that inability to pay does not exonerate the man from the duty to pay. So with God; He did not make you a sinner, oh sinner. You were pure and holy when you came from His hands. Your sin is your own. Your weakness, inability, your willfulness, your backwardness to keep the law—all these are your own, and so far from excusing you, they shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you!

Take another instance. There are some men who have become such thieves that we say of them, and say truly, that it is impossible for them to be honest. They are no sooner out of prison than their hand is into somebody's pocket—they cannot be easy and at rest till they are up before the magistrate again! But did you ever hear such a man say, "Sir, I cannot be honest! I have such an irresistible tendency to steal that the law ought to be changed on my account because I have lost my principle of honesty—therefore the law ought not to bind me"? "No," you say, "but he ought to be kept in prison always, for this is another offense to make his evil heart an excuse for his evil ways." Remember, sinner, that your inability to come to Christ is not your misfortune, but your sin! Your inability to keep the law of God is not your calamity as much as it is your

willful wickedness. Inasmuch as you are unclean and evil, the thought that you cannot help it should alarm you, for you ought to help it. You have no business to be in the state of sin you now are. If you could not help it, if there were any physical disability, you might be excused. But inasmuch as the disability is spiritual and moral, and deals with your will, there is no excuse for you! The donkey could not be accepted, but still the donkey belonged to God. You cannot be received as you are, all unconverted, but still God has a claim upon you—and for every idle word that you shall speak, He shall bring you into judgment—and for not serving Him, He will condemn you! For not believing in Christ, you shall be called to account at the last.

But I must pass on. The third thing in the text is this, that the difficulty in hand was met in this way. The donkey must be God's, yet it cannot be, for it is too impure for Him to receive! What then?

III. IT MUST BE REDEEMED BY A SUBSTITUTE.

"Every first-born of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb." Oh, the glorious gospel comes out here in much of its effulgence in connection with the redemption of men! The Jew would, perhaps, deliberate awhile. "Well," he might say, "I fancy I should like to have this donkey grown up, for I need it as a beast of burden. But here is a lamb that must be killed in its place, and he is the more valuable of the two." I fancy I can hear a consultation held in the family as to what should be done. It may be that in some cases the lamb would be the less precious of the two. However what may be, it is agreed at the last that the lamb shall die and that the donkey shall live.

Now, in our case, there might have been a consultation, indeed, as to which was the more precious—our poor, willful, wicked selves, or the Lamb of God, the Only-begotten of the Father. All of us put together, and millions upon millions of our human race could never equal in value the precious Lord Jesus! If you were to put in all the angels as well, and all the creatures that God has ever made, they could not equal Him who is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person! "Yet He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And this is the gospel which we have to preach to you every time we stand before you, namely, that Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, was offered to God as a substitute for ungodly, unclean, unacceptable man! That we might not die, Christ died! That we might not be cursed, Jesus was cursed and fastened to the tree! That we might be received, He was rejected! That we might be approved, He was despised—and that we might live forever He bowed His head and died in our place!

If any man wants to understand theology, he had better begin here. This is the first and main point. I do not think I should dispute with any of my brothers in the ministry upon what else they hold if they all hold purely and straightforwardly the doctrine of substitution by Jesus Christ on the behalf of His own elect people. Martin Luther stood out for

justification by faith, and rightly so, for in his day that seemed to be the center, where all the battle raged. I think that just now substitution by Christ seems to be the place where the garments are rolled in blood—and where the fight is thickest. That Jesus Christ was punished in the sinner's place—that the wrath which was due to His people was endured by Him, that He drank the cup of bitterness which they ought to have drunk—is the grandest of all the truths of God and so sublime a truth that if all the Christians in the world were to be burned in one dreadful holocaust, the price would be but little to maintain this precious doctrine in its integrity upon the face of the earth!

Now most men know that they are to be saved by Christ, but I am afraid—but I am afraid that it is not always preached plainly, so that men know how it is that Christ saves them. My dear hearer, I would not have you go away without knowing this! Christ Jesus came into the world to take the sins of His people upon Himself and to be punished for them. Well, if Christ was punished for them, they could not be punished afterwards. Christ's being punished in their place was the full discharge of their debt which they owed to divine justice, and they are sure to be saved. They for whom Christ died as a Substitute can no more be damned than Christ Himself can be! It is not possible that hell can enclose them, or else where are the justice and the integrity of God? Does He demand the man, and then take a Substitute and then take the man again? Does He demand the payment of our debt, and receive that payment at the hand of Christ, and then arrest us a second time for the same debt? Then, in the great court of King's Bench in heaven, where is justice? The honor of God, the faithfulness of God, the integrity of God are certain guarantees to every soul for whom Christ died, that if Christ died for him, he shall not die, but shall be exempt from the curse of the law!

"How then," says one, "may I know that Christ died for my soul?" Sir, do you trust Him? Will you trust Him now? If so, that is the mark of His redeemed! This is the King's mark upon His treasure! This is the mark of the great Sheep-Master upon all of those whom He has bought with His blood. If you will take Him to be the only pillar of your salvation; if you will build upon Him as the sole foundation of your everlasting hope, then you are His! And as for your sins, they are laid on Him. As for your righteousness, you have none of your own, but Christ's righteousness is yours! As in the case before us, the lamb was offered—the donkey was spared. The unclean animal lived—the clean creature died! There was a change of places. So does Christ change places with the sinner! Christ puts Himself in the sinner's place and what do we read? "He was numbered with the transgressors," and, being numbered with the transgressors, what then? Why, He was put to death as a transgressor! They crucified Him between two malefactors. He had to suffer the death of a felon! And though in Him was no sin, yet, "the Lord has made to meet upon Him the iniquities of us all." He was, before God, the

representative of all His people, and all the sins of His people covered Him until He had drunk the cup of wrath. And then He threw off the horrible incubus of His people's sins and cast the stupendous load of the guilt of all His elect down into the sepulcher and there left it buried forever! And in His rising from the dead, He gave to them the pledge and earnest of their acquittal and of their everlasting life! Ah, my hearers, I wish I had a thousand tongues with which to proclaim this one truth of God! As I have not, I ask the tongues of all those who know its preciousness to tell it forth. Tell the sick, tell the dying, tell the young, tell the old, tell sinners of every degree and every class, that salvation is not by what *they do*, nor by what *they feel*, but that it all lies in that man who was once crucified, but who now lives in the power of an endless life before the eternal throne of God! And if they say, "What do you mean by this?" tell them that this man is none other than God over all, blessed forever, and that He condescended to become man and take upon Himself the sins of His people, and to be punished for their guilt, so that whoever believes on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life! The just for the unjust, He died to bring us to God! This is the gospel—the core, the kernel, the marrow of the entire Bible! You may say of all the Book besides, that it is but folds and wrappings—but this is what it wraps up—substitution by Christ! This is but the box, the case—it is Christ that is the jewel, the treasure for which the case was made! Believe this truth of God! Believe it as a doctrine, but, better still, cast your souls on it, and say, "If it is so, then I will trust in the power of Him who loved, and lived, and died for sinners that I might go free." The last truth of God in the text is a very solemn one, namely, that—

IV. THE UNREDEEMED MAN MUST DIE.

The unredeemed donkey was put to a speedy and very ignominious death. "You shall break its neck." There was no bringing of it to the altar, but it must be as an obnoxious thing, killed with the axe and left. There is no choice for any man, woman, or child here, except this. If you trust in Christ, you are redeemed, and you shall live. If you do not, there is something worse for you than the breaking of the neck of the poor donkey. When they break its neck, it is done—just a pang and a struggle, and it is over. But it is not over with us when the time comes to execute the righteous sentence of the law if Christ has not suffered that sentence for us and we are found unbelievers in Him! Then, first of all, the soul is torn from the body—the body left here, the soul to appear before God—and then it immediately receives the foretokens of its last and ultimate doom! It is driven from God's presence to abide as a naked spirit in utter wretchedness. When our Lord pictures the death of the rich man, He does not talk about any sleep, but He says, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." He was one moment on earth, but the next moment in hell! There the soul must continue till the resurrection comes, and then the soul must come back to the body and, body and soul together

must stand in that great gathering where every eye shall see the pierced One and behold Him in His Glory. Then the great and final sentence shall be pronounced and to the unregenerate it will be this—"Then shall He say to those at His left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

I tremble while I speak thus, but you must hear it, lest you miss it. And we must speak it, lest we be found guilty of your soul's blood. In the name of the living God, I speak to everyone to whom this voice can come. You must have Christ die for you, or you must die forever! It must be either Calvary or hell—one of the two! His blood must be sprinkled upon your conscience, or else your blood shall be upon your own head! It is with you tonight: turn or burn—believe or perish, for I do assure you, according to the teaching of the Word of God and of His Holy Spirit, that there is not the shadow of a hope anywhere else for you. You may belong to some church and you may hope to be saved by your baptism or by your confirmation, but these are useless apart from Christ! You may attend some meeting house, and you may think to be saved because you are very orthodox, but your orthodoxy will perish with you, and will only be firewood for your burning if you trust to that! Perhaps you think that leaving something in your will at the last to some charity, or giving liberally to the poor, may cover a multitude of sins, and that with such a covering as Achan used when he covered up the wedge of gold that God's eyes might not see the unholy thing. But Achan died, notwithstanding that he had covered up his ill-gotten wealth—and so will you!

Ah, if an angel should come here tonight, and speak, perhaps you would listen to him more intensely than you would to me. But what could he tell you simpler than this, that there is but one hope for you, and that one hope neglected, there is no hope, no hope, no hope forever? God has been pleased to commit this ministry not unto angels, but unto us—poor men like yourselves—that we may tell you with affection that we may speak to you with sympathy. Why will you die? You know what pain is, do you not? You have suffered enough already. Some of you have to endure the biting pangs of hunger. You are sometimes cold and poverty brings you very low. Will you be everlastingly poor? Will you forever endure the pangs and miseries infinitely worse than any you have known in this world? I am not inventing bugbears to frighten you. God forbid! I am only telling you what I have read in God's Word and what you yourselves may see to be there. "Except you repent," said Christ, "you shall all likewise perish." Why need you perish? Why musts you perish? Jesus Christ is preached to you, and we say to you, tonight, in the name of the Most High, whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool if you do but trust Him! Though you have gone ever so far into sin, yet simple faith in Christ will bring you out of it! And though your sins should be ingrained in your nature and have become such a habit to you that you seem no more able to get rid of your abominable habits than the

leopard could get rid of his spots, or the Ethiopian of his black skin—yet such is the miraculous power of the blood of Jesus that it can take out the leopard's spots, and remove the Ethiopian's hue, and make those white who were once defiled, for it not only takes away the guilt of sin, but the power of sin! If you believe in Christ, you will have a new nature, new desires, new tastes, new enjoyments! You shall hate the things you once loved, and love the things you once hated—

"'Tis but to trust Immanuel's blood!
'Tis all! 'Tis all!"

"Yes," I hear you say, "but this is too little! It is too easy!" Well, and what a mercy that is for you, for if it were a difficult thing, how could you do it? You are precisely in the case of Naaman, when the prophet said to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times." "Oh," said Naaman, "it is too simple!" Then his servant said, "My Father, if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he said to you, Wash and be clean?" The poor Hindu will roll himself over and over for five hundred miles to get to the Ganges, because he has been told that he will get rid of his sin if he thus lies prostrate in the dust the whole painful journey. Poor soul, he is but like us! We would all do that if we were quite sure that we would be saved by it. How much rather, then, when Christ simply says, "Trust, trust, trust, trust Christ and live! Depend simply upon Him! Rely upon Him!"

Are you not almost sick of hearing me tell you this? We have to iterate and reiterate on this point. We have to bring the hammer down continually on just the same place on the anvil, and to strike just the same note. Ah, well, if you were all saved, and all believed in Christ, we would gladly go on to something else—but until every soul is saved, we can do nothing but blow the trumpet with the same sound! Believe! Trust in the Substitute! Take Christ to be yours! Look out of self—look to Christ! Have done with your doings! Have done with your trusting in your own powers, and now, whether you sink or swim, give up every other hope and rest in Him, and rely on Him, and upon Him alone!

Perhaps these simple words may bring the gospel home to some aching heart with comfort. And if it should, I pray you to be sure to follow it up at once. Do not put it off. Do not delay! 'Tis resting in Jesus, now—that is the thing. I call to recollection just now the morning when first I rested on Him. I can never, never, forget it. I had been as downcast as anyone could be. I had attended places of worship. I had done all I could, but I could get no peace till at last I heard a simple preacher put it thus—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!" Now there is nothing to do here but to look—a fool can do that! A baby can do that! You don't need a deal of learning to do that—you only have to look! But you will ask what it is that you are to look to. Well, it is, "Look to Me"—that is, look to Jesus! There He is in the garden, sweating great drops of blood! Every drop is for you—look to Him! There He is, scourged by Pilate till His shoulders run with gore, and every drop is for you! Look

to Him! Look to Him! There He is, fastened to the tree! His hands are streaming with blood and every drop is for you—look to Him! There He is with His side pierced and with the blood and water running out, and every drop is for you! Look to Him! Look to Him! Do but look to Him! No, it is not to be able to understand it, but to look to Him! No, it is not to be able to write it on paper, but to look to Him! Look to Him! "Well," he said, when he had gone thus far, "that young man under the gallery there looks very unhappy. I think he is feeling the burden of sin but he will never get rid of his burden unless he looks to Christ." Then he shouted, "Look! Look! Look! Young man! Look now!"

Blessed be God, I did look—simply looked, just as the dying men in the wilderness looked to the serpent! They did not calculate the value of the brass. They did not make a drawing of the various convolutions of the serpent. They did not consider how it could be. They did not get a physician to talk to them about how the eyes might operate upon the nerves. They just did what they were told to do! They looked, and they lived! Will you look, or not? Will you trust, or not, young man? On the answer which the Holy Spirit shall enable you to give to that question will hang your present peace and your everlasting happiness! If you answer, "No, I will not look," then, sirs, on your own heads be your blood if you will not rest in Jesus! So simple, so suitable, so gracious is this way of salvation, that I myself, though I love you in my very soul, must say that you deserve to perish if you will not thus be saved—

"How they deserve the deepest hell
That slight abounding love!
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who scorn these hands of love!"

Oh, that, instead thereof, you would simply trust! And, trusting, you shall live! Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 29:38-46; ISAIAH 53.

EXODUS 29:38-46.

Verse 38. *Now this is that which you shall offer upon the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day, continually.* Remember, as long as there was a Jewish state, the mornings and the evenings were to open and to close with the sacrifice of a lamb.

39-42. *The one lamb you shall offer in the morning; and the other lamb you shall offer at evening. And with the one lamb a tenth an ephah of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of pressed oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb you shall offer at evening and shall do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning. And according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savor an offering made by fire unto the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the*

congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto you. See, the lamb is the place of meeting! God comes to His people as His people come to Him—with the morning and with the evening lamb.

43. *And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory.* God's glory is in the lamb—it is there He is pleased to manifest Himself in the glory of His infinite grace to His people.

44, 45. And *I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.* Not without the lamb, you see—that morning and evening sacrifice must be the token and the way of God's dealing with His people.

46. *And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.* Now concerning this same Lamb, we will read in—

ISAIAH 53.

Blessed passage! I hope you all know it by heart—it should be like the alphabet to every child. See how it begins.

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* This is the continual cry of the men of God. The sent ones of God who come to bear testimony of the Lamb of God have no easy time of it. With broken hearts they have to go to their Master, and say, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

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.* Carnal minds never did see beauty in Christ, and never will. Christ as the great sacrifice is always rejected.

3-5. *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. 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.* Blessed be His name! Some of us can say that with great delight—"With His stripes we are healed."

6, 7. *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. 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.* "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth." Our blessed Master—there are His seven cries upon the Cross, but not one word of murmuring, no

complaint against His enemies—"He opened not His mouth: He is brought as the lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."

8, 9. *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.*

10. *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.* "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." If ever there was a man whom God should have protected from every sorrow, and guarded from every stroke of injustice, it was Jesus! And unless it was for sins not His own, He suffered, unless it was as a substitute for man, it was the most unjust of all heard of injustices that Christ should die at all!

11, 12. *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. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great. And He shall divide the spoil with the strong: because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* "He shall see of the travail of His soul." Oh, what a joy is this to us! He did not travail in vain. His pangs were as of a travailing woman, but the birth, the glorious birth that comes of it is the salvation of multitudes—this is His recompense!

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A SERMON
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"But He gives more grace."
James 4:6.

PRACTICAL as the Epistle of James is, this Apostle does not neglect to extol the grace of God. He would be very unpractical if he did. There are some professors of religion who talk as if they loved the doctrines and loathed the duties. They cling to the faith, while they shrink from the works! They accept the principles that are announced, but refuse the precepts that are enjoined. Herein they err. Yet we would be equally at fault and, perhaps, commit a graver error, were we to be biased in the opposite direction! Did we constantly expound and enforce the great things to be done *by us* without reference to the greater things that have been done *for us.* Did we commend the fruits regardless of the root from where they spring; did we applaud the deeds of men without lauding the grace of God, we would, I say, commit a graver error! Happily we have been taught the saintship and the service, the covenant engagements, as well as the creature obligations, the divine enabling and the divers abilities of believers that are set in motion, so that we discern without difficulty how the principle of grace combines and co-operates with the practice of goodness. In our conflict with the natural spirit of enmity, grace takes the form of, "more grace," and it is bestowed upon us that we may be able to overcome and prove victorious.

We shall first consider *the words of our text in their natural connection;* secondly, we shall *contemplate their general instructions;* then, thirdly, we shall *connect them with a special application*, seeking, each one of us, to appropriate them to ourselves.

I. OUR TEXT IN ITS NATURAL CONNECTION.

Directly you look at the matter, you are struck with the contrast. It is not merely that a comparison is instituted, but *two potent motives are confronted*—the one a strong instinct, the other a liberal endowment. "The spirit that is in us lusts to envy, but He gives more grace." On our side it is a "spirit"—a turbulent passion! On God's side it is a sweet gratuity—a supply of more grace! We fretful and murmuring, anxious and complaining; He, far from grudging, stinting, or withholding (which would be a fit retaliation), succors us and augments and multiplies His liberality, as if to compensate the aggravation of our waywardness by the enlargement of His concessions! The spirit that is in us complains of God, as though we were jealous that He gave more to others than to us. Still, the Spirit that is in God goes on to give, saying, "Is your eye evil because Mine is good? May I not do what I will with My own?" The spirit

that is in us undervalues what we possess, because, under some aspects, it may not be equally precious with that which somebody else possesses. But God, instead of taking away from us what He has given, because we judge Him so unworthily, only gives more! "He gives more grace." One might have supposed that because "the spirit that is in us lusts to envy," therefore we should discover God opposing us, restraining the bottles of heaven, commanding the dew no longer to fall upon us and withdrawing all the benedictions of His love! But no, it does not say, "He is opposed to us and, whereas we run in one direction, He runs in another. His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways. And then, again, our ways are neither His ways, nor our thoughts His thoughts. We do not rise to Him and He does not stoop to us, so as to lower His character, by meeting us with that return that would seem due to us if strict laws of retaliation were carried out." Note that contrast! Note it always! Observe how weak we are, how strong He is—how proud we are, how condescending He is—how erring we are, and how infallible He is! Note how changing we are, and how immutable He is—how provoking we are, and how forgiving He is. Observe how in us there is only evil, and how in Him there is only good. Yet our evil but draws His goodness forth, and still He blesses! Oh, what a rich contrast!

Do we not get *a hint, here, as to the quarter from which we are to derive the weapons of war against our sin*? "The spirit that is in us lusts to envy." What will you say to this? Will you, therefore, sit still and consider that you are excused because this is a positive instinct of your nature? Do you say that envy is a natural proclivity, a craving passion of many men, and that it is, therefore, to be accounted of rather as a mental cast than as a moral crime—a flaw in one's constitution rather than a fault in his conscience; or to say the worst, more of a distressing temptation than of a detestable transgression against God? Ah, no, my brothers and sisters, there is not a word in Holy Scripture that gives the least countenance or the faintest indulgence to any sin! Indulgences for sin may come from Rome, but they never come from Zion! I have known persons attempt to exculpate themselves after a fit of anger by a cool acknowledgment like this—"I was always hot-tempered." What is that but a bitter aggravation? You do but admit that your sin is of long standing and frequent recurrence! You confess, indeed, your greater guilt, and there is no repentance to regret it, no force of conviction to forsake it. So it is with envy—"The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy." So much the worse for our spirit! So much the more guilty we are. This is not only an infirmity which our circumstances have betrayed, but it is an inherent quality of the animal, debased propensity of the creature! Oh, how defiled must the nature be to which vice is as natural as a black skin to the Ethiopian, or as a spotted skin to the leopard! In vain your every plea—you cannot lighten the sin, albeit you may heighten the shame! There is no cause to tamper, but there is a call to arms. "He gives more grace." This is as much as to say, "Sit not coolly down and parley with the spirit that is in you lusting to envy, but up! Resist, withstand and oppose till you quench it!"

Here is counsel to instruct you in this arduous encounter: That evil spirit must be met with a pure, a devout spirit. The weapons of this warfare are not carnal; they are only to be found in the armory of grace. "He gives more grace." You cannot overcome your sins by denouncing them, or frustrate their malignity by fostering an admiration of virtues that never grew in the soil of your own hearts. Nor can you, resolve as you may, keep the moral law. Neither is it possible, by religious services in the future, to make amends for the perversity of your past life. Such proposals and such efforts would become the race of Ishmael, for they are under bondage. But we are the children of the free woman and we are not moved to holiness by the hope of gaining heaven, or the fear of being sent to hell. We live under a different covenant from that! They have to do with Sinai, which made men tremble—we are not under the law, but under grace, so other arguments persuade us! When we need weapons wherewith to fight against our sin, we turn to divine love, and say, "Behold how God has loved us. Can we act unloving to Him?" Or we go to Calvary and there see what a bitter thing it is to our Well-Beloved. We take the spear that pierced His heart, to see if it cannot pierce the heart of our sin. And we take the nails that nailed Him to the tree and pray the Holy Spirit to crucify our flesh with its affections and lusts. Our warfare is not carried on by weapons from the armory of Moses—the shield and spear of David suit us better. By faith in the living God who defends us from danger and guards us with strength, we shall bring down the lion, rend the bear like a kid, and vanquish the Philistine! By the help of His right hand we expect to kill the enemy. We are not going back to legal bondage—we have "more grace." And with divine grace there always comes joy, peace and security. That doctrine which, it has been often argued, gives liberty to sin does really set forth the way in which to overthrow and conquer it! The text, then, gives an indication of the place where we may find the shield and buckler of our sacred war—"He gives more grace."

And then the text, besides giving thus a contrast and a suggestion, appears to me to give us an encouragement for the continuance of our spiritual warfare. "He gives more grace." You had grace at first with which to struggle against the envying and every other sin. You are now alarmed because the warfare of your spirit is so protracted. "He gives more grace" to continue the struggle! As long as there is one passion in your soul that dares to rise, there will be grace in your soul to answer! Are you distressed because you don't appear to be making the headway you could wish against sin? It is a blessed distress and I would not mitigate it, but, meanwhile, let us not degenerate into unbelief. Know this, that though there may be more temptation, God will give more grace! And though advancing years may bring more infirmity and, consequently, more temptation, He will always give you more grace! As long as the fight shall last, the help will last. You shall have manna all the while you are in the wilderness—it shall never cease to drop till you come where you no more require it, having crossed the Jordan. Fight on, then! Never think of saying, "I cannot overcome this sin." By God's help

you must, for no sin can enter heaven with you! You must overcome it. It cannot be permitted that you sit down in peace with any foe to purity. You are never to have peace with any sin. When, first of all, the Lord Jesus made peace with us, He proclaimed war against sin on every side and of every size, and the loyal Christian never dreams of peace, but contemplates only a perpetual fighting against sin, expecting to have perpetual grace bestowed!

And then it seems to me that, in this matter, we have a prediction of victory, for if He gives more grace, it seems to me thus, that He promises so to augment the force of grace that the sin must ultimately yield to repeated assaults. There shall be more grace than sin—where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Such shall be the climax of every Christian's experience when it comes to be summed up. O sin, you cruel, deadly foe! You seek to capture us, and, if possible, to slay us—but you shall not prevail! Sin seeks to enter, grace shuts the door. Sin tries to get the mastery, but grace, which is stronger than sin, resists and will not permit it. Sin gets us down at times and puts its foot on our neck—grace comes to the rescue and faith prompts us to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I rise up again." Sin comes up like Noah's flood, but grace rides over the tops of the mountains like the Ark! Sin, like Sennacherib, pours forth its troops to swallow up the land—grace, like the angel of the Lord, goes through the camp of Sennacherib and lays sin dead. O glorious grace, you shall certainly get the victory! "He gives more grace." Surely, therefore, there is a prediction, here, of ultimate victory! "The spirit that is in us lusts to envy," but for us there is victory, and to Jehovah shall it be ascribed, for He gives more grace! Such, as it seems to me, is the instruction to be drawn from the text, if we take it in its connection. Now let us take it out of the connection and—

II. USE IT AS A GENERAL TRUTH.

"He gives more grace." Does not this mean that *He gives new supplies of grace*? The grace you had yesterday is of no use today. It would breed worms and stink like the old manna. The man who has no new experience of divine love, but tries to live on the memory of the past, will find the food very musty and apt to breed diseases. The child of God will never prosper on Tuesday through Monday's grace—and you will not find the supplies of grace for last year keep you afloat during this year! "He gives more grace." Grace is like a river—its waters are always sweet and fresh as it comes rushing from the eternal hills. Like the sunlight, it never sends the same beams twice! It is always fresh, always new. Blessed be God for this! There are perpetual streams of grace.

And He gives *larger supplies of grace.* He gives new drops to the blade; He gives a greater watering to the corn in the ear, sends heavy showers when it comes to the full corn in the ear. There is comparatively little grace with him who is but a babe in grace, though enough for his present need. There is more grace for the young man who has temptations to avoid that he may cleanse his way. And there is the most grace for the valiant man who is strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Little faith has grace, but great faith has more grace. Little love has grace, but God gives greater grace where there is greater love. None of us have got so far but what there is much beyond. Suppose a man says he is perfect? You may conclude that he does not know himself or the course that lies before him, for if he is perfect in his own estimation, he has not a perfect standard to judge himself by and probably he is not as perfect in his humility as it is desirable he should be!

"God gives more grace," that is, *higher, larger, deeper, stronger grace*, so that we may go from strength to strength. When it is said, "He gives more grace," it means that He gives higher styles of grace, for there are differences and degrees of grace. One man has grace—a proportionate amount of it, but it is of one kind. Now the grace of patience appears to me to be a higher grace than many others, and to come late to some of us. We have not got to it yet. We have got courage and we have faith in a measure and that will produce every other virtue, doubtless, but as yet we have not the full closeness of fellowship, the perfectness of acquiescence, the keen susceptibility of the presence of God, and certain other and higher forms of grace of which we cannot now particularly speak. But these are not things that are reserved and laid by—He gives these higher graces—they are to be had. There is no degree of divine grace which we ought not to seek—not with the covetousness that seeks grace for a graceless object like self-exaltation, but with that sacred eagerness which longs for more grace that God may have more glory! God gives to His people the highest forms of grace and, therefore, they ought to be encouraged to ask for them.

This precious Word of God which I have before me, dear friends, on which my heart is fondly set, and which my tongue gladly repeats, expresses *a statute of the Lord which we ought to live upon every day*. "He gives more grace," By the grace of God I have got to the end of another day! Well, then, I need to go to Him again at my bedside, before my eyes are closed in slumber, and seek fresh fellowship with Him—"He gives more grace." What He is prepared to give most certainly I am prone to need! Tomorrow, when I go forth to follow my calling, I know not what may befall me, for I have not trod that way before—but "He gives more grace." Every day there are fresh supplies of grace as fresh needs for grace arise. And oh, how I ought to recollect this in my pleadings for others! Should I not pray for my minister, that he might have more grace? If I do not profit under his ministry as I could wish, I should pray more, being confident of this very thing, that, "God gives more grace." And if I do profit as I could wish, then I have new reasons for praying that he will continue to get more grace, for God has promised to give it! Have I a child whom I hope to see grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? As I see the budding, the beginning of grace in him, I should plead for more grace! And how, my Christian brothers and sisters in the service of the Church, should I fail to plead with God on your behalf?

Much blessed use, too, beloved, may we make of this verse *when called to any fresh service*. If you who never preached before, should be

invited to speak to a few people, do not measure your ability by your inexperience. He who calls you to more service will give you more grace! Or should you be about to move from a little to a larger occupation, you may be timid—cast down because of the littleness of your strength—but "He gives more grace." Possibly, you are entering into deeper trials. You have only been a coaster before, and you kept among the headlands near the shore. Now you are to cross the sea and get out of the sight of land. Well, the pilot knows all about the sea which you are about to traverse—trust Him. "He gives more grace." I know you have more fear. The only way to overcome it is by more grace. Do not be over-anxious to make more provision, or trust to the exercise of more prudence, or rely upon anything you have got, else you will make shipwreck in that manner! But go to the Lord for more grace. It is the straight way, the right way, the safe way—and in that way you will always find that more grace will carry you through more trouble! Possibly you are about to undergo sharper tests than ever. You are to be tried this time as to whether you are really God's servant. Well, if the Lord permits Satan to tempt you, He will give you more grace! He who preserved you in prosperity, will preserve you in adversity! He who kept you in the high places will not forsake you in the lowlands. He who blessed your substance will not suffer you to starve in time of famine. If you need more grace, you shall have more grace to supply your need! Do not be afraid, dear brothers and sisters, as to what may happen to you. Go in this your strength—seek the Lord's guidance. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths. If God should bid any one of us go right through a wall of stone, we are to go straight through it and He shall clear our way! He cuts the gates of brass and breaks the bars of iron asunder. Ours is to obey—not to reason or ask why! Ours is to dare and die, if need be, for Him—not to halt or draw back! When He bids us go, He will clear the way. Through the Red Sea, Israel went. "Forward," was the word, and the floods divided and stood upright as a heap! So shall it be, if providence should call you to the most extraordinary pathway ever trod by human pilgrims! He that calls you will preserve you and cause you to triumph in the way of obedience, for "He gives more grace." Again, let us endeavor to—

III. MAKE APPLICATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE TO OURSELVES.

I would urge each dear brother and sister here to take the words and see what they say to you. "He gives more grace." Do you suffer from spiritual poverty? It is your own fault, for He gives more grace. If you have not got it, it is not because it is not to be had, but because you have not gone for it—you have not sought for it—you have not walked in such a way that you could possess it and exhibit its fruit! If there is anyone—a hired servant of our Father—that is hungry, it is not because our Father's larder is bare, for He has provided bread enough and to spare! And if there is one of our Father's children who cannot fill his belly, it is not because there is not food enough, nor because there is not abundance on the Father's table, but because he chooses to go after the swine husks in some form or other. We might rejoice, we might triumph, but we take the course which leads to poverty, littleness of grace,

leanness of soul! It is our own choice—not the Lord's. The text forbids us ever to lay blame on God. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" You might well consider this. You have little love—have I given you little cause for love? Your zeal burns very low—have I given you objects so contemptible that you might reasonably relax your fervor? Ah, no. "He gives more grace." He always gives. You hungry ones that stand shivering there, faint and ready to die—it is not because the oxen and the fatlings are not killed, and all things are not ready—you that pinch yourselves and starve yourselves are not straitened in Him, but straitened in your own heart. May God teach us this lesson! May we come now to God with open mouths that He may fill them. May our desires be strong and our faith a mighty enthusiasm, that, according to our faith, it may be done unto us!

Spiritual growth, if we have any, must never be the subject of our self-congratulation, but we must give all the glory to God, for if you look at the text from another point of view, the more grace we have, the more has been given us! If we have it not, it is our own fault, but if we have it, it is not our earning, but His bestowal! If you have more than another, you have no cause to thank yourself for it. If you can say, "I bless myself that I have more grace than my brother," you have already shown that you are naked, poor and miserable, though you think yourself to be rich and increased in goods. All grace leads us to gratitude. Grace never leads us to lift ourselves up and say, "I have done well to obtain it." grace, like the cargo in the vessel, makes the ship sink deeper in the stream. He that has most grace is the lowliest man. You shall measure your rising in grace by your sinking in humility.

Oh, beloved, what satisfaction and what security we should feel in meditating on the goodness of God. Verily, God is good. This is not an occasional display of His bounty, but it is the universal order of His government in the Church, "He gives more grace." There is no time given here. You do not find any timetable in Scripture, saying, "At such an hour of the day He gives more grace," or, "At such a time in the year He gives more grace," but it is day by day, all the year round, long as the cycles roll, while the dispensation of mercy lasts! So long as there is an heir of heaven that needs, our Father, who is in heaven, supplies! "He gives more grace." What a blessing for us that the grace of God is "unlimited" as to time!

Nor is there any restriction as to the way of our getting it. When "He gives more grace," you need not apply through certain appointed priests, or use a prescribed ritual, or put yourselves in certain peculiar postures. No, no! Nothing ceremonial—everything substantial! This provision, like every other promise, is in and through Jesus Christ, the Mediator. If you do but go and seek from Him, He gives what none others can give—He gives more grace! Oh, for the agony of prayer that will lead us to the mercy-seat with power! And for the humility of soul that empties us in order that there may be room for God to fill us! Oh, for the life of faith which believes that God will do great things, and expects Him to do them! How then should we, each one, have to say, "He gives me more grace: blessed be His name! He leads me on from height to height,

enlarges my capacity and still fills me! He makes me feel that there is a greater capacity yet to receive and an undiminished fullness when my capacity expands." Turn the meditation into music in your heart! Let the rich melody charm your thoughts and henceforth may our song be, "He gives more grace."

Are any of you seeking more grace? If He has given you grace to seek, He will surely give you more grace—grace to find! Are any of you grieving for sin? That is of His grace—He will give you more grace to rejoice in the pardon of all your sins through Christ! Have you begun to pray? That is according to His grace bestowed on you—but He will give you more grace to continue in prayer until you receive such answers as are the ripe fruit of your supplications! Thank God for little grace—mind that you do. If you have only starlight, thank Him for it, and He will give you moonlight. Or if you have only moonlight, thank Him for it, and He will give you sunlight! Then, if you have sunlight, thank Him fervently and He will give you, shortly, as the light of seven days! Be thankful, since a little grace is more than you deserve! Be thankful for the least grain that the Lord adds to it. Oh, that you might be all led to believe in Christ! It pleased the Father to give Christ Jesus to us, and in Him all fullness dwells. He cannot give you more, because in this one gift every other gift is concentrated. You cannot need more than Jesus! With Him you shall find that you receive more and more grace adequate to your needs and according to His exceeding riches of glory. So shall you praise Him more and more forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 24:1-16; 1 SAMUEL 30:1-13; 1 JOHN 1:1-3.

Our subject is the value of divine guidance, and we shall, therefore, read two passages of Scripture illustrating the truth of God which we hope to enforce.

GENESIS 24:1-16.

Verse 1. *And Abraham was old, and well advanced in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.* Happy man that can say that, who has a blessing everywhere! And yet Abraham had his, "but," for as yet Isaac was unmarried and, perhaps, he little dreamed that for 20 years afterwards, he who was to build the house of Abraham was to remain childless. Yet so it was. There was always a trial for Abraham's faith, but even his trials were blessed, for "God blessed Abraham in all things."

2. *And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, put, I pray you, your hand under my thigh*—According to the Eastern manner of swearing.

3. *And I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that you shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.* This holy man was careful of the purity of his family—he knew what an ill effect a Canaanite wife might have upon his son, and also upon his offspring. He was,

therefore, particularly careful here. I would that all parents were the same.

4, 5. *But you shall go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him, Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I bring your son again unto the land from where you came?* The servant was very careful. Those that swear too readily they know not what, will before long, swear till they care not what. Better still is it for the Christian to remember the word of Christ, "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath." Doubtless the doctrine of the Savior is that all oaths of every sort are lawful to the Christian, but if they ever are taken, it should be with deep circumspection and with earnest prayerfulness—that there be no mistake about the matter.

6. *And Abraham said unto him, beware you that you bring not my son there again.* He knew that God had called him and his kindred to inherit the land of Canaan and, therefore, he was not willing that they should go back to their former dwelling places.

7. *The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spoke unto me, and that swore unto me, saying, Unto your seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife unto my son from there.* What simple faith! This was the very glory of Abraham's faith—it was so simple, so childlike. It might be many miles to Padanaram, but it does not matter to faith. "My God will send His angel." Oh, we are always making difficulties and suggesting hardships, but if our faith were in lively exercise, we would do God's will far more readily! "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." Brothers and sisters let us be of good heart and of good courage in all matters, for doubtless the angel of God will go before us!

8-11. *And if the woman will not be willing to follow you, then you shall be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son there again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and swore to him concerning that matter. And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down outside the city, by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.* Now I think I may freely say that this looks something like what we call "a wild goose chase." He was to go and find a wife for a young man left at home. He knew nothing of the people among whom he was to sojourn, but he believed that the angel of God would guide him aright. What ought he to do; now he had come near to the time when the decision must be made? He should seek counsel of God—and observe that he did so!

12-14. *And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray You, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass that the*

damsel to whom I shall say, Let down your pitcher, I pray you, that I may drink, and she shall say, Drink, and I will give your camels drink, also; let the same be she that you have appointed for Your servant Isaac and, thereby, shall I know that You have showed kindness unto my master. I do not know that he is to be imitated in setting a sign to God. Perhaps not, but he did his best—he left the matter with God; and a thing is always in good hands when it is left with Him. There is a deal of wisdom in this sign, however. Why did he not say, "The damsel that shall first offer me a drink"? No, she might be a little too forward, and a forward woman was not a fit spouse for the good and meditative Isaac. He himself was to address her first, and then she must be ready, with all cheerfulness, to do far more than he asks! She was to offer him a drink, and draw water for his camels. She would thus not be afraid of work, she would be courteous, she would be kind and all these meeting in one might show him! And by this test he might very wisely discover that she was a fitting woman for Isaac, and might become his spouse.

15. *And it came to pass, before he had done speaking*—No, he did not know that promise, "While they are yet speaking I will hear," but God keeps His promises before He makes them and, therefore, I am sure He will keep them after He has made them!

15, 16. *That, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her. And she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.* And so on—I need not read the rest of the story, because we now find that, through earnest prayer, the good servant has been rightly led. We will now turn to another passage where we shall have another instance of a difficult case—where another person put his case before the Lord—sought guidance and found it.

1 SAMUEL 30:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire. And had taken the women captives that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.* What a singular providence! There was a blood-feud between Amalek and Israel since Israel endeavored to exterminate the Amalekites, and it is written, "The Lord shall have war with Amalek forever and ever." Yet God holds in these tigers and will not let the lions devour their prey!

3, 4. *So David and his men came to the city, and behold it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.* They were tired and weary after a long march with Achish, and then another long march home. Oh, how they longed for their couches! How they desired to sit down and converse with their wives and their little ones! Tears did not seem a sufficient expression for their sorrow, and yet when a strong man

weeps—a burly warrior like Joab, a rough, coarse man like Abishai, or a strong young man like Asahel—there must be deep grief. They wept till they had no more power to weep.

5, 6. *And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.* He had not only his own personal sorrow, but that of all his people. And then, instead of comforting him, every friend had turned into a foe! His house was a heap of ashes—he might have said—"Ahinoam is not, and Abigail is not, and my children have You taken away. All these things are against me!" But he had more faith than Job, and so he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

7. *And David said to Abiathar, the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray you, bring me here the ephod. And Abiathar brought there the ephod to David.* Ah, that's the thing! Bring here the old family Bible! Let us go to prayer about it! Down on our knees and tell the Lord the case.

8. *And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue: for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.* But it is easier said than done! Where are they? How shall they find these fleet Amalekites who fly away so rapidly?

9, 10. *So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred stayed behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.* Worse and worse you see! But the case is in God's hands and no matter what the circumstances may be, all's well that ends well, and God always has the enemy in His hands!

11-13. *And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom do you belong? And from where did you come? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.* Shame on his master, I say, and yet there are some who stop their men's wages as soon as they get a little ill! Shame on them, I say! It might be fit for an Amalekite to do this, but certainly not for an Israelite! So this young Egyptian tells David all about what they had done. And David follows them, kills them with the sword, takes away their plunder and, moreover, gets a great spoil to himself, and so the Lord hears the voice of David. Now Abraham's servant and David were men in like difficulties with us, but they asked guidance of God and received it! Let us be sure in every time of difficulty to do the same.

1 JOHN 1:1-3

Verse 1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life*—The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that He was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon Him, is exceedingly important, and hence John (whose style, by the way, in this Epistle is precisely like the style which he uses in his Gospel)—John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in His eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial man, for he says, "We have heard Him"—hearing is good evidence. "Which we have seen with our eyes"—eyesight is good, clear evidence certainly. "Which we have looked upon"—this is better still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze. But better still, "Which our hands have handled"—for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ's bosom, and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Savior. We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ's incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence!

2. *For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* That same eternal Being who is Very God of Very God, and is worthy to be called essentially Life, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and the apostles could say, "We beheld His glory."

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* See how he hammers this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death-knell of every doubt!

3. *That you also may have fellowship with us.* But John, what is the value of fellowship with you, you and your brethren, a parcel of poor fishermen? Who wants fellowship with you—hooted, despised, mocked and persecuted in every city—who wants fellowship with you?

3. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.* What a leap from the fisherman to the Father's throne, from the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh, John, we would have fellowship with you now! We will have fellowship with your scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with you, and with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

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PRAISE COMELY TO THE UPRIGHT

NO. 3460

A SERMON
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"Praise is comely for the upright."
Psalm 33:1.

THE Psalmist was full of praise, and therefore felt that he could not fully express the glory of God, but desired to enlist others in the sacred service. You hear him often calling upon sea and land, upon earth and heaven, upon mountain and valley, upon plants and creeping things, upon living creatures, upon the heavens and the heavens that are above the heavens, to assist him in magnifying the name of the Infinite Jehovah, whose praise still exceeds all the honor that can be given to Him by all His creatures. Praise has a blessed contagion in it. It is like fire—if it burns its way in one place, it will be spreading itself if it can. A man cannot praise God alone. There will always be within him a high ambition to teach others to take up the strain. He will always be longing and desiring to lead others in the same sweet employ. Now let us seem to hear across these ages the voices of those who are with their God as they cry to us, "Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, for praise is comely to the upright."

I have taken for a text that one sentence—and I will speak of it under four short words which may serve as headings—four words of question. The first is—

I. WHAT?

What is it which is so comely, so comely to the upright? It is praise, the praise of God! And this praise of God, though it is always the same thing, the same spiritual thing produced by the Spirit of God, yet takes different forms, and in each form it is still comely to the upright. It is so in *that delightful form of music in which we express with accord, hearts and voices keeping tune together, in the great congregation our sense of united adoration*. I think there is nothing more comely than the sweet songs of the sanctuary, and what our friends of the Society of Friends do without singing I scarcely know! I think they will have to recant that one thing at least when they enter heaven, for surely they cannot be silent there, where all shall join in songs like unto great thunder, and like the mighty rolling of the sea in praise of the infinite majesty of Him who was slain, but who always lives! I think we could not, anyhow, give up our song. We would feel as if the Sabbath were shorn of its bloom, as if you had plucked the flowers out of the garden of the soul! Our soul must sing, yes, she will sing praises unto the Lord! So natural does it seem to the renewed heart to join in praise with others, that even when lying in the dungeon, after having been beaten sore with stripes, and with their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas did not only pray, but they sang praises unto God, and praise was comely there! It has been comely in many a prison where no one has heard the sound but God. It has been comely among the glens of Scotland when the Covenanters lifted up the Psalm. It has been comely in nooks and corners of England when Puritans, in fear of their lives, nevertheless magnified the name of the Lord. It has been comely at the stakes at Smithfield! Comely from Anne Askew's lips, when she was on the rack, stretched to the utmost! It has been comely anywhere when the voice has poured out itself with musical rhythm in the praise of the Most High!

But there is a second form of vocal praise which is equally comely to the upright; *the spoken praise* of God. I allude to those praises which consist of commendation of the name, and person, and service, and goodness of the Lord by private Christians to their fellow men. Think not that all praise is gathered up in singing! It is the praise of God when the mother tells her child of the goodness of Him who made the stars, and who spread the world with flowers. It is praise when the young convert tells of the joy of

his heart to his companion and bids him fly to the fountain where he has washed and been made clean. It is praise, praise of a high order, too, when the advanced believer in his old age tells of the faithfulness of God, and how not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised! And while praise seems to sit in such a comely manner upon the young convert, so that it seems to be the most natural thing in all the world for him to praise, it is equally comely in the aged Christian, for he seems to feel that if such a man as he, preserved so long, did not praise God, the very stones in the street would cry out against him!

That praise which consists in living, loving, personal testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord is always comely to the upright. I wish that some Christians would remember that murmuring is not comely. That envying others, that finding fault, that ambition, that desiring greater things—that all these are not comely, but the speaking well of His name, the testimony to His faithfulness in providence and to His goodness in grace—this is comely to the upright.

But the truest praise, perhaps, *is that which is not expressed in language, because it could not be—meditative praise.* I fear there is but little of this in London. I am not sure that there is any more of it in the country, though there ought to be a great deal more of it in both. I mean such praise as this—when, like David, we sit before the Lord and think of His exceeding bounty and then say, "What am I, and what is my Father's house that You have brought me here?" I mean the praise that makes the tear unbidden come to the eyes—not the tear of sorrow, but the tear of overwhelming gratitude for the goodness of God, so that the soul, without making use of words, seems to say—

"When all Your mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view,
I'm lost in wonder, love, and praise."

When thoughts become too heavy for words to carry them—when they break the backs of words, as it were. When "expressive silence," as the poet calls it, has to come to the rescue and the man is compelled rather to fall prostrate before the infinite majesty and goodness than to venture on a sonnet that would fall flat in the presence of such emotions!—

"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
But Your compassions are divine."

Where, then, shall it be found possible for words and for tongues to worthily express our praise? I am sure it would be a very refreshing thing to us all—acceptable to God and very blessed to ourselves—if we had more of this quiet praise! It would be refreshing if we could get to some of those cool retreats, those silent shades that with prayer and praise agree, and seem, by God's kind bounty, made for those who would worship Him. Such praise is comely to the upright. I like to think of George Herbert and those other holy men who led meditative lives walking through the Parsonage Garden and up and down by the banks of the brook, singing within themselves of their God. It seems to fit them as a beautiful vest that is comely upon their shoulders when they are engaged in the meditative praise of God!

But one more remark. Sometimes praise does not even fall into the form of meditation, much less of conversation or of song. It becomes—what shall I call it?—*habitual praise—the spirit of praise*. I will indicate one or two brothers and sisters in this congregation who, if it were the depth of winter, would create a smile in my vestry if they would but enter it—that, whenever I meet them, their eyes sparkle like stars, their lips drop pearls, they never seem to be unhappy, never doubting, never distrustful. They are sure to speak every Sabbath morning, "We shall have a good day today. There has been much prayer about it and God always answers prayer. You will be graciously helped through it. Be of good courage." And on Sunday night it is, "This has been a good Sunday." In fact, they say they never have anything but good Sabbaths! They always seem to be fed and they are always rejoicing. And if you talk to them, they are not the youngest people in the congregation, perhaps—they may not be the richest, they may not be in the best circumstances, but they are always the most cheerful, always the most happy and they can say—

"We would not change our blest estate
For all the world calls good and great."

Now, believe me, I think this is most comely to the upright when men or women shall get into the spirit of praise so that they shall always be blessing God. Why, it is such a beautiful dress to wear that they shine in the family, they shine in business, they shine in the church, they shine in the eyes of angels who think that they must be angels, and too, they have got into such an angelic frame of mind! Such a man was Bernard Gilpin, who always said "it was all for the best." If it was fair, it was all for the best. Or if there had been any rain, it was all for the best. Were it hot or were it cold, it was all for the best! Bernard was arrested by the Queen's order to be brought to London to be burned, but he said it was all for the best. The soldiers, knowing of this expression of his, jeered him all along the journey with blasphemies, and when his horse fell and he broke his leg, they laughed, but he said it was all for the best. He was laid upon the road for a surgeon to set his bones, but he said it was all for the best, and so it proved to be, for this delayed them—and when they got just within sight of London they could hear the bells ringing and, on enquiry, they learned that Queen Mary was dead and Queen Elizabeth had succeeded—so that Mr. Bernard Gilpin had arrived in London just three days too late to be burned—and he was quite correct in saying that it was all for the best! But I have no doubt that if he had gone to the stake he would have said it was all for the beat, and certainly his emancipated spirit, as it left its charred ashes behind, would have sung, "Yes, it is all for the best." Now that state of heart, not the act of praise, but the *spirit* of praise, in which the soul seems to swim in praise as the fish swims in the river, and to bathe and perfume itself with thanksgiving, as Esther perfumed herself in Ahasuerus's palace—such a state of heart as this is extremely comely to the upright! That is the answer to the question—What? The next question is—

II. WHY?

Why is praise so befitting and becoming to the upright? We answer that it is so, and you will soon see it, *from the nature of things*. Wings are most becoming to an angel. You would not think of drawing one of those spirits that are like flames of fire without giving it wings. What for? Why, to mount with, to make him ethereal, to quicken his motions. Well, and the Christian without praise would be without his wings! What is he to mount with? He does not wish to grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys, but how is he to mount? Prayer gives him one wing, but praise must give him the other—and when he gets prayer and praise, oh, how he seems to leave sublunary things behind and away he flies, borne by the strong help of the eternal Spirit up to—

"Where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul."

Take away the Christian's power of praising God and you make him a poor earthworm, bound here with doubts, fears and cares. But let him but kindle in his soul the flame that burns in heaven of seraphic love to God and away he mounts!

Praise is comely to the upright, in the next place, *from the office of the believer*. When Aaron put on his breast-plate, his belt, his ephod and his bells, everyone said that the garment was comely to Aaron. It would not have been comely to us because we would have no right to wear it, but the office of Aaron made it comely to him. You would not think it comely if I were to come here to preach to you tonight with a red coat on. You would have said, "No, that red coat is exceedingly comely to the soldier—it suits him—but it does not suit the minister." Now the Christian is a priest and praise is a part of the garment of a priest that he must wear. Praise is the employment of a priest. Inasmuch as we are kings and priests unto God, it becomes us that we should swing that golden censor that is full of thanksgiving, and that we should stand before the golden altar and continually offer sacrifice and praise acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. It suits our nature and suits our office and, therefore, it is comely to the upright.

Praise is comely to the upright *as flowers and fruits are comely to a plant.* There never was a plant but what the fruit it bore suited it and the greatest comeliness to the apple tree in the garden is to see it loaded with its wondrous blossoms, the most beautiful things in all the world—and then afterwards to see the boughs hanging down with luscious fruit! The comeliness of a plant lies in its coming to perfection and bearing its fruit. So with Christians; the barren Christian has no comeliness, but the comeliness of the Christian, his *spiritual* comeliness, lies in his bringing forth fruit unto God—and what

is this but praise? "Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me," says the Lord. Man is made on purpose to glorify God. It is his chief end. Then his chief end is comely to him. If he answers his end, he is comely to Him who made him, and inasmuch as our chief end is to glorify God, praise becomes comely to the upright.

Once again, praise is comely to the upright *as a crown is comely to a king.* It is his highest honor, his chief dignity. It is one of our highest honors to praise God—praise Him that we are His elected, His begotten—that we are His redeemed, His sanctified, His preserved people. When we get to this, we occupy as high a stand as we well can do short of heaven! And in heaven I know not if we shall ever seem more comely than when we are, with all the hosts of angels, praising and magnifying the name of the Lord! When we praise God, we do, as it were, put on our crowns, as when they, before the throne of God, praise God. They also come with their crowns, but make it part of their praise to take them off, again, with, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name be glory!"

Now, Christian, just treasure up this thought, that praise is comely to the upright. There are a great many people in the world who think a great deal of their personal appearance. How they will look in that mirror! How they will turn that hair again! How they arrange that dress! There must not be a pin awry. What does it really matter? After you have dressed yourselves as best you may, flies, bees, and insects of all kinds still excel you! When you have glorified yourselves to the pitch of Solomon, yet you cannot match the lilies—they still excel you! But that idea of comeliness ought to be turned into a better channel. If I want to make myself comely, why should I not desire to be comely in the esteem of those whose opinion is worth the having, *and comely in the eyes of God?* How can this be, then? Well, if I have, first of all, been covered with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, which are the true beauty of the Christian, then the next thing to make me comely is to praise God, to keep His praises continually on my lips! If I begin complaining and mourning when I am harshly treated, I am, as it were, but scratching my own face! It is not comely to me—I am putting on rags! I am soiling my garments. I am pulling off my gold rings. I am stripping myself of my ornaments. But if I praise God, then I am acting according to my better nature, according to my office—I am acting in the most honorable capacity possible and I am answering the end for which God made me. Do, therefore, you who want to be thought comely, be continually praising God!

And now, in the third place, another little word to help your memories and that shall be—

III. WHEN?

"Praise is comely to the upright." But when? Now-a-days that which is comely one day is not comely the next, for the fashions change so continually. But let me tell you that *the spiritual fashions never change,* and that which God declares to be comely, today, will be comely next year, and comely forever! Praise is never out of fashion, never out of season, never out of date. You may praise God and utter even the same sentiments as came from the lips of Enoch and there shall be nothing stale therein—it shall still be comely. When is it comely for Christians to praise God? My answer is always. I must comprehend all seasons and all places. It is never uncomely to praise God. When the congregation has met and the service has commenced, it is the time to lift up the voice unanimously! Oh, it is then comely to the believer to praise the Most High God! If there are but two or three who are met together in some lowly schoolroom, or a shed, or a barn, or under the forest trees—or half a dozen on the deck of a vessel, or down in the cabin or the forecastle—it matters not where, let us pitch our tent and sing one of the songs of Zion! Praise is comely to the upright from half a dozen in some back-wood settlement, or out in the bush at a settler's log hut. Sweet everywhere, it is unacceptable nowhere! Praise is comely in all such places when the saints come together. And, brothers and sisters, praise is comely from the Christian at any season. If he wakes in the morning, he sings—

"Awake! Lift up yourself, my heart
And with the angels bear your part,
Who all night long unwearied sing
High praises to the Eternal King."

His morning praise, glistening with dew, is comely. And if in the night watches he tosses restlessly on his bed, why, praise at night again is sweet—and so will it be from the believer if he can then sing the

praises of the Lord. When you are cracking your whip, you that drive a cart in the streets, why, you can sing one of the songs of Zion there! There is many a light and frothy song sung there—why should not ours be sung, too? It will be comely to the upright. When you are in the field digging, plowing, hay making, harvesting. When you good girls are at work at the needle, or the sewing machine, or book folding, or whatever it is! You mothers, rocking your cradles, or whatever it may be—praise will not seem out of place if you are upright in heart. Praise will be comely to you on all occasions!

But there are *certain occasions when praise has a peculiar beauty.* For instance, praise is comely to the upright when you are in poverty. It is easy to praise God when you have all you need. Who would not? A dog will follow you when you feed him. But to praise God when He takes away those gifts that you prize the most—oh, this is comely praise, indeed! To say, with Job, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?"—that is praise! Let me just say that when we lie upon the bed and pain shoots through us, some of us men who are a great deal more impatient than women are, do not find it very easy to praise God, then, and yet oh, it is blessed when we can tighten the heartstrings at last and get them right, and bless the Lord that lives, who will yet bring us up from languishing and restore us from the gates of the grave. Praise in the midst of bodily pain—headache, heartache, or any form of disease, is very comely to the upright! And to praise God when some beloved one on whom your heart is set is sickening—that is difficult, but it is very comely. To see him on whom all your earthly dependence is fixed, sickening and pining, and yet to say, "The Lord's will be done, and blessed be His name," oh, 'tis so comely that I do not know that the angels in heaven have, any of them, such a piece of praise, so rich and rare as that of the song of resignation when beloved ones are going! And when the earth rattles on the coffin lid of a dear child, or a friend, or a beloved wife, then to be able to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord"—such praise as that is very comely to the upright. And when these things meet—when deaths, sicknesses and poverty come like many seas meeting at one place—let me tell you that the harder it is to sing, the more comely it is to do it! There is no music, perhaps, that we relish so much as the song of the nightingale, and that is because it sings in the night. And there is no praise more acceptable to God than the songs of His people in the night when they can praise Him under distress. I have read a saying by an old writer that God's birds sing best in cages, and so they do when the cages have in them some affliction and trial. Then do they pour out their notes sweetly, magnifying the name of the Lord! If I am asked, then, when should the believer praise God; I say, especially in the time of trial!

I may say yet again, that we never praise God, I think, so acceptably as when *others are blaspheming and profaning His name*. For the believer then to venture his testimony in the teeth of all defiance, to thrust himself in the way of jeers and sneers for Christ's sake, to bless God when others curse Him—this is very comely to a cross-bearer, to a servant of Him who laid down His life for His Father's glory. And in times when you come to be slandered and your name is evilly spoken of, and your religion is said to be worthless, and your actions misrepresented, and your motives misconstrued—it is a grand thing, then, to praise God, and say—

"If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If You remember me."

At such times, again, praise is sweet.

But, beloved, there is an hour coming when praise will be comeliest of all—I mean when this mortal frame shall dissolve and our spirits shall be entering upon an unseen world. It is not every believer that dies singing. It is not necessary to his safety that he should do so, but oh, it is so comely if he can do it! As it is said to sound very sweetly over the water, so certainly over the billows of death the song of the triumphant Christian comes with special sweetness! I shall always remember with great delight one verse of a hymn which I heard from a dying Christian who had become blind just before his death—and which has always since been invested in my memory with a melody I never heard in it before—

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

Ah, it is comely to the upright to be praising God when heart and flesh are failing!

But I must leave that. I shall finish with another little word, and that is—

IV. WHOM?

Praise is comely—not to everybody—but to the upright. It is a very sad reflection that during this week some of the most glorious music that ever was composed—some of the noblest words that have ever been written, has been sung—and I do not altogether disapprove of it—but sung, I fear, by some who have no part nor lot in what they are singing! I refer to Handel's glorious music—the noblest sounds, I think, next to the songs of angels, and one of the highest and holiest enjoyments of earth to listen to! But there are singers there who know nothing of God, or of His praise. It is very sad to think of it, but then it is just the same here on Sundays—just the same. You sing, but you do not sing. The sound is there, but not the heart in the song. As for your professional singing on Sabbath—I believe that that is earthly, sensual, outright devilish! We have heard say of our friends in America that in some of their churches the choir is so much esteemed and so highly esteemed by itself, that if the congregation were to sing, they would almost frown upon them to put them out of tune, and that there is very little sound of the congregation's singing heard compared with those half a dozen perhaps as wicked singers as the music halls could find, stuck up there to glorify God by insulting Him! There has been a good deal of that done in England, too. Some of our churches have gone and picked up people according to their sweet voices and have said, "Now you praise God at so much per week." But the thing won't do—every conscience is convinced that it is wrong and the text utterly condemns it, *for praise is comely to the upright*—it is not comely to anybody else!

The upright: Did you notice that word? It is a grand word, that word, *upright*. It is not the man who goes out of his way here and there. It is not the crooked man. It is the upright man. Nobody praises God like the man that stands upright. God will have a straight musical instrument—He will not have it crooked. If we are to praise Him, we must be upright. And mark, being upright consists in perfect independence of all, except God. The upright man does not lean on anything else, but stands right straight up. Now when a man says, "I would like to be a Christian, but_____"—he is not upright. "I would be honest, but_____"—he is not upright. "I would make a profession of religion, but_____"—he is not upright. He who has two objectives, two ends, who holds with the world and holds with God; he is not upright, and he cannot praise God! But when a man has been created anew in Christ Jesus; when he has been taught what the right path is and grace given him to follow it, and who says, "Now, come fair or come foul, my trust is in the living God. I would not lie, though it would be to gain a world. Nor would I cheat, though it would be to win heaven itself. I am independent of these things, seeing that God has promised that He will never leave me, nor forsake me"; when a man thus stands upright, he makes very blessed music, and such us God can accept! But your crooked tradesmen, your merchants who can cheat, your sneaks, your fraudulent bankrupts, and I know not what besides; God wants no music out of them! It is no credit to a man to be praised by a rogue, and it is no credit to God to be praised by a man who has no character. When a man has character and lives up to it as a Christian, then it becomes honorable to God to be praised by him. If I heard a bad man speak well of God, I would say, "Ah, I do not like that! As a jewel of gold set in a swine's snout, so is a good word from such a man as that." I am sure, if I lived near any of you, and esteemed your character very highly and I heard all the blacklegs in London say what a good soul you were, I would begin to ask if you had not done something amiss, if you had not done something wrong. One of the philosophers said when he was praised by a bad man, "What have I done wrong that I should deserve to be praised by such a man as this?" And when ungodly men praise God, we might almost say, "What has God done that such a one as this should praise Him?" Praise is not comely to such—it does not seem right at all. It is either a mere form without life and, consequently, a dead thing that God cannot accept, or else it is hypocritical, and God will not accept

that. Or else it is a downright insult and that is to be avoided above all things! Praise is only comely to the upright.

Then, my dear friends are you upright? Have you, first of all, been laid flat and brought to the horizontal? If so, then you will soon come to the perpendicular! A man must be brought to lie flat before the throne of grace, confessing his own nothingness. And he must look up to the cross of Christ and rest there, or else he has not yet learned what it is to stand upright, for this, alone, can produce stability of principle—faith in the living God—and the believing man stands where all others fall! Oh, to have this uprightness of heart. If you have it, then go and praise God. It is comely to you. Cease not from it, but say, in the words of our hymn—

"I'll praise Him in life, I'll praise Him in death!
I'll praise Him as long as He lends me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now.'"

Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 130; 1 JOHN 1:4-7.

PSALM 130.

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* The most eminent of God's saints have been in the depths. Therefore, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying the cross? David saw the depths—and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths. Learn, therefore, that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God and then God's long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth! "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Do not say, "Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends."—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would often be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"

2. *Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore—

3. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His justice to its utmost severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of man, being men at the best, are sinners even at their best estate.

4. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.* If there were no mercy, there would be no love in any human heart—and there would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness! Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God, that the holiest of God's saints need to be accepted on the footing of a Mediator, to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.* There is a waiting of expectancy—we believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and so we hold out our hand for it. There is a waiting of resignation. We know not what God may do, nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace—'tis a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait for His explanations and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them!

6. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break. Many a weary patient, tossed upon the bed of pain, has waited for the morning, saying, "Would God it would be morning, for then, perhaps, I might find ease." And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning. So does David's soul

watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh, there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God! I recollect that Rutherford said, "I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that, the loving of Him will be heaven enough for me." Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful—

"To those who call, how kind You are, how good to those who seek.
But what to those who find? Ah, this, nor tongue nor pen can show
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know."

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God!

7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning sacrifice—and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the throne of God. I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed, says the Lord that dwells in Zion. May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise!

1 JOHN 1:4-7.

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us that our joy may be full! Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become a brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.* Not a light, nor the light, though He is both, but that He is Light. Scripture uses the term, light, for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is Light, and then in his usual style John, who not only tells you a truth of God, but always guards it, adds, "in whom is no darkness at all."

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not speak the truth.* Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God's people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God. No, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk. But the darkness here meant is the darkness of *sin*, the darkness of lies. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not speak the truth.

7. *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light—*not to the same degree, but in the same manner.

7. *We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.* So you see that when we walk the best—when we walk in the light as He is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order—we still need daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my soul—it does not say the blood of Jesus Christ "cleansed," but, "*cleanses.*" If guilt returns, His power may be proved again and again! There is no fear—all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

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PRAISE COMELY TO THE UPRIGHT
NO. 3460

A SERMON
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"Praise is comely for the upright."
Psalm 33:1.

THE Psalmist was full of praise, and therefore felt that he could not fully express the glory of God, but desired to enlist others in the sacred service. You hear him often calling upon sea and land, upon earth and heaven, upon mountain and valley, upon plants and creeping things, upon living creatures, upon the heavens and the heavens that are above the heavens, to assist him in magnifying the name of the Infinite Jehovah, whose praise still exceeds all the honor that can be given to Him by all His creatures. Praise has a blessed contagion in it. It is like fire—if it burns its way in one place, it will be spreading itself if it can. A man cannot praise God alone. There will always be within him a high ambition to teach others to take up the strain. He will always be longing and desiring to lead others in the same sweet employ. Now let us seem to hear across these ages the voices of those who are with their God as they cry to us, "Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, for praise is comely to the upright."

I have taken for a text that one sentence—and I will speak of it under four short words which may serve as headings—four words of question. The first is—

I. WHAT?

What is it which is so comely, so comely to the upright? It is praise, the praise of God! And this praise of God, though it is always the same thing, the same spiritual thing produced by the Spirit of God, yet takes different forms, and in each form it is still comely to the upright. It is so in *that delightful form of music in which we express with accord, hearts and voices keeping tune together, in the great congregation our sense of united adoration.* I think there is nothing more comely than the sweet songs of the sanctuary, and what our friends of the Society of Friends do without singing I scarcely know! I think they will have to recant that one thing at least when they enter heaven, for surely they cannot be silent there, where all shall join in songs like unto great thunder, and like the mighty rolling of the sea in praise of the infinite majesty of Him who was slain, but who always lives! I think we could not, anyhow, give up our song. We would feel as if the Sabbath were shorn of its bloom, as if you had plucked the flowers out of the garden of the soul! Our soul must

sing, yes, she will sing praises unto the Lord! So natural does it seem to the renewed heart to join in praise with others, that even when lying in the dungeon, after having been beaten sore with stripes, and with their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas did not only pray, but they sang praises unto God, and praise was comely there! It has been comely in many a prison where no one has heard the sound but God. It has been comely among the glens of Scotland when the Covenanters lifted up the Psalm. It has been comely in nooks and corners of England when Puritans, in fear of their lives, nevertheless magnified the name of the Lord. It has been comely at the stakes at Smithfield! Comely from Anne Askew's lips, when she was on the rack, stretched to the utmost! It has been comely anywhere when the voice has poured out itself with musical rhythm in the praise of the Most High!

But there is a second form of vocal praise which is equally comely to the upright; *the spoken praise* of God. I allude to those praises which consist of commendation of the name, and person, and service, and goodness of the Lord by private Christians to their fellow men. Think not that all praise is gathered up in singing! It is the praise of God when the mother tells her child of the goodness of Him who made the stars, and who spread the world with flowers. It is praise when the young convert tells of the joy of his heart to his companion and bids him fly to the fountain where he has washed and been made clean. It is praise, praise of a high order, too, when the advanced believer in his old age tells of the faithfulness of God, and how not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised! And while praise seems to sit in such a comely manner upon the young convert, so that it seems to be the most natural thing in all the world for him to praise, it is equally comely in the aged Christian, for he seems to feel that if such a man as he, preserved so long, did not praise God, the very stones in the street would cry out against him!

That praise which consists in living, loving, personal testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord is always comely to the upright. I wish that some Christians would remember that murmuring is not comely. That envying others, that finding fault, that ambition, that desiring greater things—that all these are not comely, but the speaking well of His name, the testimony to His faithfulness in providence and to His goodness in grace—this is comely to the upright.

But the truest praise, perhaps, *is that which is not expressed in language, because it could not be—meditative praise.* I fear there is but little of this in London. I am not sure that there is any more of it in the country, though there ought to be a great deal more of it in both. I mean such praise as this—when, like David, we sit before the Lord and think of His exceeding bounty and then say, "What am I, and what is my Father's house that You have brought me here?" I mean the praise that makes the tear unbidden come to the eyes—not the tear of sorrow, but the tear of

overwhelming gratitude for the goodness of God, so that the soul, without making use of words, seems to say—

"When all Your mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view,
I'm lost in wonder, love, and praise."

When thoughts become too heavy for words to carry them—when they break the backs of words, as it were. When "expressive silence," as the poet calls it, has to come to the rescue and the man is compelled rather to fall prostrate before the infinite majesty and goodness than to venture on a sonnet that would fall flat in the presence of such emotions!—

"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
But Your compassions are divine."

Where, then, shall it be found possible for words and for tongues to worthily express our praise? I am sure it would be a very refreshing thing to us all—acceptable to God and very blessed to ourselves—if we had more of this quiet praise! It would be refreshing if we could get to some of those cool retreats, those silent shades that with prayer and praise agree, and seem, by God's kind bounty, made for those who would worship Him. Such praise is comely to the upright. I like to think of George Herbert and those other holy men who led meditative lives walking through the Parsonage Garden and up and down by the banks of the brook, singing within themselves of their God. It seems to fit them as a beautiful vest that is comely upon their shoulders when they are engaged in the meditative praise of God!

But one more remark. Sometimes praise does not even fall into the form of meditation, much less of conversation or of song. It becomes—what shall I call it?—*habitual praise—the spirit of praise*. I will indicate one or two brothers and sisters in this congregation who, if it were the depth of winter, would create a smile in my vestry if they would but enter it—that, whenever I meet them, their eyes sparkle like stars, their lips drop pearls, they never seem to be unhappy, never doubting, never distrustful. They are sure to speak every Sabbath morning, "We shall have a good day today. There has been much prayer about it and God always answers prayer. You will be graciously helped through it. Be of good courage." And on Sunday night it is, "This has been a good Sunday." In fact, they say they never have anything but good Sabbaths! They always seem to be fed and they are always rejoicing. And if you talk to them, they are not the youngest people in the congregation, perhaps—they may not be the richest, they may not be in the best circumstances, but they are always the most cheerful, always the most happy and they can say—

"We would not change our blest estate
For all the world calls good and great."

Now, believe me, I think this is most comely to the upright when men or women shall get into the spirit of praise so that they shall always be

blessing God. Why, it is such a beautiful dress to wear that they shine in the family, they shine in business, they shine in the church, they shine in the eyes of angels who think that they must be angels, and too, they have got into such an angelic frame of mind! Such a man was Bernard Gilpin, who always said "it was all for the best." If it was fair, it was all for the best. Or if there had been any rain, it was all for the best. Were it hot or were it cold, it was all for the best! Bernard was arrested by the Queen's order to be brought to London to be burned, but he said it was all for the best. The soldiers, knowing of this expression of his, jeered him all along the journey with blasphemies, and when his horse fell and he broke his leg, they laughed, but he said it was all for the best. He was laid upon the road for a surgeon to set his bones, but he said it was all for the best, and so it proved to be, for this delayed them—and when they got just within sight of London they could hear the bells ringing and, on enquiry, they learned that Queen Mary was dead and Queen Elizabeth had succeeded—so that Mr. Bernard Gilpin had arrived in London just three days too late to be burned—and he was quite correct in saying that it was all for the best! But I have no doubt that if he had gone to the stake he would have said it was all for the beat, and certainly his emancipated spirit, as it left its charred ashes behind, would have sung, "Yes, it is all for the best." Now that state of heart, not the act of praise, but the *spirit* of praise, in which the soul seems to swim in praise as the fish swims in the river, and to bathe and perfume itself with thanksgiving, as Esther perfumed herself in Ahasuerus's palace—such a state of heart as this is extremely comely to the upright! That is the answer to the question—What? The next question is—

II. WHY?

Why is praise so befitting and becoming to the upright? We answer that it is so, and you will soon see it, *from the nature of things*. Wings are most becoming to an angel. You would not think of drawing one of those spirits that are like flames of fire without giving it wings. What for? Why, to mount with, to make him ethereal, to quicken his motions. Well, and the Christian without praise would be without his wings! What is he to mount with? He does not wish to grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys, but how is he to mount? Prayer gives him one wing, but praise must give him the other—and when he gets prayer and praise, oh, how he seems to leave sublunary things behind and away he flies, borne by the strong help of the eternal Spirit up to—

"Where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul."

Take away the Christian's power of praising God and you make him a poor earthworm, bound here with doubts, fears and cares. But let him but kindle in his soul the flame that burns in heaven of seraphic love to God and away he mounts!

Praise is comely to the upright, in the next place, *from the office of the believer*. When Aaron put on his breast-plate, his belt, his ephod and his bells, everyone said that the garment was comely to Aaron. It would not have been comely to us because we would have no right to wear it, but the office of Aaron made it comely to him. You would not think it comely if I were to come here to preach to you tonight with a red coat on. You would have said, "No, that red coat is exceedingly comely to the soldier—it suits him—but it does not suit the minister." Now the Christian is a priest and praise is a part of the garment of a priest that he must wear. Praise is the employment of a priest. Inasmuch as we are kings and priests unto God, it becomes us that we should swing that golden censor that is full of thanksgiving, and that we should stand before the golden altar and continually offer sacrifice and praise acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. It suits our nature and suits our office and, therefore, it is comely to the upright.

Praise is comely to the upright *as flowers and fruits are comely to a plant*. There never was a plant but what the fruit it bore suited it and the greatest comeliness to the apple tree in the garden is to see it loaded with its wondrous blossoms, the most beautiful things in all the world—and then afterwards to see the boughs hanging down with luscious fruit! The comeliness of a plant lies in its coming to perfection and bearing its fruit. So with Christians; the barren Christian has no comeliness, but the comeliness of the Christian, his *spiritual* comeliness, lies in his bringing forth fruit unto God—and what is this but praise? "Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me," says the Lord. Man is made on purpose to glorify God. It is his chief end. Then his chief end is comely to him. If he answers his end, he is comely to Him who made him, and inasmuch as our chief end is to glorify God, praise becomes comely to the upright.

Once again, praise is comely to the upright *as a crown is comely to a king*. It is his highest honor, his chief dignity. It is one of our highest honors to praise God—praise Him that we are His elected, His begotten—that we are His redeemed, His sanctified, His preserved people. When we get to this, we occupy as high a stand as we well can do short of heaven! And in heaven I know not if we shall ever seem more comely than when we are, with all the hosts of angels, praising and magnifying the name of the Lord! When we praise God, we do, as it were, put on our crowns, as when they, before the throne of God, praise God. They also come with their crowns, but make it part of their praise to take them off, again, with, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name be glory!"

Now, Christian, just treasure up this thought, that praise is comely to the upright. There are a great many people in the world who think a great deal of their personal appearance. How they will look in that mirror! How they will turn that hair again! How they arrange that dress! There must not be a pin awry. What does it really matter? After you have dressed yourselves as best you may, flies, bees, and insects of all kinds

still excel you! When you have glorified yourselves to the pitch of Solomon, yet you cannot match the lilies—they still excel you! But that idea of comeliness ought to be turned into a better channel. If I want to make myself comely, why should I not desire to be comely in the esteem of those whose opinion is worth the having, *and comely in the eyes of God?* How can this be, then? Well, if I have, first of all, been covered with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, which are the true beauty of the Christian, then the next thing to make me comely is to praise God, to keep His praises continually on my lips! If I begin complaining and mourning when I am harshly treated, I am, as it were, but scratching my own face! It is not comely to me—I am putting on rags! I am soiling my garments. I am pulling off my gold rings. I am stripping myself of my ornaments. But if I praise God, then I am acting according to my better nature, according to my office—I am acting in the most honorable capacity possible and I am answering the end for which God made me. Do, therefore, you who want to be thought comely, be continually praising God!

And now, in the third place, another little word to help your memories and that shall be—

III. WHEN?

"Praise is comely to the upright." But when? Now-a-days that which is comely one day is not comely the next, for the fashions change so continually. But let me tell you that *the spiritual fashions never change*, and that which God declares to be comely, today, will be comely next year, and comely forever! Praise is never out of fashion, never out of season, never out of date. You may praise God and utter even the same sentiments as came from the lips of Enoch and there shall be nothing stale therein—it shall still be comely. When is it comely for Christians to praise God? My answer is always. I must comprehend all seasons and all places. It is never uncomely to praise God. When the congregation has met and the service has commenced, it is the time to lift up the voice unanimously! Oh, it is then comely to the believer to praise the Most High God! If there are but two or three who are met together in some lowly schoolroom, or a shed, or a barn, or under the forest trees—or half a dozen on the deck of a vessel, or down in the cabin or the forecastle—it matters not where, let us pitch our tent and sing one of the songs of Zion! Praise is comely to the upright from half a dozen in some back-wood settlement, or out in the bush at a settler's log hut. Sweet everywhere, it is unacceptable nowhere! Praise is comely in all such places when the saints come together. And, brothers and sisters, praise is comely from the Christian at any season. If he wakes in the morning, he sings—

"Awake! Lift up yourself, my heart
And with the angels bear your part,
Who all night long unwearied sing
High praises to the Eternal King."

His morning praise, glistening with dew, is comely. And if in the night watches he tosses restlessly on his bed, why, praise at night again is sweet—and so will it be from the believer if he can then sing the praises of the Lord. When you are cracking your whip, you that drive a cart in the streets, why, you can sing one of the songs of Zion there! There is many a light and frothy song sung there—why should not ours be sung, too? It will be comely to the upright. When you are in the field digging, plowing, hay making, harvesting. When you good girls are at work at the needle, or the sewing machine, or book folding, or whatever it is! You mothers, rocking your cradles, or whatever it may be—praise will not seem out of place if you are upright in heart. Praise will be comely to you on all occasions!

But there are *certain occasions when praise has a peculiar beauty.* For instance, praise is comely to the upright when you are in poverty. It is easy to praise God when you have all you need. Who would not? A dog will follow you when you feed him. But to praise God when He takes away those gifts that you prize the most—oh, this is comely praise, indeed! To say, with Job, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?"—that is praise! Let me just say that when we lie upon the bed and pain shoots through us, some of us men who are a great deal more impatient than women are, do not find it very easy to praise God, then, and yet oh, it is blessed when we can tighten the heartstrings at last and get them right, and bless the Lord that lives, who will yet bring us up from languishing and restore us from the gates of the grave. Praise in the midst of bodily pain—headache, heartache, or any form of disease, is very comely to the upright! And to praise God when some beloved one on whom your heart is set is sickening—that is difficult, but it is very comely. To see him on whom all your earthly dependence is fixed, sickening and pining, and yet to say, "The Lord's will be done, and blessed be His name," oh, 'tis so comely that I do not know that the angels in heaven have, any of them, such a piece of praise, so rich and rare as that of the song of resignation when beloved ones are going! And when the earth rattles on the coffin lid of a dear child, or a friend, or a beloved wife, then to be able to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord"—such praise as that is very comely to the upright. And when these things meet—when deaths, sicknesses and poverty come like many seas meeting at one place—let me tell you that the harder it is to sing, the more comely it is to do it! There is no music, perhaps, that we relish so much as the song of the nightingale, and that is because it sings in the night. And there is no praise more acceptable to God than the songs of His people in the night when they can praise Him under distress. I have read a saying by an old writer that God's birds sing best in cages, and so they do when the cages have in them some affliction and trial. Then do they pour out their notes

sweetly, magnifying the name of the Lord! If I am asked, then, when should the believer praise God; I say, especially in the time of trial!

I may say yet again, that we never praise God, I think, so acceptably as when *others are blaspheming and profaning His name*. For the believer then to venture his testimony in the teeth of all defiance, to thrust himself in the way of jeers and sneers for Christ's sake, to bless God when others curse Him—this is very comely to a cross-bearer, to a servant of Him who laid down His life for His Father's glory. And in times when you come to be slandered and your name is evilly spoken of, and your religion is said to be worthless, and your actions misrepresented, and your motives misconstrued—it is a grand thing, then, to praise God, and say—

"If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If You remember me."

At such times, again, praise is sweet.

But, beloved, there is an hour coming when praise will be comeliest of all—I mean when this mortal frame shall dissolve and our spirits shall be entering upon an unseen world. It is not every believer that dies singing. It is not necessary to his safety that he should do so, but oh, it is so comely if he can do it! As it is said to sound very sweetly over the water, so certainly over the billows of death the song of the triumphant Christian comes with special sweetness! I shall always remember with great delight one verse of a hymn which I heard from a dying Christian who had become blind just before his death—and which has always since been invested in my memory with a melody I never heard in it before—

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

Ah, it is comely to the upright to be praising God when heart and flesh are failing!

But I must leave that. I shall finish with another little word, and that is—

IV. WHOM?

Praise is comely—not to everybody—but to the upright. It is a very sad reflection that during this week some of the most glorious music that ever was composed—some of the noblest words that have ever been written, has been sung—and I do not altogether disapprove of it—but sung, I fear, by some who have no part nor lot in what they are singing! I refer to Handel's glorious music—the noblest sounds, I think, next to the songs of angels, and one of the highest and holiest enjoyments of earth to listen to! But there are singers there who know nothing of God, or of His praise. It is very sad to think of it, but then it is just the same here on Sundays—just the same. You sing, but you do not sing. The sound is

there, but not the heart in the song. As for your professional singing on Sabbath—I believe that that is earthly, sensual, outright devilish! We have heard say of our friends in America that in some of their churches the choir is so much esteemed and so highly esteemed by itself, that if the congregation were to sing, they would almost frown upon them to put them out of tune, and that there is very little sound of the congregation's singing heard compared with those half a dozen perhaps as wicked singers as the music halls could find, stuck up there to glorify God by insulting Him! There has been a good deal of that done in England, too. Some of our churches have gone and picked up people according to their sweet voices and have said, "Now you praise God at so much per week." But the thing won't do—every conscience is convinced that it is wrong and the text utterly condemns it, *for praise is comely to the upright*—it is not comely to anybody else!

The upright: Did you notice that word? It is a grand word, that word, *upright*. It is not the man who goes out of his way here and there. It is not the crooked man. It is the upright man. Nobody praises God like the man that stands upright. God will have a straight musical instrument—He will not have it crooked. If we are to praise Him, we must be upright. And mark, being upright consists in perfect independence of all, except God. The upright man does not lean on anything else, but stands right straight up. Now when a man says, "I would like to be a Christian, but_____"—he is not upright. "I would be honest, but_____"—he is not upright. "I would make a profession of religion, but_____"—he is not upright. He who has two objectives, two ends, who holds with the world and holds with God; he is not upright, and he cannot praise God! But when a man has been created anew in Christ Jesus; when he has been taught what the right path is and grace given him to follow it, and who says, "Now, come fair or come foul, my trust is in the living God. I would not lie, though it would be to gain a world. Nor would I cheat, though it would be to win heaven itself. I am independent of these things, seeing that God has promised that He will never leave me, nor forsake me"; when a man thus stands upright, he makes very blessed music, and such us God can accept! But your crooked tradesmen, your merchants who can cheat, your sneaks, your fraudulent bankrupts, and I know not what besides; God wants no music out of them! It is no credit to a man to be praised by a rogue, and it is no credit to God to be praised by a man who has no character. When a man has character and lives up to it as a Christian, then it becomes honorable to God to be praised by him. If I heard a bad man speak well of God, I would say, "Ah, I do not like that! As a jewel of gold set in a swine's snout, so is a good word from such a man as that." I am sure, if I lived near any of you, and esteemed your character very highly and I heard all the blacklegs in London say what a good soul you were, I would begin to ask if you had not done something amiss, if you had not done something wrong. One of the philosophers

said when he was praised by a bad man, "What have I done wrong that I should deserve to be praised by such a man as this?" And when ungodly men praise God, we might almost say, "What has God done that such a one as this should praise Him?" Praise is not comely to such—it does not seem right at all. It is either a mere form without life and, consequently, a dead thing that God cannot accept, or else it is hypocritical, and God will not accept that. Or else it is a downright insult and that is to be avoided above all things! Praise is only comely to the upright.

Then, my dear friends are you upright? Have you, first of all, been laid flat and brought to the horizontal? If so, then you will soon come to the perpendicular! A man must be brought to lie flat before the throne of grace, confessing his own nothingness. And he must look up to the cross of Christ and rest there, or else he has not yet learned what it is to stand upright, for this, alone, can produce stability of principle—faith in the living God—and the believing man stands where all others fall! Oh, to have this uprightness of heart. If you have it, then go and praise God. It is comely to you. Cease not from it, but say, in the words of our hymn—

"I'll praise Him in life, I'll praise Him in death!
I'll praise Him as long as He lends me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now.'"

Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 130; 1 JOHN 1:4-7.

PSALM 130.

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* The most eminent of God's saints have been in the depths. Therefore, should I murmur if I have to endure trials? What am I that I should be exempt from warfare? How can I expect to win the crown without first carrying the cross? David saw the depths—and so must you and I. But David learned to cry to God out of the depths. Learn, therefore, that there is no place so deep but prayer can reach from the bottom of it up to God and then God's long arm can reach to the bottom and bring us up out of the depth! "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Do not say, "Out of the depths have I talked to my neighbors and sought consolation from my friends."—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would often be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"

2. *Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* Now a main part of prayer must be occupied by confession and the Psalmist proceeds, therefore—

3. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* That is to say, apart from Christ, if God exercises His justice to its utmost

severity, the best of men must fall, for the best of man, being men at the best, are sinners even at their best estate.

4. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.* If there were no mercy, there would be no love in any human heart—and there would be an end to religion if there were an end to forgiveness! Here let us observe that the best of men dare not stand before an absolute God, that the holiest of God's saints need to be accepted on the footing of a Mediator, to receive forgiveness of sins.

5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.* There is a waiting of expectancy—we believe that He is about to give us the mercy, and so we hold out our hand for it. There is a waiting of resignation. We know not what God may do, nor when He may appear, but we wait. Aaron held his peace—'tis a great virtue to wait for God when we know not what He does, but to wait for His explanations and be content to go without explanations if He does not choose to give them!

6. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* And many a mariner has watched for the morning with an awful anxiety, for he could not know where his vessel was until the day should break. Many a weary patient, tossed upon the bed of pain, has waited for the morning, saying, "Would God it would be morning, for then, perhaps, I might find ease." And you know that sometimes the watchers upon the castle top, who have to be guarding the ramparts against the adversary by night, watch for the morning. So does David's soul watch. Lord, if I may not have You, permit me to watch for You. Oh, there is some happiness even in waiting for an absent God! I recollect that Rutherford said, "I do not see how I can be unhappy, for if Christ will not love me, if He will but permit me to love Him, and I feel I cannot help doing that, the loving of Him will be heaven enough for me." Waiting for God is sweet, inexpressibly delightful—

> ***"To those who call, how kind You are, how good to those who seek.***
> ***But what to those who find? Ah, this, nor tongue nor pen can show***
> ***The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know."***

Happy are they who, having waited patiently, at last behold their God!

7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* He shall do this in a double and perfect way—He shall redeem us from the effect of all our iniquities through the atoning sacrifice—and from the presence of all iniquity by His sanctifying Spirit. They are without fault before the throne of God. I will purge their blood that I have not cleansed, says the Lord that dwells in Zion. May my soul have a part and lot in this precious promise!

1 JOHN 1:4-7.

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their

cup. But the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us that our joy may be full! Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad, the fact that Jesus has become a brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.* Not a light, nor the light, though He is both, but that He is Light. Scripture uses the term, light, for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is Light, and then in his usual style John, who not only tells you a truth of God, but always guards it, adds, "in whom is no darkness at all."

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not speak the truth.* Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God's people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God. No, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk. But the darkness here meant is the darkness of *sin*, the darkness of lies. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied and do not speak the truth.

7. *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light*—not to the same degree, but in the same manner.

7. *We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.* So you see that when we walk the best—when we walk in the light as He is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order—we still need daily cleansing. It does not say—mark this, O my soul—it does not say the blood of Jesus Christ "cleansed," but, *"cleanses."* If guilt returns, His power may be proved again and again! There is no fear—all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

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THE WELCOME VISITOR
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"And when she had so said, she went her way, and secretly called Mary, her sister, saying, The Master is come, and calls for you. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews who were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goes unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died."
John 11:28-32.

IT seems that Martha had heard of Christ's coming, and Mary had not. Therefore Martha rose up hastily and went to meet the Master, while Mary sat still in the house. From this we gather that genuine believers may, through some unexplained cause, be at the same time in very different states of mind. Martha may have heard of the Lord and seen the Lord. And Mary, an equally loving heart, not having known of His presence, may, therefore, have missed the privilege of fellowship with Him. Who shall say that Martha was better than Mary? Who shall censure the one, or approve the other? Now, beloved, You may be tonight, yourselves, though true believers in Jesus, in different conditions. I may have a Martha here whose happiness it is to be in rapt fellowship with Christ. You have already gone to Him and told Him of your grief—you may have heard His answer to your story and you may have been able by faith to say—"I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." And you may be full of peace and full of joy. On the other hand, sitting near you may be a person equally gracious as yourself who can get no farther than the cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" Dear Martha, condemn not Mary. Dear Mary, condemn not yourself! Martha, be ready to speak the word of comfort to Mary. Mary, be ready to receive that word of comfort and, in obedience to it, rise up quickly and, in imitation of your sister, go and cast yourself, as she has already done, at the Savior's feet. I must not say, because I have not all the joy my brother has, that I am no true child of God. Children are equally children in your household, though one is little and the other is full grown, and they are equally dear to you, though one is sick and the other in good

health—though one is quick at his letters and another is but a dull scholar. The love of Christ is not measured out to us according to our conditions or attainments. He loves us irrespective of all these. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He loves all His own and they must not judge Him by what they feel, nor measure His love by a sense of their own lack of love.

Hoping that the Lord will now bless the word to all of us who are His own people, I shall speak of two things—a visit *from* the Master—a visit *to* the master.

I. HERE IS A VISIT FROM THE MASTER.

Martha came and said to Mary, "The Master is come"—or as we might read it truly, "The Master is here and calls for you." "The Master is come." "The Master is here."

Beloved Friends who are just now without the present fellowship with Christ, which you fondly desire, permit me to whisper this in your ear—"The Master is here! The Master is here!" We cannot come round and whisper it secretly as Martha did, but take the message, each one of you, to yourself—"The Master is here."

He is here, for He is accustomed to be where His Word is preached with sincerity of heart. He is accustomed to be wherever His saints are gathered together in His name. We have His own dear word for this—the best pledge we can have—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We have met in His name, we have met for His worship, we have met to preach His gospel—and the Master is here! We are sure He is here, for He always keeps His word. He never fails any of His promises!

He is here, for some of us feel His presence. Had Mary said to Martha, How do you know that the Master is come? she would have answered, "Why I have spoken with Him and He has spoken to me." Well, there are some among us who can say, "He has spoken to us." Did we not hear Him speaking when we were singing that hymn just now?—

"My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights.
The glory of my brightest days,
The comfort of my nights."

Did not we perceive Him to be near some of us, when we were singing—

"Oh, see how Jesus trusts Himself
Unto our childish love,
As though, by His free ways with us,
Our earnestness to prove"?

I, for one, did, if none besides! I can bear good witness to you that are languishing for His company—"The Master is here!"

And mark, He is here none the less surely because you have not, as yet, found it out, for a fact does not depend upon our cognizance of it, though our comfort may be materially affected thereby. The Master was at Bethany, though Mary had not heard an inkling of the good tidings. There she sat, her eyes red with weeping, and her whole soul in the grave

with her brother Lazarus. Yet Jesus was there for all that. Make the case your own—though you may have come here troubled with all the week's cares—though while you have been sitting here the thought of something that will happen tomorrow has been depressing you—though some bodily weakness has been holding you down when you would lift up your spirit towards God, yet that does not alter the fact—"the Master is come." The Master is here. Oh, there was Mary sighing, "If only Christ had been here! Oh, if only Christ would come." And there He was! And perhaps you are saying, "Oh, that He were near me!" He is near you right now! You sigh for what you have, and pine for that which is near you! You think not, like Mary Magdalene, that He stands in this garden. You are asking, "Where have you laid Him?" While your joy and comfort seem to you dead, He, whose absence you mourn, stands present before you! Oh, that He would but open those eyes of yours, or rather that He would open your heart, by saying to you, "Mary!" Let Him but speak one word right home to you, personally, and you will answer with gladness, "Rabboni!" The Master is come here, though you as yet have not perceived Him.

That word, "The *Master*," has a sweet ring about it. He *is* the Master. He that is come is earth's Master. What are your cares? He can relieve them! What are your troubles? He can overcome them and sweep them out of the way! The Master has come. "Cast your burden on the Lord: He will sustain you." He is hell's Master. Are you beset with fierce temptations and foul insinuations of the arch-fiend? The Master has come! Oh, lift your head, you captive daughter of Zion, for your bands are broken! The Breaker is come up before them. Their king shall pass before them and the Lord on the head of them. He who has come is no menial servant, but the right royal Master, Himself. The Master is come! What does it matter though your heart now seems cold as a stone and your spirit is cast down within you? What if death has set up its adamantine throne in your breast? The Master has come and His presence can thaw the ice, dissolve the rock, and bring you all the graces of the Spirit, and all the blessings of heaven that your soul can possibly require! "The Master is come"—does not that touch your soul and fire your passions? Whose Master is He but your own? And what a Master! No taskmaster, no slave's master, but such a Master that His absolute sovereignty inspires you with the sweetest confidence, for He binds you with the bonds of love and draws you with the cords of a man. Master, indeed, is He! Yes, Lord and sole Master of your soul's inmost care if you are what you profess to be. The Master whose scepter is the scepter of reed which He carried in His hand when He was made a scorn and scoffing for you! The Master whose crown is the crown of thorns which He wore for your sins when He accomplished your redemption! Your Master! You shall call Him no more Baali, but Ishi shall His name be called! He is only Master in that same sense in which the tender loving

husband is the master of the house. Love makes Him supreme, for He is Master in the art of love and, therefore, Master of our loving hearts. How sweetly does, "My Master," sound! "My Master." Why, if nothing else might bestir us to get up and run to meet Him, it should be the sound of that blessed word, "The Master is here: the Master has come."

But Martha added—and it is a very weighty addition (may the Holy Spirit make application of it to your heart)—"and calls for you." "But is that true?" asks one, "Does He call for *me?"* Dear brother, dear sister, I know that if I say He does, I shall not speak without His guarantee, for when He comes into a congregation, He calls for all His own! He speaks, and He says to all whom He loves, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." I know He does because love always delights in fellowship with the object that is loved! Jesus loved you before the earth was! His delights were with the sons of men from old eternity! He loved you so well that He could not stay in heaven without you, so He came here to seek you and to save you! And now it gives His heart joy to be near you. He says, "Let Me hear your voice. Let Me see your face, for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely." I tell you it is Christ's heaven to hear the voices of His people! It is that for which He left heaven—that He might give them voices with which to praise Him. Do you think He loved you so and will live without you? No, He calls for you!

What is His Word, indeed, all through, but a call to His own beloved to come to Him? What are Sabbaths but calls in which He says, "Come away! Come away, My beloved, from the noise and turmoil of the city, and come into the quiet places where My sheep lie down and feed"? What are your troubles but calls to you in which, with somewhat of harshness as it seems to you, but with an inner depth of love, He says, "Away My beloved, from all earthly delights, to find your all in Me"? What is the Communion of the Lord's Supper but another call to you, "Come unto Me"? The bread which you shall eat, and the wine which you shall drink—these are for yourself—but the call which is encompassed by them as by symbols, is for each one of you! The Master is here, and calls for you—for each one! "Oh, but" says Mary, "my eyes are bleared with weeping." He calls for you, you red-eyed mourner! "Yes, but my heart is heavy with a sad affliction." He calls for you, you burdened sufferer! "Yes, but I have been full of levity all the week and have forgotten Him. "He calls you that He may cleanse you yet again! "Ah, but I have denied Him." What says He but, "Go, and tell My disciples, and Peter"? He calls for you, that He may forgive you yet again, and may say to you, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" I care not who you are, if you are one of His, the Master is come and calls for you!

"Why," says one, "no Christian has spoken to me for a long while." But the Master calls for you! "But I seem so solitary in this great metropolis, and though I know my Master, I do not know any of His people." Never mind His people! The Master is come, and calls for you. "Yes, but I think

if I am one of His, I must be at the very tail end of the catalog, and the last of all." He calls for you—for *you*. Oh, may that Word now come home and may each one feel, "If He calls for me, there is such condescension in that call, such tender memories of my weakness, such consideration for my distance, and my forgetfulness, that I will loiter no longer. Is the Master come? Lo, I am ready for Him! Does the Master call? Lo, my spirit answers, 'Come, Master, my heart's doors are flung wide open! Come and sit on the throne of my heart! Enter in and sup with me and I with You, and make this a gladsome season of intimate fellowship between my soul and her Lord.'" Turning now to our second part, let us talk awhile of—

II. A VISIT TO THE MASTER.

It follows on the first as a fit sequence. We never come to Christ till Christ comes to us. "Draw me—I will run after You." That is the order. It is not, "We will run after You, Lord—draw us." When a soul is saying, as we sung in the hymn just now—

"If You have drawn a thousand times,
Oh, draw me yet again"

—then, beloved, He is drawing us! When we are praying to be drawn, we are being drawn all the while!

In answer to the Lord's visit, you will notice the conduct of Mary. She rose up quickly. She bestirred herself. Oh, let each one of our souls now say, "Has the Lord called for me? Why, then, should I loiter or linger for a single moment? I will get up this very moment. I will say, 'My Lord, I have come to You. You have called me, and here I am.'" Oh, for grace to shake off the sorrow that makes some hearts sit still! Mary's dear brother was newly laid in the tomb, but she rose up quickly to go and meet her Master. Dear mother, forget for a few minutes that dear unburied child still in the house. Forget awhile, dear husband that sick wife of yours towards whom your heart so naturally flies. Forget, beloved, just now, all that you have suffered, all that you expect to suffer; all that you have lost or may be losing. The Master is come, and calls for you! Rise up quickly! Let not these things constrain you to inactivity of spirit, but rise up, now, and, by His grace, come away from them! Mary bestirred herself. She put on her best efforts that she might not tarry when He called. And then she went, we find, just as she was. She rose up quickly, it is said, and she went. She came unto Him. No sooner said than done! She arose and she came. Well, but should she not have washed her face? Tears add but little beauty to the maiden's visage. And that hair of hers, I doubt not, all disheveled—might she not have arranged that a little, and prepared her dress, and made herself trim for the Lord? Ah, that is a temptation for the mass of us—"I cannot expect to have fellowship at the table because I have not come prepared." Brothers and sisters, you ought to have come prepared, but, at the same time, if you have not, rise up quickly and come to the Master as you are! The Master had seen Mary with tears, before, for He had felt her tears upon His feet. He had seen her with

disheveled hair before, for she had wiped His feet with the hairs of her head! If you are out of order, it is not the first time Christ has seen you so. I do not think a mother's love depends upon seeing her child in its Sunday clothes. She has seen it, I guarantee you, in many a trim in which she would not wish anybody else to see it, but she has loved it none the less!

Come, then, you unprepared one! Come to Him who knows just what you are and in what state you are—He will not cast you out—only make brave to believe that when Christ calls, His call is a call to come, however unfit we may be! And oh, how promptly she left all other comforters to come to Christ! There were the Jews that came to comfort her. I dare say they did their best, but she did not stay for the Rabbi to finish his fine discourse, nor for the first scholar of the Sanhedrim to complete that dainty parable by which he hoped to charm her ears and reliever her sorrow! She went straight away to the Master, then and there! So would I have you forget that there are other comforters—forget your joys as well as your griefs—leave all for Him and let your soul be only taken up with that Great Master of yours who calls for you, for all your faculties, for all your emotions, for all your passions, for your entire self! Come right away, by His help, from everything else that would absorb any part of your being. Rise up and draw near to Him!

But it seems, beloved, that when Mary had reached the Master's feet, she had done all she could, for it is said that she fell at His feet. Ah, you remember she had once *knelt* at His feet when she washed them. She had once *sat* at His feet when she heard His Words. This time she *fell* at His feet. She could neither kneel to do Him service, nor sit to pay Him the reverence of a disciple. She fell all but in a swoon, life gone from her. She fell at His feet. Never mind, if you are at His feet, if you do but fall there! Oh, to die there—it would be life itself! Once get to Jesus and you may say, like Joab at the altar when Benaiah said, "Come away, for Solomon has sent me to slay you." "No," said Joab, "but I will die here"—and there at the horns of the altar he died! And if we must die, we will die there at His feet! Fall down at His feet! Beloved, if you do not feel you have strength for communion tonight, never mind—it does not need any!—

"Oh, for this no strength have I—
My strength is at His feet to lie."

Some of us know what it is to be scarcely able to get together two consecutive thoughts—not to be able to master a text or lay hold of a promise—still we would say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." We could lie down at the feet that were pierced and feel how sweet it is to swoon at the Savior's feet. Only get there! Let your will and heart be good to get at Him now, for the Master is here and calls for you! Come, though in the coming you should utterly fail to get enjoyment, come and fall at His feet!

Do I hear any of you saying, "Ah, but I have a heavy thought pressing at my heart, and if I come to Him, there is not much that I can say in His honor. I feel but little love, and gratitude, and joy. I could not pour out sweet spikenard from the broken box of my heart." Be it so, only pour out what you have! For what did Mary do? She said—and the Master did not chide her, though He might have—"Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." Oh, it was half cruel, for she seemed to say, "Why were You not here?" It was unbelieving in part, and yet there is a deal of faith in it—a sweet clinging to Him. Martha had said the same and it shows how often those two sisters had said to one another, "Would God the Master was here." When the brother was very sick and near to death, they were saying to one another, "Oh, if we could get the Master here!" That had been the great thought with them, so they pour it out. Beloved, when you are at Jesus' feet, if you have an unbelieving thought, if you have something that half chides Him, pour out your heart like water before the Lord—

"Let us be simple with Him then—
Not backward, stiff, and cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."

Tell Him the weakness. Tell Him the suspicion. Tell Him all the sin that has been, and all the sin that is haunting you. Tell it all to Him—and at His feet is the place to tell it! You will then be eased of your burden. Beloved, you know how Mary received consolation. It was a great day for her when she got to Christ's feet, and then the Master began to do wondrously, and very soon Lazarus was restored! So now, your first business, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, is to get to Jesus! "Oh, but Lazarus is dead." Never mind Lazarus! You get to Jesus and *He* will see to Lazarus! "Oh, but my business fails me." Never mind the business just now! Get to Jesus. "Oh, but there is sickness in my house!" Leave the sickness for a while now. The one thing is to get to Jesus and to His feet! "Oh, but my own heart is not as it should be." Forget your own heart, too, and remember Jesus! He is to you all that you need! He is made of God, unto you, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"—come to Him quickly, and you shall have all you need! "Ah," says one, "I cannot bear to think of God, for I do not love Him." "Ah," says another, "but I can bear to think of Him, for though I did not love Him, He loved me." And now you may say, "I cannot bear to think of coming to Jesus, for I do not love Him as I should." Ah, but think of Him, for He loves you! His grace to you is boundless! Now let yourself be put aside awhile, and remember this "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners." Come, then, in the strength of that!

I must close by saying a few words to those here whom I have not addressed. Perhaps there are some here to whom this message has never

come—"The Master is come and calls for you." If it were to reach them tonight, it would be the first time they ever heard it. O dear Heart, I pray it may come to you, that this may be the beginning of days with you! The Master has come. This is certain. From the highest throne in glory to the manger, to the cross and to the grave, the Master has come! That He calls for you, I think this is also certain. Let me give you a text in which, I think, He calls for you. "Whoever will, let Him come and take of the water of life freely." "Whomever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Calls He not for you, too, in this text, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"? Calls He not for you in this verse, where He bids all that labor and are heavy-laden come unto Him, that they may rest? Or in that other, "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, their shall be as snow"?

He calls for you! Believe Him! It is certainly matchless grace, but He is God and none is like He. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above your thoughts." But does your heart say, "Why, if I thought Jesus called for me, I would come"? Then He does call you! That speech of yours, "I would come," proves it! It is He that makes you feel willing! Do you long for Him? Oh, He is putting His hand in at the door of your heart and making your heart yearn for Him! Does a tear drop on the floor, and do you say, "It cannot be that such a one as I should ever live and be saved, and be Christ's"? Why, your very admiration at His grace shows that some of His grace is at work upon you. Trust in Him! Trust in Jesus whether you sink or swim! Trust that that arm can save! Trust that those pierced hands can grasp you! Trust that that heart that was gashed with a spear can feel for you! Trust yourself wholly to Him! "Go your way, your sins which are many, are forgiven you." If you have trusted Him, you are saved!

Come and cast yourself at Jesus' feet tonight! Is there no young man here to whom this shall be Christ's voice? You say you cannot believe and cannot repent—and cannot do anything? Then fall like dead at Jesus' feet and look up to Him—to Him, alone, and you shall have life! Is there no young woman here burdened in heart, to whom the Savior's feet may become a place of refuge from all her fear? I trust there is. And if I speak to someone far advanced in years, who imagines that he, at least, must be given up by mercy, it is not so! You have but a few days more to live, but the Master calls for you! Rise up quickly! May tonight witness your forsaking of your sins and your clinging to His cross! And one day you shall see His face in heaven without a veil between!

The Lord bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 16.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* That you should not be scandalized when you are put to suffering on My account—that you should not dread the offense of the cross and turn aside because of it. How considerate our Master is! It seems as if He might be angry at us if He suspected that we could be offended by anything that He did or suffered, or that we had to suffer for Him—but He knows the weakness of our flesh and, therefore, He speaks with so much elaboration of comfort.

2-4. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.* When you meet with rebuke, and slander, and jesting, and jeering against you for Christ's sake, He has told you of them—

"Temptation or pain—He has told you no less.
The heirs of salvation, you know from His Word
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

4. *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.* While they had His presence, He was like a wall of fire round about them. They did not need to be protected, then, from dangers which had not come. And the Lord has not told us yet some of the things which He will reveal to us, by-and-by, because the trial has not come. You feel as if you could not die at peace just now. You dread death. You shall have dying grace in dying moments! Do not be questioning yourself as to whether you have dying grace *now*. You do not need it *now*. You shall have it when the time comes!

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me. And none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* It often happens, that if we were to inquire a little more into the sorrow, it would vanish. They did not ask Him why He went away. They fretted because He was going. Now He tells them to whom He was going.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* It is a better thing for us in this world to have the Holy Spirit in us than to have the corporeal presence of Christ with us. We are better helped by the Holy Spirit than we would have been if Jesus had remained on earth.

8-12. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me: of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many*

things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Partly because their sorrow incapacitated them from hearing anymore; partly because their spiritual infancy did not permit them, as yet, to learn the deeper doctrines which are rather meat for men than milk for babes. O you that are teachers of others, imitate the prudence of Jesus! Do not teach people too much at once. Do not try to make a little child understand all that an advanced and experienced saint knows! Say, as your Master did, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

13, 14. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me.* Now that is a sure mark of the Holy Spirit! If there is any spirit which does not glorify Christ, it is not the Holy Spirit! It is not the Comforter. If you hear any doctrine which detracts from the dignity of Christ's nature, from the glory of Christ's person, from the perfection and the necessity of Christ's sacrifice, you may depend upon it that it is not the doctrine of God. Reject it at once! It may poison you. It cannot build you up. "He shall glorify Me."

14, 15. *For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* The things of the Father are Christ's. We learn them as Christ's. The Spirit brings them to us as Christ's and so Christ is glorified and we are comforted.

16-19. *A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him*—And that is a very sweet thing. Sometimes we are afraid to pray. Sometimes we feel as if we could not bring ourselves to prayer. But it is so sweet. "Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him." There is the essence of prayer in the desire to pray! There is really a request which Jesus Christ can read in the heart that longs to make a request and scarcely dares do it.

19, 20. *And said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.* Not merely shall your sorrow be taken away, but it shall be transformed! As the alchemist thought that he turned baser metal into gold, so in very truth by a heavenly alchemy does Christ turn the sorrow of His people, not in this case only, but in many others, into joy.

21-24. *A woman when she is in travail, has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no*

more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you. And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Up to now you have asked nothing in My name. They had asked so little that it came to nothing, and they had not yet learned the art of using His name in prayer—and a great many Christians have not learned it either! Often they say, and they say very properly, "for Jesus Christ's sake." That is good, but there is something better! Suppose a person calls at my door and asks me to relieve him, out of love to some friend of mine. That is very well. But suppose he says, "I come from that friend of yours, and he told me to use his name, and to put whatever you did for me to his account. Why, that is a stronger plea altogether! Happy are they who know how to use the name, the authority, the claims, and the rights of Jesus as an argument with which to back their prayers!

24. *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* You have got some joy, but there is room for more. Brothers and sisters, has your joy ever been full? Full? Could not you be more joyous? Oh, there have been times with some of us when we could not be more joyous than we were. We have asked, and we have received, and we have been so glad that we hardly knew how to live under the blessed delirium of gladness. We have seemed to be carried away with an intense delight because God has heard our prayers. "That your joy may be full."

25. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs.* In short, parabolic sentences.

25-27. *But the time comes, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came from God.* That is a very precious truth of God! While Jesus does pray the Father for us, yet we are not to look upon that as if Christ's prayer made the Father love us. No! Not only is it not Christ's prayer that makes the Father love us. It is not even Christ's death that makes the Father love us. Often do we repeat that verse—

"'Twas not to make the Father's love
Towards His people flame,
That Jesus, from the realms above,
On the kind errand came.
'Twas not the pangs that He endured,
Nor all the woes He bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before."

It is an exposition and display of the Father's love—and the prayer of Christ, though blessedly useful, does not make the Father love us, or

willing to grant the request. "For the Father Himself loves you." Notice the blessed condescension of Christ that He should mention His people's virtues. He says to these men that had been with Him, who really do not seem as if they had loved Him very much, and certainly were not very strong in faith, but were often in such a state of unbelief that He had to say, "Where is your faith?" Yet He says, "The Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came from God."

28-31. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now you speak plainly, and speak no proverb. Now are we sure that You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You: by this we believe that You came forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?* Are you at this moment full of faith? Do not trust yourselves. Do not begin to glory in the strength of your faith.

32. *Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.* Oh, you that say you believe tonight, beware lest tomorrow you should be scattered in unbelief and fear! Whatever faith we have is God's giving, and if it remain with us, it will be because God keeps it there! There is not one among us that has any faith to spare. We do not know but that the very hour is come, even now, that will try us and make us ask whether we have any faith at all.

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.* There is a blessed word of good cheer for us, everyone!

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TO THE RESCUE
NO. 3462

A SERMON
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"Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?" Isaiah 49:24.

IN the days when this prophecy was written, there were certain great nations of the earth that sought and obtained their wealth, not by commerce, but by force—not by fair trading, but by fiercely invading their richer neighbors. The Babylonians and the Chaldeans gathered together great armies and then pounced upon small territories, such as those at Israel and Judea, and carried off all the substance of the inhabitants as a prey. When the marauding host, flushed with victory, was returning home with its booty, it would have been a very dangerous thing to attempt to rescue the spoil. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?" What a great king has captured and what his mighty hosts have fought for—shall this be taken from them? Where are the warriors that have strength and numbers enough to attack the victors as they return with the spoil? Sometimes treaties were broken and then the Babylonians made that a pretext for taking the people away captive. They were "lawful captives," as they had broken certain conditions and made themselves subject, according to the articles of war, to be lawfully taken prisoners. Now where such is the case, when enraged kings and princes have taken cities which have proved traitorous to them, shall anybody deliver the prisoners? Who shall step in between the monarch and his righteous captive? That is the literal meaning of the verse, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?" It was first applicable to the Jewish people. They were taken into captivity in Babylon. Shall they ever be set free?

God declared that they should be delivered, and so they were. In due time they came up without price or reward into their own land. God had promised it by His Word, and by His providence He performed it. Leaving, however, this primary literal interpretation, we intend to draw your attention to the *spiritual* sense, and to ask the question concerning some of you whom it most intimately concerns. If it should appear that you are "prisoners," and that, according to the conditions of your captivity, you are "lawful captives," you will see and feel the urgency of the matter! "Is it possible for you to be set free?" Is there any arm that has strength enough to tear off your fetters? We will begin by describing—

I. THE NATURAL CAPTIVITY IN WHICH EVERY UNREGENERATED MAN IS HELD.

Every creature of Adam born, who has not been saved by grace, is a prisoner to sin. *He is a lawful captive to God's law.* His nature is in thralldom under the power and dominion of sin, for that nature is evil. The man does not sin by accident—he sins because he wills to sin! He wishes to do it—he takes delight in it—he casts his heart into it. As the fish naturally swims in the stream, so the unconverted man finds sin congenial to his depraved instincts. He chooses to do that which is evil, and revels therein! He omits to do that which is good, and recoils from it. Who shall set free the man whose nature is thus enslaved? Moreover, the chains of habit become more and more highly riveted on those who indulge their lusts, but never restrain their passions. Time was when you hesitated whether to follow the pleasure that allured you, or to heed the conscience that would restrain you. Then you chose the wrong—and now the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than you can change your guilty propensities—so hard is it for the man accustomed to do evil to learn to do well! As well try to reverse the course of the sun, or make the waters of Niagara return to their source, or check the north wind in its fury, or stop the rising tide, as hope to make men cease from ways which by constant repetition and steady accumulation over a long course of years have acquired the force of a natural disposition and produced an unmistakable type of character! Unhappily, too, custom, of which it has been well said that it is the law of fools, gives sanction to vices which would otherwise be abhorrent. A man will willingly consent to be the slave of sin because his fellow man sins after the same fashion. He must do this and that because his neighbors or his comrades do the same. Why should he be different? Why should he swim against the general current? If others see no harm, feel no compunction and find it pleasant sport, why should he not join them? Is it not always livelier to follow the multitude? What road is better than the broad road where all sorts of good company may be met with? And, brethren, the less scrupulous men are, the more self-complacent they become. Mirth, it would seem, extracts the venom from sin, and wit can robe ribaldry in innocence. But be not deceived! The customs you adopt and the habits you cherish combine with the depravity of your own nature to weld a chain which the strength of Hercules could not snap—a chain that makes the creature an abject slave to the flesh, instead of a liege subject of his adorable Creator.

Each man, according to his own order, *has some peculiar chain to bind and chafe him*. There are aberrations to which the constitution is prone. There are temptations to which one's business or employment expose him. And there may be entanglements in the social relationships and the home circle that involve a heavy bondage. Raging passions, restless anxieties and rigorous circumstances carry men far out to sea and leave them to the tender mercy of the waves and breakers. They seem to be as powerless to resist as the chaff in the wind that blows from side to side on the summer threshing floor. Like some bird borne out to sea by an impetuous hurricane, they cannot stem the torrent! They are hurried

away whether they will it or not. But, alas, alas, their will concurs! They do not struggle or contend for the right, but where their passions bear them, there do they float! 'Tis so with some men. The slavery of other men consists in their self-righteousness. They do not hold themselves guilty of any crime. They have always acquitted themselves to their own satisfaction. As for their transgressions, they are trifles! They account themselves as good as their neighbors in all respects and in some points better. And because of this, is their conceit. Repentance they will not practice! Remission they will not seek! In vain the gospel tells them that they are lost! To them the gospel is a fiction—a thing scarcely consonant with the delicacy of their feelings. They will try to find a way to heaven by their merits! Why need they cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"? What need for them of scalding tears of penitence? What occasion for them to fly to the blood of sprinkling to be cleansed? They are not conscious that they are foul! Others may say—

"Black, I to the fountain fly."

But they are not conscious that they are black and, therefore, to no fountain will they resort. This is another chain and how heavy a one it is! How difficult to take it off! Some of the victims of self-flattery are faster bound and harder to set free than the most reckless and profligate of their neighbors, with whom they would count it an insult to compare them!

So it was in Christ's days. Publicans and harlots, the dregs of the town, the refuse of the population, entered into the kingdom of God, hailed it with joy and were received into it with welcome, while Scribes and Pharisees, the upper circle of society, the chief and representative men of the synagogue, clogged and bound with their self-righteousness, scorned the sinner's hope, refused the Savior-King, and perished in their infatuation! And oh, *how many are there upon whose hearts a willful unbelief lays its icy chains*? They ask for evidences and proofs, only to rebut them. They are shown signs and wonders, but they merely cast discredit on them till their hearts grow more callous. No reasons will weigh with them. To give *reasons* may be easy enough for us, but to impart *reason* to them is difficult. Indeed, to furnish motives that would suffice to move their understanding to discern Him were a miracle! Cut the ground from under their feet. Let them look confused. No, let them acknowledge themselves non-suited—

"Convince a man against his will,
He is of the same opinion still."

His conversion is as far off as ever. A new difficulty and a fresh dilemma will they start. Making sport of matters too weighty to be trifled with, they raise another question and argue another point. So perverse do they become that they could argue themselves into hell! At issue with their own mercies, they contend with all the might of logic against the cross of Christ. Unwilling to yield obedience to the precepts, they cast discredit on the promises of the gospel. How hard it is to rescue men that are thus manacled and fettered, whose heads and hearts are alike enslaved! We

have known sad cases—and those not among the most hopeless—of persons carried away and led a prey to despair because they are too guilty in their own apprehensions to obtain mercy, therefore they will not repent! Supposing that there can be no pardon for them, they sit down in sullen rebellion against God—they will not believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Because they have sinned so much, therefore they will even sin more! And because the disease is so dreadful, they will, therefore, decline to adopt the remedy. Oh, miserable souls! To what a plight do such arguments reduce you! Yet how many unhappy creatures are subject to such thralldom, we, who have to deal with them, find out! And how hard it is to take the prey from the mighty and to deliver these lawful captives, we know too well.

And are not full many of you chained hand and foot—fastened, as it were, in the stocks—*your spirits so crushed that you cannot move*? You have forgotten the meaning of spiritual liberty, if you ever had an idea of it. By nature, lost, by practice, lost, by custom, led astray, by evil habits, bound and fettered, by all manner of vice, enslaved, you are under the dominion of Satan! But the worst remains to be told. That which aggravates the horror of the situation is this—that such persons are lawful captives to the law of God. They have violated the precepts, transgressed the ordinances, offended the Divine Majesty—therefore, they must be punished! It is inevitable that every offense against God's law should ensure the penalty due to the offender. God will by no means spare the guilty! From Sinai's summit there sounds no note of mercy. Justice and judgment hold undisputed sway. "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." That curse falls on every one of us by nature—it leaves us bruised and mangled, and incapable of rescue! Who can deliver the man who is God's lawful captive? Who can claim exemption for him that has broken God's law? Such is the helpless, hopeless case of the sinner! Believe me, I do not overstate it. Though my words may sound rough, they do not fully describe the state that you are in, my unconverted friend. You are in such a state, that unless One interpose for you whom I will tell you of soon—you will have but a short reprieve! From the haunts of your folly, from the scenes of your toil, from the home of your affections, you will, before long, be taken to the place where hope will never dawn upon you! You are lost—now you are already condemned! If infinite mercy prevents not, the pit will soon shut its mouth upon you. Although my words were never so weighty, they could not be weighty enough to fitly describe your momentous peril! It is not possible for human language to set out the horror of an impenitent soul, the terrible condition of a sinner at enmity with his God! Oh, you may dress up your person, you may make merry and spend your little day in frivolity, but you cannot avert the summons that awaits you! Were you wise, you would consider this and you would heed the voice that says, "God is angry with the wicked every day." Nor would you ever rest till that anger was appeased and you were reconciled to God by the only method through which reconciliation can be found!

The more we consider this question before us, the more does *the hopelessness of finding any answer to it, apart from the revelation of the gospel, appear*. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?" Answer—no, no, most emphatically no! The thing is beyond all human power. Look first at the man, the hapless victim—he has lost the will to be delivered—like you may have seen, sometimes, in the Zoological Gardens, a small creature given to a voracious serpent for food. The reptile fixes its eyes upon its prey, which seems to be quite unconscious of what is coming. Calm, still, motionless, it is fascinated—charmed either by the brightness of the serpent's eyes, or by some kind of influence unknown to us exercised over it—until the monster darts at him and devours him! Even so does the unconverted man offer no resistance to the destroyer! It has been said that birds have been so fascinated by serpents as to fly to their foe and put themselves within his reach. Who can save the man that is determined to venture life and soul upon a hazard that every onlooker sees must end in death? Sitting, sometimes, in your little chamber with an open window on a summer's evening, you may have watched a moth that has dashed into your candle. In vain you have taken it up and put it away, but no sooner has it recovered strength enough than it darts back again to the flame! You put your hand out and stop it—it is but for a little while that you can keep it from its destruction, for it is desperately set on mischief and bent on suicide! So it is with man. Either with naked overt sin, or else with covert lust and ill pretense, he is so besotted and fascinated that he will plunge his soul into ruin! Who can deliver the man who resists deliverance? Who can save the man who will not avail himself of succor? Can the prey be taken from the mighty? Will eloquence avail? It has been tried and it has failed over and over again! There was never a soul divorced from his sins by the blandishments of rhetoric! You cannot persuade men to give up their favorite passions by goodly words. The trembling pathos or the withering scorn of your address will prove, alike, unavailing.

Beza once preached to a heap of stones, and, I doubt not, that the result was quite as happy as any that I could anticipate from an audience like the present, unless the Spirit of God shall move upon the hearts of those who lend their ears. Melanchthon thought that he might convert everybody by the force of his argument and the fervor of his manner, but after a while he said that old Adam was too strong for young Melanchthon. The devil is not to be driven out of his stronghold by music's melting mystic lay, nor yet by the declaimer's subtle art, though he is like one that plays well upon an instrument. "Cannot evil be dislodged," some will ask, "and cannot the captive be set free by sacred rites and ceremonies?" The experiment is attempted in our day all over this country! With what success judge you? We are told that men can be regenerated by baptism—and we have seen these regenerated infants develop into what, to our minds, was nothing more than "baptized

heathens, washed to deeper stains." All the ceremonies that can possibly be practiced, with the sanction of antiquity or the invention of modern priestcraft to recommend them, can have no effect in changing the bias of the human will, or in renewing the qualities of human nature! The disease is too deep and too irritant for the prescription to grapple with as a remedy. As well hope to vanquish Leviathan with a straw as to drive out the devil with a ceremony! Oh, no, the captive is not delivered thus. But could not a man deliver himself from his sins if he were to desperately strive? Yes, brothers and sisters, there is the pinch—that, "*if*." Therein—in that, "*if*"—you touch the seat of the delinquency! Men do not, will not, and cannot strive! They are so held by the morbid vein and malevolent propensity of their own nature, and by the fatal obstinacy of their own disposition, that they treat the gospel of the grace of God with the most bitter aversion—and the "*if*" becomes the master! They do not, will not, and cannot be induced to strive! What says Christ about it? "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Well, but could not they have come if they would? Yes, but there is the rub—they *would* not if they could! "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not." There, sinners, is the pith of the indictment! Were it said you *could* not, you might find an excuse, but it is charged against you that you *will* not, and this is damnable!

Did man sin by compulsion, I see not how he could be blamed, but since his sin is voluntary and he recklessly chooses the evil, clings to it and will not give it up, the slavery becomes the more obnoxious! When the iron enters into the soul and the man becomes a slave, not merely through misfortune, but through very baseness of heart and prostitution of his nature till he is ground down to be a serf of Satan and a drudge of sin, his wretchedness entitles him to little pity! The man is so far sunk that he cannot, nor will not deliver himself! No others can deliver him. Bound hand and foot, the prey of the mighty and the lawful captive—oh, Lord, what can be done for him? Do I hear anyone say, "Perhaps as he grows older the power of sin will grow weaker"? I have heard that suggestion many times but my solemn conviction is that if you want the worst of man, you will find them among the oldest of men! And if you seek a confirmed criminal, you most generally find him with gray hairs upon his head. Have you never noticed in the annals of the Church who were the men that fell most grievously? I never read in all of God's Book of such instances of foul defection among young believers as I do among the venerable sires whose names have come to be like a tower of strength in their generation! The youths were weak and knew it—and God kept them. But Lot was an old man when he committed incest, even as Noah before him had long years, ripe experience, and rich honors on his side when he defiled himself with drunkenness! David was far past the prime of life when he coveted Bathsheba and slew Uriah, her husband, with the sword of the children of Amman. Peter, when he denied his Master, was no raw recruit! His Master had pronounced on him high encomiums and

endowed him with rich blessings. The fact is, when we begin to lean on experience, we grow weak! Temptation, instead of getting weaker with our age, gets stronger. The passions which we thought would expire when the heat of youth had evaporated become fiercer as we grow more infirm till some lusts are more rampant in those who have the least power to gratify them! In whose breast does avarice rage with the most unquenchable ardor but in that of the man who is lingering on the margin of life, about to quit the world? He, indeed, in the course of nature, is the most loath to part with the gold that he has scraped together! Portray the miser. Do you not picture to yourselves the skeleton with bald scalp, wan visage, and withered fists, knocking at death's door? Ah, no, the devil does not release his grasp because our eyes wax dim and our senses grow dull. Instead, thereof, he seems to hold the victim more tightly. The thralldom of a man does not slacken as his vital powers wane. If one passion expires, another takes its place; could we imagine that the power of evil might sometimes sleep, we might imagine that the man might escape! Thus we read of giant Despair in the *Pilgrims Progress*, that in the night Christian and Hopeful, when the Giant was taken with a shivering fit, made their escape. Yes, but they were children of God, and not mere natural men! In the case of the sinner there is no sleeping of the foe. The power of evil has the sinner under its control, and never refrains its dreadful watch. He is held whether he is alone or in public; he is watched by night and by day, nor is it possible by accident or stratagem that the captive should get free.

So far the story is all black, and, like Ezekiel's roll, it is written within and without with lamentation. Remember, friend, that while I speak to you, it is of you I speak, if you are not a believer in Jesus! Unconverted men and women, to you I address these solemn words of God's own truth! You are the prey of the Mighty, and the captive of God's law! Can you be delivered? Can you be redeemed? We now turn to the brighter side of our picture—to the more cheerful aspect of our text—

II. CAN THE PREY BE RESCUED? CAN THE CAPTIVE BE DELIVERED? WE ANSWER, HE CAN.

Yes, sinner, you can! Your nature can be radically changed. Your habits can be snapped. Custom can lose its spell. Your besetting sins can be put under your feet and those vices which you now cling to with tenacity, you can be made to hate with deepest abhorrence! And this can be done for you, done now, done without preparation. But where is He that can achieve it? Ah, He is present with us here, though not to be seen by the eye—the Holy Spirit of God! Be You worshiped, O most Holy Spirit! There is one whom God has been pleased to give to His Church, who has the power to enlighten the understanding, to renew the will, to change the affections—in a word, to make us "new creature in Christ Jesus." That Holy Spirit is God! Know that unless the same God who first made Adam and Eve in the Garden comes and makes us new, we can never be saved! There must be as great a miracle performed upon you,

dear friend, as if you should be killed, put into the grave, and then be raised up again to live anew. God must create you a second time! He must quicken you in Christ Jesus unto good works! "Is that ever done?" asks one. It is often done! There are hundreds here on whom that strange transformation has passed, so that they are no longer what they were. "Old things have passed away, and all things have become new." You cannot work this of yourself. No priest can effect it, but the Holy Spirit can produce it. He can complete it NOW, so great is His power—so divine!

I could give you many living proofs. Memorable, however, is one that the New Testament history will not suffer you to doubt. There was Saul, the hater of Christ! The persecutor of Christians—a Pharisee, desperately resolved to oppose and efface the Christian faith! He had hunted out the brethren in Jerusalem. He had forced them to blaspheme by his cruelty. He had obtained letters from the high priest and he was on his road to Damascus, saying to himself, "I will harass them. I will make these professors of the Christian religion bite their tongues! I will scourge them in the synagogues. I will weary them of trusting in the Nazarene." He is proudly on his horse—it is about the noon of day—the orange groves of Damascus are just coming into view, when suddenly a light brighter than the meridian sun, shines round about him! Astonished and blinded, he falls to the ground. Soon a voice rings in his ears, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" That voice pierced his heart and entered into his understanding. He soon perceived that the Christ whom he was persecuting was God's own Son and he quickly answered, "Who are You, Lord" To this question the voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Thus he found out his mistake! He had been persecuting the Christ, the Messiah, ignorantly supposing that he had been hunting down an impostor! It was all he needed—he arose, blind, it is true, yet he saw more than he ever beheld before! So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

Oh, what a change had passed over him! What an altered man was he! Within three days, Ananias, an obscure Christian brother, is instructing him in the faith and saying to him, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." He is baptized, and not many days after you find him in the synagogue, not to persecute, but to proselyte! Not to betray the saints, but to testify of the Savior! Through all his later life you can discern the sincerity of his profession, the fervor of his spirit, the unwavering attachment of his soul to the person of Christ—and the steadfast confidence of his faith in the atonement! "God forbid," he says, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." For Him he could say, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him." A like change must be worked in you! It can be worked in you! It has been worked in many of us! It can be worked in you at this good hour! "Oh," says one, "I wish it were. What can I do towards it?" I will tell you. I spoke of a lawful captive. Now you are in the condition of a

lawful captive. Since you have broken God's law, justice demands that punishment in full measure should be meted out to you. This is inevitable. Every sinner stands accountable for his sins and every sinner must receive its due recompense! But listen. Listen to this and believe it—God, Himself, in the person of His dear Son, out of pure love to you, came down into this world and He suffered what you ought to have suffered! For all who believe in Jesus, Jesus Christ suffered the penalty due for them! "What?" says one, "If I trust Jesus Christ to save me, do I understand you to say, then, all that is due to me on account of sin, Christ has already borne?" I do say that! I say, you are immediately forgiven and, henceforth, secure against the wrath of God—if you can trust Jesus Christ with your whole heart! Because He lived, and loved, and died for such as you are, you are forgiven! God loves you! The past is blotted out of His book. "Oh," you say, "is that true?" Most certainly true! Only put your trust in Christ, now, and this is true to you. Your sins are gone, your iniquities are blotted out!

Now I think I hear some dear soul say, "Well, I do believe it. Yet I can hardly realize it—the mercy seems so great. Oh, what love God must have to me! What tender melting pity the dear Son of God must have had towards me, that He should give Himself to die for me!" Are you favorable to this? Then it is done! You are changed! Already you are talking as you did not use to talk—your heart is now towards God, as it was not before—the Holy Spirit has blest the story of the love of Christ to you, and that love of Christ has been the key that has turned your heart right around! Have you believed this with all your heart? Then you will be a new man from this time forth! You will not love what you loved before. The people of God whom you once despised, you will honor, for you will say, "I am one of them! Christ has washed me in His blood. I was, I know not what in wickedness, but it is all gone! God has blotted out my transgressions. My God is reconciled. His love I feel within my heart! Oh, how I repent of all my sins against Him! Lord, help me to give up everything that is impure in thought, or word, or deed. The dearest thing I have, if it stands against You, O Lord, I will renounce it and away with it! Down with you, my sins! Down with you, my lusts! Away, you drunkard's cups! Away, far away, be the company of the profane and the songs of the lascivious! From this time forth, be gone from me!—I cannot bear you any longer! My God has made me to love Him because He first loved me! Now, from this day on, I am a new creature, pardoned, purified, welcomed, accepted in Christ. Take me, Lord! Declare me to be Your own! You have bought me with Your blood, anointed me with Your Spirit, acknowledged me as Your child. Take me and make use of me to Your glory. Whether I live or die, may I praise Your dear name."

I recollect hearing an old sailor say, "I have had the devil's black flag at my masthead for 60 years, but, by the grace of God, I have run it down, tonight, and I put up the red cross flag of the Lord Jesus." Oh, Holy Spirit, come work this wonder in many hearts! So shall the "prey be

taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive be delivered." Oh, would not some of your neighbors be surprised if you were to go home a Christian? Others of you, who have always been moral and outwardly religious—were you to declare to your companions the great things God has done for you, and show them the reality and power of saving grace—they might laugh at you, and say, "Well, but where have you been? You must have been among the Methodists, I should think, and learned their cant." How thunderstruck they would be at you! To this end is our preaching! May such miracles be worked in the name of Jesus. Let the sot become sober, let the churl grow kind, let the covetous man be generous, let the careless turn prayerful, let the formalist seek after that which is spiritual! Transformations of character like these tell their own story! And while the change is transparent, your kinsfolk and acquaintances will take care that it fails not to be talked about!

Glory to God! He can break chains of adamant and He often does deliver just those very people that we do not think He would take. I believe that in infinite mercy He often looks round to find out a ringleader. There he is! Conspicuous for his vice, proclaiming his own shame! The gospel musket is leveled at him and down he comes! When an officer in the devil's army falls there is a great cry! God is glorified, the man is saved, and the ranks of the enemy are weakened! Oh, that some such might be brought to Christ tonight—some proud formalist, some mere churchgoer or chapel-goer, whose whole religion lies in conforming to a few paltry sacraments, or in adopting a few Nonconformist sentiments! Oh, that God would strike such a one's heart right through and make real heart-work of it with him from this day forth, even forever!

I do hope, as I beat the recruiting drum, there will be some that will come to the standard that have been bold soldiers of the devil, and that they will be quite as bold soldiers of Jesus Christ! My heart longs to know if it is so! Be not slow at once to tell what grace has done for you, and be not slack afterwards to fight for Him who lived, and loved, and died for you!

God bless the Word to every one of you for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 4:1-20.

Verses 1-3. *What shall we say, then, that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory, but not before God. For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* He stands as the great Father of believers, and this is the charter given to him, and given to all believers in him. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

4. *Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* That is to say, to him who hopes to be saved by his works, to whom

salvation is of merit, he has worked for the reward—has earned it—do not talk about grace in that case!

5. *But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* This is the man who does not go upon the line of works—who does not rest in his works at all, or bring them as a price to God. "His faith is counted for righteousness." It is a very wonderful thing that faith should stand in the stead of righteousness, and should make righteous all those that believe in God by Jesus Christ!

6-8. *Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* Instead of being a worker, this man had been an offender—a sinner. God did not impute it to him. He was a believer, and God imputed righteousness to him on account of his faith, and did not impute sin to him. Then comes a very important inquiry.

9. *Comes this blessedness, then, upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?* Is circumcision so necessary that a man is justified by faith after he is circumcised, and could not be so justified if he were an uncircumcised man?

9, 10. *For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?* Look back to the history. See in what condition Abraham was when faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. Was it when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? The answer is—

10, 11. *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.* But the sign is to follow the thing signified. He is, first of all, justified by his faith, and then afterwards he receives the token of the covenant.

11. *That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they are not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.* It is a very remarkable fact. A great many readers of the Book of Genesis would never have noticed it if the Holy Spirit had not called attention to the fact that father Abraham was justified by his faith before he was circumcised! And this is the reason of it—that he might be the father of *all* believers, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. "That righteousness might be imputed to them also."

12, 13. *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.* For the law was not even given when that covenant promise was made! The law was 400

years afterwards. The covenant of grace was the oldest covenant of all, and it shall stand fast, whatever shall happen.

14. *For if they which are of the law are heirs, faith is made void. And the promise made of none effect.* If you are upon that tack of salvation by the law, then what have you to do with faith? And what have you to do with promise, and what have you to do with Christ? You are on a different line altogether!

15. *Because the law works wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.* That is plain enough. You cannot break a law if there is not any. And thus, through our sinfulness, the law becomes a cause of sin, and never does it become the cause of justification.

16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.* Salvation is by faith, alone, that it may be seen to be of the free favor of God, that we may not look to merit or look to human strength, but may look always to the abounding mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

16, 17. *To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.* What a God we trust in—a God who quickens the dead! We have no faith unless we believe in such a God as this. We shall need such a God in order to bring us safely to His right hand at last.

18-20. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.* Men seem to think that only workers can give glory to God, but there is more glory given to God by one drachma of faith than by a ton of works! After all, works usually generate conceit and pride in us. But faith lays itself low before its God and gives to Him all the glory. God is never more glorified than He is by the believing confidence of His people when difficulties seem to come in the way. He was "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

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WHY MEN DO NOT BELIEVE
NO. 3463

A SERMON
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"How can you believe, who receive honor one of another"
John 5:46.

THE Pharisees in our Lord's day were very fond of high-sounding titles. They had their diplomas, like our modern doctors of divinity, and they took good care to pride themselves upon them. Some were called "Rab," others, "Rabbi," others, "Rabbini." They had their various degrees of respect—degrees which signified the respect due to them, and the attainments to which they had reached. In fact, they would not listen to a teacher unless he came with the title of, "Rab," or, "Rabbi," or, "Rabbini." He must be one who had about him a great air of self-importance. He must be a witness of himself and that very abundantly, too, or else the confraternity of the Scribes and Pharisees turned away from him.

Now our Lord asked no testimonials from anybody. He stood up and spoke very simply, but very earnestly the truth of God and He did not quote, as these old Rabbis did, authors far gone back, one upon another, and make glosses upon them. He took the authority derived from God and constantly said, "Verily this is the case," and, "Verily I say unto you that this other is the case." And when these mighty Scribes and Pharisees turned upon their heels and would not receive Him, He replied to them, "It was not at all likely that you would. You gentlemen are so given to complimentary phrases and to grandiloquent titles, that there was no likelihood that you would listen to a man who came with truth on His lips, and still further, in His heart." Perhaps there could be nothing more clear than that the position which the Scribes and Pharisees occupied was most dangerous. They were prejudiced. They considered that they had the key of knowledge. They already knew by far, too much to be taught anything more and, consequently, while publicans and harlots heard Christ and rejoiced to listen to Him, out of all those who were continually caviling and finding fault, how few ever won the blessing!

Now this is an illustration of a general rule upon which I wish to speak tonight. The moral character has a great effect upon the faith. These men, through being proud, stilted and fond of titles, were unable to believe in Christ—but there are other faults more common than these which effectually prevent men from becoming the disciples of our blessed Master. Of some of these I intend to speak this evening. And when I have

done so, I shall have a few words to address to the individuals here who cannot believe in Christ because there is a something within their hearts that very effectually prevents their coming to the faith of God's elect. First, then, it is very clear that—

I. IT IS NOT BECAUSE A TRUTH IS PLAIN THAT, THEREFORE, ALL MEN SEE IT.

There are some men in such a condition of mind, of such a blinding sort, that even if the truth of God could be still plainer, it would be the most unlikely thing in the entire world that they would receive it! We will suppose for a moment that teetotalism is based upon the surest truth of God and cannot, for a moment, be disputed. Some earnest brother is endeavoring to convince a man. He belabors him with the most potent arguments—he brings before him the most astonishing facts and some of those wonderful "statistics" which the more we look at, the less we believe! And after bringing all these to bear upon the man, he is still unmoved. You are surprised, but somebody whispers in your ear, "He owns a gin palace," and now you are not surprised at all! It would be a very unlikely thing that he should be convinced of the propriety of total abstinence while he, himself, gets his gain by selling the pernicious evils! But take another case of the same sort. A young gentleman, in conversation with a bishop, was endeavoring to show his lordship the unscriptural character of the episcopal body as now held in the Church of England. His lordship was observed to smile and when he was asked the reason, he replied, "Why, I wonder at the courage of this young gentleman that he should imagine he could ever convince me out of 3,000 a year!" And, indeed, it was not very likely that he would be converted from the errors of episcopacy, if these are errors, any more than our friend of the gin palace was likely to be converted to anti-alcoholic principles! There is a something in both instances about the position of the men which renders them, probably, impervious to the truth of God! These two illustrations just bring that point before your mind's eye.

Now there are some men who do not believe in Jesus. They have godly parents. They have lived to see others who have believed and though, perhaps, they have never been quite able to cast away the recollections of their early days, yet for all that, they are almost and would be quite infidels if it were not for a slender thread which is still held in the hands of God. Now the question comes to us—Why are not these people believers? Under so many good influences, why are they not decidedly believers in Christ? The answer may be found by the light of the truth which I have brought to your minds. There may be a something about their characters which renders it impossible for them to be believers in Christ, no, which even reflects credit upon the gospel of Jesus, that they should not be able to believe it, for if, being as they are, they could receive it, it might prove that gospel to be a thing devoid of the power of God!

Let me just mention some of the things which effectually prevent men from believing in Christ, and one is a self-righteous idea of one's self. Exceedingly common, this! The man thinks that he is not as other men are and though he does not say so, he is rather proud of himself. Though he is so humble as not to say it, yet at the bottom of his heart he is convinced that nobody is worthy of greater respect than he is! He has been scrupulously honest and has brought up his family, to the best of his knowledge, in the ways of integrity. He is a good fellow, generous to the poor and if he should have a fault or two, yet who has not his faults? As for himself, if the world would be picked, he would at least take his place somewhere near the first! Now you cannot expect *that* man to believe the gospel, for that gospel tells him that he is fallen, that his sins have been so many that God has condemned him forever, that he must escape from that condemnation or, if not, he must sink forever into misery and that for him there is no salvation except upon the footing of pure grace apart from merit! The gospel denies that he has any merit. It pulls off from him all those finely woven rainments of his, in which he boasted himself, and makes him stand naked before the bar of God—and the man does not like that. "No," he says, "I will not be treated so! The gospel gives me so ill a character that I will take my chances and not believe the gospel, but still hope to be saved by my own natural goodness."

Well, dear hearer, if this is your case, I should not advise you to run the risk, for if you are to look at yourself, you will find many omissions and, above all, this glaring omission—that you have not loved the God who made you and you have not served Him! He supplies you with life, but you do not reverence Him. If it had not been for His will, you had long ago been among the dust that sleeps in the grave, or among the lost that howl in the pit and yet, despite His longsuffering goodness, you have not thanked Him, but gracelessly gone up and down the world with no more thought of your Maker than the brute that dies and so comes to its end! I do pray you look at yourself in the light of God's law, that spiritual law which judges your thoughts and which comes home to your imaginations. What if your outward life is pure, yet can you stand such a test as that? You know you cannot! Believe not, then, yourself to be rich and increased, for you are poor, you are penniless in the presence of God. Oh, that you could feel this! Then would you come to Jesus and put your trust in Him, but, alas, this self-righteousness of yours is that which holds you back from Christ. How can you believe while you take honor to yourselves and flatter yourselves? You must be humbled! You must be brought low, or else faith in Christ can never reside in your bosom.

A second remark may come closer home to others, and I do desire to come very close home to you. There are men who never will believe in Jesus because their very idea of religion is a mistake. You ask them what their religion is and, if they spoke very plainly, they would say that they

like good music, excellent music, and they like the best of architecture, and they like floral decorations, and they like millinery, and some of them like images on altars, and I know not what other devout and admirable things besides! They take religion to be simply the indulgence of their tastes, the pleasing of the eyes, the gratification of the senses and, if they can sit while the pealing organ pours forth floods of music and they are charmed thereby, they call that adoration! True, as excellent music might be heard at the theater or the opera, but that would be an abomination! The ears are tickled with the same sounds, precisely the same, and yet in the one case it is sin, and in the other case it is holiness! I confess I cannot quite see the difference—I can perceive none whatever! The gratification of the senses, of the ears and the eyes cannot be devotion! It is for the *heart* to draw near to God! It is to learn that God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is to learn that the broken heart is the best sacrifice, that the tears running down the cheek is that which is received by the great Father who is in heaven. That to come humbly and confess our sins, to come with lowly reverence and trust in the great Lamb of God is acceptable worship, not the mere chanting or singing of the lips, or the bending of the knees, or the joining in a liturgical service—but for the inner man to bow itself before the unseen God—the vital part of our nature to come into contact with Him who lives and who hears prayer! Now, you cannot expect a man who has imbibed his notions of religion from a thing that is theatrical and full of show, to accept the simple teaching of Jesus Christ. How can they believe while they are duped by these gewgaws? How can they believe in Jesus while they are taken up with these mere externals, these fancies, these sweet perfumes and sounds which can never be acceptable to the great God who is in heaven? There is something greater, something deeper about salvation than this!

There are not many here who will come under that head, but they will come under another. There are many who cannot believe in Jesus because—now let them themselves estimate the force of this—they cannot believe in Jesus *because they have a besetting sin that they cannot give up*! There is the bottom of most men's doubt! They would not doubt if they did not sin. If they could have their sins and be believers, they would be believers fast enough, but there is that company that must be given up, that company which, instead of sanctifying the soul, depraves it. There are those amusements which are not merely recreations which might invigorate the jaded mind, but which are, in truth, a sort of debauchery which turns aside the mind from its true force and vigor. Oh, how many things there are in this great London that we know nothing of, and which it were better not to know, which are the secret source of the doubts and skepticism that come up on the surface of society! It were a very curious thing to follow these men home, to follow those home, I say, who say they doubt this and doubt that! Yes, when you see them drunk, you do not wonder that they doubt a sober

gospel—it were a pity but what they did. When you see them cheat, you do not wonder that they doubt an honest gospel—it were a great pity that they should believe it! When you hear them swear, you do not wonder that they doubt a sacred gospel! Why, to keep up any appearance of consistency, not to say, sanity, they must doubt it! There is a kind of honesty about this professed doubt which I like, for it is better for a man to doubt those things which contradict his life than that he should be such a damnable hypocrite as to pretend to believe in them—better than that he should stand to them in theory, and yet deny them in his life!

But to return to the subject, there lies the secret spring that makes up the non-belief in Jesus in many hearts. It is because they feel that His service is too hard, and exacts too much, too great a self-denial, too much of coming out from the world, and so they cannot believe in Him. And yet Jesus asks us to give up nothing that is really for our good. Jesus, I say, takes away from us no pleasure that is a true pleasure, no enjoyment that exalts the mind or that makes a man truly blessed. 'Tis true He takes away that poisoned cup. Who would permit you to drink it who had a care for you? 'Tis true He takes away from you that dagger of sin, that poisoned viper that is only nestling in your bosom to destroy you! Who that loved you would let you have these dangerous things about you? Jesus Christ asks us only for such self-denial as shall promote our everlasting welfare. Ah, men and women, you will find your sins won't pay you when you come to die—and I suppose you intend to do that. I hope you think not that you shall live forever! Then that little drink will seem sour enough when you come to leave it for the last time. Then the giddy merriment of this world will seem foolishness enough when the curtain begins to be drawn and you look from side to side on the river of death into an eternity that is dark, unlit by a single star of hope! You know that you will not perish like brutes. You know, for God has put a trembling conscience within you that you will start upon a voyage that is never to end! Oh, sirs, how is it that you thus wreck your vessels for a little joy, and for a paltry pleasure give up the welfare of your souls forever?

There are some men, too, who are kept from believing in Jesus Christ *because they are lovers of gain*. How could they believe in Jesus when their whole life is spent in money-grabbing? Mammon, "the least erect of spirits," says Milton, but he is the god of London! Does not Mammon rule and reign abundantly, and do not men fall down and say their prayers to him?" All hail, thrice glorious Mammon! Fill our pockets full and help us to blow out our bubble-companies and cheat the public!" Are not these the prayers offered by many? Yes, and among you in sober trade, how many spend their whole lives in getting and scraping for themselves alone—no consideration for the Church of Christ, or for the poor and needy, but only for themselves? Now when Christ comes and says, "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," you do not wonder that they do not like that. "No," they say, "it is contrary to social economics!" When He tells them that this world will pass away, and the fashion of it, and bids them seek another and a better portion, where things endure without end, they will not have it. This world is quite enough for them and they are gone from Christ. How can they believe in Him if they live for gain?

So, too, there are some others who never can believe in Jesus *because they are so downright cowardly that it would be very difficult for them to believe in anything which involves the slightest oppositions.* Yes, many a man and many a woman has been influenced by that mean thought, "I would be laughed at. I would be ridiculed if I became a real believer in Jesus Christ. Why, how could I meet my old companions? What would they say to me if they heard that I had become a saint? How could I stand the sneers of the commercial room? How could I run the gauntlet down that long workshop where all the benches are?" "How," says the young woman, "could I have it known in that book-folding room that I have been baptized?" And among your upper circles it is just the same. How men are afraid of one another, afraid of poor worms, afraid of poor sinners like themselves who shall wither before the face of the terrible Judge of all the earth! Oh, that men should be so afraid of men, and not afraid of God, that they will consent to be His enemies and lose His good opinion! The good opinion of a drunk or of an arrant fool is thought to be of more weight to them than the good opinion of their God! Sirs, I scarcely like to talk to you on this subject because it is not manly for you to be ashamed of your convictions. If you do love Christ, say so, and if the world hisses, what does it matter to you, as long as you get Christ's smile? Are we the sons of those brave old sires who at Edgehill met sword with sword and feared not? What have we to do to cringe before the world's frown, or to court its smile? God grant it may be otherwise, and may you rise into the full stature of spiritual manhood and be not ashamed to follow Jesus through good report and through ill-report.

Now I might enlarge, but I shall not. You clearly see that there are many moral faults which keep men back from believing in Jesus. Now for—

II. A FEW PLAIN, EARNEST WORDS WITH THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT BELIEVED.

There have been many arguments which have been used at different times to bring over the skeptical to the faith. I will just tell you what has often strengthened my own mind, so that, my dear friends, if God inclines you to overcome the moral difficulty, you may not have a mental difficulty. In the first place, *the doctrine that we are called upon to believe* is, that having sinned we are condemned, but that God, full of mercy, had pity upon us and that His Son, God Himself, came down on earth to suffer what was due on account of our sins. In order that the justice of

God might not even *seem* to be robbed of its due, Jesus, God's only-begotten Son—

"Bore that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

Now I have turned that over, and it looks to me as if it must be true because I cannot conceive where else it came from but from the realm of facts. A God condescending to bleed and die for His own enemies out of respect to justice, and moved by love—where in all heathen mythology is there anything like it? Where have the most refined of men ever hit upon anything that at all approaches to it? Their gods are usually lustful and the highest honors of their gods are crimsoned with blood. But if this is not true, it ought to be, for it is the grandest conception that ever flashed upon the human mind! The superlatively Just, the superlatively Great must suffer sooner than that His creature should suffer, and sooner than that the laws of His kingdom should for a moment be dishonored? I do not know how it is, but I never need arguments about it, myself. It seems to me so plainly a divine thing, so standing out of all conceptions of poetry, so distinctly rising out of all the realms of philosophy that it must be true!

Then, again, another thing which often helps me is this—*ever since I have trusted in the Son of God to save me, I have been conscious of a very remarkable change that has passed over my entire nature*. Now I desire to speak very soberly and I claim to be believed. I have as good a claim to be believed as any other man. I do not wish to distort the truth, but now this I know, I look up to the starlit sky at night and I think, "The God who made this great universe and orders it all, I really love. I would not do a thing contrary to His will if it were not for my poor infirmities. I would do and I would wish to be whatever that great invisible God would wish me to do and to be. I feel I would." Now I know there was a time when I did not think about Him at all, or if I did, I never could say, "I am reconciled to Him. I am one with Him. His will is my will and I desire to do whatever He bids me do." Now I know that that same thing that has made me love God has made me desire to be truthful, to be honest, to be kind, to be generous—and when I have not done right, I feel a pricking within my heart that I did not feel once, so that I do know that there is set up in me a wonderful standard which was not there before. Now a thing that makes me love God and makes me live and feel so, cannot be a lie! If so, it is a very wonderful kind of lie which produces holiness and goodness. And indeed, my brothers and sisters, if you would try this for yourself, you would get the same evidence—it would produce in you the same change. There would be your old nature, and you would have to grapple with it, to your own shame and sorrow, but still there would be a new nature with better desires and feelings—and with this new nature within me I am convinced, for myself at any rate—that this thing is true.

Moreover, knowing a great many of those who have believed in Jesus, I am obliged to say of them that they are all imperfect—I wish they were not. I wish they were what God Himself is for purity, and gentleness, and

love—but for all that, if I had to pick the people I should like to live with, I would choose them. And with all their faults, I am persuaded that you would sooner have the world full of them than you would of any other sort. If you were going down a dark lane tonight, and you did not know what sort of people were going along it, I would be bound to say it would be a wonderful consolation to you to be told that they were believers in Christ—you would feel pretty safe, and though there are professors, rotten professors who are a very stench both to the Church and to the world—it is but natural that there should be hypocrites. There never was a good thing in the world but what people did make shams of it. When people say, "They are all hypocrites," I say, "Then I suppose all our sovereigns are bad ones." Why, if there were no good sovereigns, people would not make bad ones, for it is the good ones that pass off the bad ones! And if there were not some real, genuine children of God, people would not pretend to be so—it would not pay! It is because the world, after all, knows that faith in God makes men happier and nobler, that men make pretense of having what they have not! Now when I see the effects of the gospel upon God's people, making than patient under pain, joyful in the hour of trouble, making them pray to God and receive answers as indisputable facts, I am able to receive Jehovah's Word and believe the gospel of Jesus as sent from God.

Now a word with regard to you, dear friend, who are still a doubter. We are driven to believe two things about you and about everybody like you, namely, that you will never come to know Christ unless the Holy Spirit deals with you, for all the arguments in the world do not convince the human heart unless the Spirit of all grace shall come and change the nature! And we believe another thing of you, that you must first give up that belief in yourself before you are ever likely to believe in Jesus. How simple it all seems! God has punished Jesus, His dear Son, instead of those who trust Him. Those who trust Him are forgiven. That trust, that sense of forgiveness operates upon the mind, leads the mind to gratitude, influences it to love. The man loves God, chooses what he once rejected, and runs now in the ways of God which were once tedious to him. There is the whole theory of salvation and the experimentally acting out of it. It does seem to me hard that you turn from it. If it were a gospel full of superstitions, like Roman Catholic teachings—if we asked you to believe in certain miracles that were so strange, so weird that you could not conceive them to be true, I could well excuse your unbelief! But when it is simply to trust the incarnate God who did hang on Calvary and bleed for sinners, a thing which looks so true, and which to tens of thousands has been proved to be true in their lives and in their hearts—oh, I would that you would doubt no longer, but close in with Christ and find safety in Him! These reflections will do to close with, namely, that—

III. IF WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS, OUR NON-BELIEF WILL NOT CHANGE THE FACTS.

If a man says, "I am no sinner," he remains a sinner. If he says, "I do not believe that God will punish sin," the punishment will be just as

sure. If he says, "There is no hereafter," the future will not end for him. If he shall doubt as to the punishment of the wicked, his skepticism shall not mitigate God's wrath. The facts remain. Oh, think not, when you have blotted out your own recollection, that you have blotted out God's determination! There it stands.

And then think again—*those facts are coming nearer every hour*. We shall soon be into another year. How these years do fly! How the multitudes of men fly, too! They were dying last year when the snowflakes fell upon their tombs. They died while the sweet flowers were blossoming from the sod as though to remind us of resurrection. They fell when the mower's scythe laid the grass in the net—and they are dying now—dying fast while the sere leaves are descending and heaping up their sepulchers. How is it that we presume that we shall not die? Persons well a week ago are gone, and our own hearts are merely like muffled drums which beat sad funeral marches to the tomb, and here are still the facts—the fact of sin and a tortured conscience! The fact of punishment and no forgiveness! The fact of eternity and no hope! The fact of hell and no escape! Oh, you who have doubted, if you push these off by your doubting, let alone annihilating them, there might be some excuse for you—but they come! They come like some huge express train thundering down the line, and there are you, like children playing on the tracks, and you tell us that your games are full of merriment and there is time enough, and you will think about it! Or you do not believe the express is coming, though there it is with its great red eyes and its great mouth of fire, and it comes rushing on and crushing everything that shall be in its pathway! Fly, in God's name, man! This may be the last hour you may have in which to fly! Think not that you can postpone it, or that you can stop it. Over you with a crash will the divine vengeance come! He shall tear you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver you. But this is not yet! And meanwhile be wise and escape! Lay hold on eternal fife. Trust Jesus and the infinite mercy of God shall blot out the past and secure the future and you shall be saved in Christ Jesus with an everlasting salvation!

I talk thus somewhat strongly because I feel strongly, and I often puzzle myself with this question—why do I feel concerned about some of your souls when you are not concerned about them at all? Why, you came and heard me tonight and it only seems like a little kind of music. Well, it may be sport to you, but it is none to me! I have to answer for this, and if I speak not so that you understand, and speak not earnestly, I know I shall have to account to my Master! I would not be some that occupy the pulpit for all the worlds that God ever made if they were threaded on one string! To get a sermon and read it coldly, to read out statements which do not concern your hearers and deliver them as if it did not matter whether they were true or not—to be an iceberg in the midst of an assembly—how will God call us to account if such is our way of ministry! But I beseech you, men and women, if you have not believed

in Christ, to remember that that is the only door of safety according to God's own revelation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ, the righteous." To deny Him, to neglect Him, is to perish! To trust Him, to accept Him, is to be saved! May God's blessed Spirit move you to trust Him this very night, and as there will be on earth, so will there be joy in heaven, and God's shall be the glory world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-21.

We can scarcely find a chapter in which the gospel lies so compact and so plainly stated.

1. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.* Christ's door is open at all hours. You may come to Christ by day. You may come to Christ by night. There is never a time when Christ is not home. He that seeks finds, and, to him that knocks, it shall be opened. "The same came to Jesus by night." Perhaps he was timid. It is just as likely that he was prudent and did not wish to commit himself till he had seen what it was that Jesus taught. Perhaps, too, he was busy and had no time except at night. Better come at night than not come at all! "The same came to Jesus by night."

2. *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with Him.* The miracles were accepted as a proof of Christ's mission, and if they do not seem to be such a proof to us at this distance, they were a most marvelous and necessary proof at the first. Perhaps they have ceased because that first work being done, the testimony can now stand upon its own strength, and men reading it may judge it to be of God if they will. But to Nicodemus it was quite clear that Christ could not have worked His miracles, except God were with Him.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Here is a greater miracle than I have worked in the outside world. Here is a spiritual miracle. This is what you must receive as well as others. You cannot even understand My kingdom, and know what it means—you cannot see it, except you are born-again.

4. *Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Thus do men interpret Christ's figures literally, and this has been the basis of much mischief and false doctrines. When He is using metaphors to make the thing plain, they straightway use the metaphor rather as a cloak to hide the meaning than as a glass through which to see it! This is the reason why the *doctrine of transubstantiation* has come up. Because our Savior said, "This is My body," men have not been able to understand

that He meant, "This *represents* my body. This is a figure." Truly "the letter kills." It is the inner spirit that gives life.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* He cannot be Christ's professed disciple unless he receives the Spirit and unless he is baptized—if the water here relates to Baptism at all, which we *judge it does not.* He must be renewed, washed and purified. That must be the water—and he must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, or else, as he cannot see, so he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* A man may have the best parents that ever lived, but all that is born of the flesh is flesh, at the very best. Your father may be a saint and your mother a saint, but you are born in sin, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and unless you are born of the Spirit, you cannot understand or see spiritual things—and you cannot enter into the *spiritual* kingdom, for you have no spiritual capacity. "The carnal mind discerns not the things that are of God, for they are spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned." Therefore we must be born-again so as to receive that Spirit by which spiritual things are discerned and entered into.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* There are mysteries in nature. There are mysteries in grace. Every new-born soul is a mystery. He cannot explain himself. He can scarcely understand himself.

9, 10. *Nicodemus answered, and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* These simple things—these elementary principles—these rudiments of the school book of believers.

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen: and you receive not Our witness.* This was an additional hint to Nicodemus of the unbelief that still lingered in him. "You receive not our witness."

12. *If I have told you earthly things*—Things that have to do with men while here below.

12. *And you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* If I lift the veil and talk to you about still greater mysteries, if you do not believe about regeneration, where will you be if I begin to talk of My Godhead and of all the inner secrets?

13. *And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.* A riddle, doubtless, to Nicodemus, which in later days he understood.

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Oh, that blessed, "whoever"! Hear it, you

sons of men, and tell it to your neighbors—"That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

16-18. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned*—he may be very faulty. His conscience may accuse him, but he is not condemned.

18. *But he that believes not is condemned already.* Hear that! "Condemned already"—not in a state of probation. Never was there a greater mistake than to say that men are in a state of probation! That probation has passed long ago. They have been proved in the world and if they are unbelievers, they are condemned already. "Condemned already."

18-19. *Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation*—the head and front of it.

19, 20. *That light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* This is the secret of infidelity. This is the reason of all opposition to Christ. It is love of sin! Trace it home to its den and lair, and you shall find that it is love of sin that breeds hatred of Christ. Men do not see because they do not want to see. They do not want to see too much lest they should be uneasy in their present state of life. So they kick against Christ and try to put out the light of His gospel, lest they be reproved by it.

21. *But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God.* God give us the heart that seeks His light, and sooner or later we shall find it. We shall find it in Christ!

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TRUE WORSHIP
NO. 3464

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1915.**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 1, 1870.**

***"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High: and call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."
Psalm 50:14, 15.***

EVEN in the Christian Church we have great diversities of opinion as to what is the true form of worship. One stoutly cries, "Lo here," and another as earnestly says, "Lo there!" There are some who think that the more simple and plain the outward worship can be, the better. Others think the more gorgeous and resplendent it can be, the better. Some are for the quietude of the Friends' meeting house—some are for the stormy music of the cathedral. Some will have it that God is best praised in silence—others that He is best honored with flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and I know not what kinds of music! Is it so difficult, then, to know what kind of worship God will accept? It is very difficult if it is left to the guesses of men, but it is not at all difficult if we turn to *the Word of God*. There we shall find, I think, great room for diversities of mode, but we shall find ourselves shut up by a consecrated intolerance to a few matters of spirit. We shall there be told what is not essential, but we shall certainly be assured of what *is* essential to the true worship of God. And I suppose it will be enough for any of us who are sincerely anxious to worship God, ourselves, if we find out for ourselves, by the teaching of God's Spirit, the way to do it. And we shall be content to let others, also, find out the way for themselves, satisfied if we, ourselves, are approved of God—for we have very little to do with sitting on the throne of judgment and either condemning or approving others. Now, on turning to this Psalm we shall find out what worship *is not* acceptable with God. And we shall find out what *is*. And these will make the main points of our sermon this evening. In reading this Psalm to you, you must all have noticed—

I. WHAT SORT OF OFFERINGS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

You noticed with me, I dare say, that first, those are not accepted *in which men place the reliance upon the form itself*, and are contented when they have gone through the form, though their hearts have had no communion with God. And they have brought to the Most High no spiritual sacrifice whatever. Lay it down, then, beyond all question, that

formal worship which is not attended with the *heart*—which is not the worship of the spirit—can never be acceptable with the Most High!

And here we will remind ourselves, too, that *even when the form is actually prescribed of God*, yet without the *heart*, it is not a worship of God at all in the true sense of language. With what indignation of eloquence does God here speak to the Israelite people who imagined that when they had brought their bulls and their goats—when they had kept their holy days, consecrated their priests, presented their offerings, been obedient to the ritual—then that all this was enough. He puts it to them—He inquires of them whether they can be so foolish as to think that there is anything in sacrifices of bulls and rams that could content the mind of the Most High! If He wanted bullocks and rams, He says, He has enough of them—all living creatures are His—and He has infinite power to make as many more as He would! Do they fancy that if He wanted bulls and goats, He would come to them for them? That the Creator would crave and turn beggar to His own creatures and ask for bullocks out of *their* houses and goats out of *their* field? He puts it to them, do they really think that He, the Infinite God, who made the heavens and the earth, the great I AM, actually eats the flesh of bulls and drinks the blood of goats? And yet their idea was that the mere outward sacrifice contented Him! Was God as gross as that? And what was involved in that? Now I shall put it to you, you who profess to be Christians and yet in your worship, whatever it may be, rest in it. Do you really believe that God is honored by your eating a piece of bread and drinking a few drops of wine? The thousands of creatures that He has in the world eat more bread and drink more wine. Do you really believe that your sitting at a table brings any satisfaction to Him who is in the company of angels, and who has choicer spirits than you are to enter into fellowship with Him? No, sirs, if you rest in the outward form, what you do can bring no amount of entertainment to Him! He might say to those priests who think that they offer unto God a sacrifice in the "Mass," "Do I eat bread that is made by the baker, leavened or unleavened? Do you think that I drink wine pressed from the grape?" Fancy you, you that find satisfaction in these things—oh, fools, and slow of heart—that the infinite Jehovah takes any delight in these matters? And if you come to Baptism as God, Himself, commands it—if you trust in that, might He not say to you, "Do you think that I am pleased with water, when the rivers, the lakes, the seas, and the deeps that lie beneath are all My own? Does that immersion in water bring any satisfaction to Me, in itself considered? What can there be in it that can delight My infinite mind or satisfy My soul? If we rest in any outward form, though God prescribes it, we must have a very gross and carnal idea of God, indeed, if we conceive that He is served or glorified thereby! It cannot be so. If men were not idiotic, they would shake off from themselves all idea of sacramental efficacy and everything that is akin to it! They would see that what God wants is the *heart*, the *soul*, the *love*, the *trust*, the *confidence* of rational, intelligent beings—not the going

through of certain forms! The forms are useful enough when they teach us the truth of God of which they are the emblems. The forms are precious and, as ordained of God, to be reverently used by those who can see what they mean and who are helped by the emblem to see the inner meaning, but by none besides. The mere outward thing is but the shell, the husk—useless unless there is within it the living kernel, the embryo which the shell protects! The mere form of outward worship is nothing—it is not acceptable with God!

Now if this is true—and we know it is—of even ordinances ordained of God, *how much more must it be true of ceremonies that are not of God's ordaining*? I am not about to judge, but I will say of all ceremonies and absence of ceremony, if there is no divine prescription, we feel certain that there cannot be a divine acceptance! And even if that could be supposed, yet if the heart were not there, and there were reliance in these outward things of man's devising, it were utter folly to suppose that God accepts them! For instance, there are certain people who think that God is glorified by banners, by processions, by acolytes, by persons in white, in blue, in scarlet—(I know not what colors)—by golden crucifixes, or brass, or ivory—by very sweet music, by painting, by incense. Now what an idea they must have of God! What a thought they must have of Him! I remember standing on Monte Cenis one afternoon on a very broiling summer's day, in a cool place where I could look all over the wide plains of Italy and see the blue sky—such a blue as we never see, and the innumerable flowers, and all the land fair as a dream—and then I looked to my right and there stood a shrine—a shrine to which there came a worshipper. There was a doll. They called it "the Blessed Virgin." It was adorned with all sorts of trinkets—just such things as I have seen sold at a country fair for children. It had little sprigs of faded artificial flowers—little bits of paint. And I said to myself, "The God that made this glorious landscape in which everything is true and real—do they fancy that He is honored by this kind of thing—these baubles? What an idea they must have of God." Sirs, if He wanted banners, He would deck His escutcheon with the stars! If He wanted incense, ten thousand thousand flowers would shed their sweet perfume upon the air! If He wants music, the wind shall sound it, the woods shall clap their hands, every forest tree shall give out its note and angelic harpers standing on the glassy sea shall give such music as your ears and mine have never conceived! If He wants an alb, behold the snow! If He wants your many-colored rainments, see how He decks the meadows with flowers and strews, with both His hands, rainbow hues on every side! If He wanted garments, He would bind the sky's azure round Him with a belt of rainbows and come forth in His glory! But your dolls and your boys and men, and all their millinery—Sirs, do you know what you are doing? Have you got souls? If you worshiped a calf, calves, like you, might well worship him in such in style, but the great I AM that built heaven and earth dwells not in temples made with hands! That is to say, in these buildings—and He is not worshiped by such trumpery as this. All this, of men's inventing, can

never be acceptable to the Most High. Common sense tells us so—much more the revelation of God!

But, mark you, my censure does not count alone against them. Suppose a man should say, "Well, I am far enough from that. On the morning of the first day of the week I resort to a meeting house—whitewashed, a few forms, a raised desk at the end of it—and I sit down there. I have not any minister—nobody to speak unless he believes the Spirit moves him. We all sit still. Many times we sit still the whole morning. *We* worship God." Do you believe you have? If your heart was there—if your soul was there—I am the last man to complain of the absence of form. I love your simplicity, I admire it. But if you trust it, I believe *your simplicity will as certainly ruin you as the gorgeousness that goes to the opposite extreme*, for if there is any reliance in that sitting still—if there is any reliance in that waiting—(take our own case) if there is any reliance in your coming up to these pews and listening to me—do you think you have served God merely by coming here to sing hymns, and cover your faces during prayer, and so on? I tell you, you have not worshiped God! You are mistaken if you suppose the mere act counts for anything! You know not what you think—you know not what your mind is drifting to. It is the *heart* that gets to God—it is the eye that pours out penitential tears—it is the soul that loves and blesses and praises—this is the sacrifice! But all the outward, whether God, Himself, ordained it, or man devised it—or whether it is a matter of mere convenience—it cannot be received by the Most High!

So let me add, beloved friends, a matter which may touch some of you. *The mere repetition of holy words can never be acceptable sacrifices to God*. There are some who from their childhood have been taught to say a form of prayer. I shall neither commend nor censure, but I will say this—you may repeat that form of prayer for twenty, forty, 50 years, and yet never have prayed a single word in all your life! I am not judging the words. They may be the best you could possibly put together. They may be the words of inspiration, but the mere saying of words is not prayer, neither does God receive it as such! You might just as well say the Lord's Prayer backwards as forwards for the matter of its acceptance with God, except you say it with your heart! I believe some people fancy that the reading of prayers in the family, and especially that the reading of prayers at the bedside of the sick, has a kind of charm—that it somehow or other has a mysterious influence and helps to prepare men for life or for death. Believe me, no grosser error could exist! When the soul talks with God, it matters not what language it uses. If it finds a convenient form and it uses it with its heart, let it use it if so it wills. But if, on the other hand, the words come bubbling up and come ever so strangely and irregularly, yet if the *heart* speaks, God accepts the prayer—and that is worship! So, too, in singing; if we have the sweetest hymn that ever was written—yes, though it were an inspired hymn, and if we sang it to the noblest tune that ever composer wrote, yet we do not praise God by the mere repetition of the words and the production of those sounds! Ah,

no—the whole of it lies in the soul after all! "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him." Let there be good music, by all means, and noble words, for these are congruous to noble thoughts—but oh, let the thoughts be there! Let the song be there! Let the flames of love burn on the altar of the heart! Be the outward expression what it may, let the praise be winged by the ardent affections of the soul—otherwise far from you be the thought that you have worshiped God when you have used solemn words with thoughtless hearts! Does not this touch some of you? You have never prayed in all your lives! You have said a prayer, but never talked with God. You have been to the house of God, perhaps, from your infancy, but never worshipped God! Though oftentimes the preacher said, "Let us worship God," yet you have never done so. O sirs, what! All these formalities, all these routines, all these outward forms, and yet no heart, no soul?—nothing acceptable with God? Alas for you! And will you go on so forever? You will, so long as you rest contented with the outward! I pray that God may put in you a sacred discontent with the merely outward worship and make you long and cry that you may offer unto Him the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart through Jesus Christ the Savior, by the power of the eternal Spirit—for that will the Lord accept!

Thus I have mentioned one form of sacrifice that God does not accept, namely, that of formalists. Now this Psalm shows us that—

II. THERE ARE OTHER SACRIFICES WHICH GOD REJECTS, namely, *those offered by persons who continue their wicked lives*. Now some will preach and yet live in an ungodly manner. Some can lead prayers in the prayer-meeting and yet can lie and steal. There are those who, for a pretense, make long prayers. Their minds are occupied upon the widow's house, and how they shall devour it, while their lips are uttering consecrated words! Now observe *no man's praying is accepted with God who is a hater of instruction*. Turn to the 17th verse of the Psalm—"Seeing you hate instruction, and cast My Words behind your back." Let me look a man in the face who never reads the Bible—who does not want to know what is in it—who has no care about what God's Word is—I see there a man that cannot worship God! If he says, "Oh, I am sincere in my own way"—Sir, your "own way"—but that way is sure to be the way of rebellion! A servant does not have his own way, but his master's way! You are not a servant of God while you think that your will and your fancy are to settle what God would have you do. "To the law and to the testimony." Every devout mind should say, "I will search and see what God would have me do." What does He say to me? Does He tell me that I am, by nature, lost and ruined? Lord, help me to feel it! Does He tell me that only by faith in a crucified Savior can I be saved? Lord, work that faith in me! Does He tell me that they who are justified must also be sanctified and made pure in life? Lord, sanctify me by Your Spirit and work in me purity of life! The really accepted man desires to know the divine will and to that man there is not one part of Scripture that he

would wish not to know, nor one part of God's teaching that he would wish to be ignorant of! The Lord does not expect you, beloved, while you are in this world at, any rate, to know everything, but He does expect that you who call yourselves His people should also be as little children, who are quite willing to learn! Oh, it is an ill sign with us when there are some chapters that we would like to see pasted over—when there are some passages of Scripture that grate on our ears—when we do not want to be too wise in what is written—do not want to know too well what the Lord's will is! If you willfully shut your ear to God's instruction and will not listen to His will, neither will He listen to your prayer, nor can you expect that your sacrifice will be received by the Most High! Such things are not acceptable, and yet, how large a proportion of Christendom has never recognized the duty of learning the will of God from God's own Spirit! They take it from their party leaders—one borrows from this body of divinity, another from his Prayer Book! One borrows from his parents and must be what his father was—and another borrows from his friend or thinks that the National Church must necessarily be the right one! But the genuine spirit says, "Lord, I would have that which is Your mind—not mine, nor man's. Oh, teach me!" And though he judges not others, he desires always to be judged of God, Himself—to stand before the Most High and say, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my way, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the right way everlasting."

The Psalm goes on to say that *God does not accept the sacrifices of dishonest men*. "When you saw the thief, you consented with him." When a man's common trade is dishonesty—when frequently he excuses himself, as some servants do, in little pilfering—as some masters do in false markings of their goods. When the man knows he is not walking uprightly before his fellow men, he comes to the altar of God and brings a sacrifice which he pollutes with every touch of his hand! No, sir! No! Say not that you have fellowship with God when your fellowship is with a thief! Do you think you can have God on one side, and the thief on the other? Surely you know not who He is! If we are not perfect, yet at least let us be sincere! And if there are sins into which we fall through inadvertence and surprise, yet at least uprightness before our fellow men is one thing that must not be lacking—cannot be lacking in a gracious soul—in a true child of God whom God accepts.

So next, *the sin of impurity prevents our worshiping God*. You come and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us!" Or you say, "We praise You, O God. We acknowledge You to be the Lord." Or you stand up here and sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," and you have come from lascivious talking—perhaps from worse than talking! You have even, now, upon your mind some scheme of what is called, "pleasure," and you think that "life" means what in this assembly and in the assembly of God's people it were best not to mention, for you count it no shame to do what believers count it shame even to think of! Polluted hands! Polluted hands! How can they be lifted up before God? Use what

forms you may, your praises are an abomination! Your prayers, while you continue as you are, are a loathing and a stench in the nostrils of God! Turn! Repent! Seek washing in the Savior's blood—and then you may offer acceptable praises, but not till then!

The Psalmist goes on to say that *so it is with slanderers*. Slanderers cannot be accepted with God—those (and oh, how many there are) who count it sport to ruin other people's characters—who seem to take a joy and a delight in finding fault with the people of God! How can you expect that God will bless you when you are cursing your fellow men! And while your mouth is full of bitterness, how can it also be full of praise? Now these are not things that will cheer and comfort the people of God. I trust it is a main point in my own ministry to comfort God's people, but the axe also must be laid to the root of the tree! And let it be known to all who come into these courts that if they come here with defilement in their spirits and with lust or unrighteousness in their daily practice and love to have it so, from this pulpit they shall find no apologies and gather no comfort! And from God's Word, too, they shall have denunciation, but not consolation! They shall have threats and judgment, but not the promised blessing! Now we must have a few minutes on the next part of our subject, on which I hope to enlarge on another occasion, which is—

III. WHAT SACRIFICES ARE ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD?

The text tells us, first, thanksgiving. "Offer unto God thanksgiving." Let us come and worship, then, brothers and sisters—let us come and worship! We were lost, but Jesus came to seek the lost. Blessed be His name! We were foul and filthy, but His mercy brought us to the fountain filled with blood. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might." Since that very day in which He washed us, He has given us all things richly in His covenant. "He makes us to lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside the still waters." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Now if that is your spirit. If you can keep up that spirit even when the husband sickens, when the child dies, when the property melts away—if you can say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord"—what if there is no hymn from your lips? What if there is no bull on the altar? Yet these are the calves of your lips—the offering of your heart—and they are a sacrifice of a sweet smell if they are presented through Jesus Christ, the great atoning High Priest! This is a sacrifice that God accepts, and I dare say it is often offered to Him in an attic—often presented to Him in a cellar—often, I hope, by you when your hands are grimy at your work and, perhaps, even when your cheeks are scalding with tears! You can yet say, "I am His child. I have innumerable mercies. When He smites me, yet it is in tenderness. Glory be to His name! Blessed be His name!" That is the sacrifice for a spiritual God! That is spiritual worship! Have you ever offered it, dear hearer, or have you been living on God's favor and yet never thanked Him? Have you had your life preserved and your daily food constantly given, and yet have you never blessed God for it?

Oh, then you have never worshiped Him! I do not care though you are a good singer—although you put on a vestment, or whatever else you have done—if you have not thanked Him from your soul, devoutly and intensely, you know not what the worship of Jehovah is!

Next the text tells us that *performance of our vows is worship*. "Pay your vows unto the Most High." Now I shall interpret that not after the Jewish form, but adapt it to our own. You, beloved, profess to be a Christian. Live as a Christian! Say, "The vows of the Lord are upon me. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? I am a servant of Jesus. I am not my own—I am bought with a price. What can I do to praise Him today? How can I win another soul for Him who bought me with His precious blood? I declared myself, when I joined His Church, to be one of His and, therefore, a cross-bearer. Let me take up my cross, today, whatever it is, though I may be ridiculed, separated and laughed at. Let me do it—bear it cheerfully for His truth! And let me say—

"If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You will remember me."

Let me do everything as in His sight. I was in outward form buried in Baptism—I profess, then, to be dead to the world. Oh, let me try to be so! Let not its pleasures cheat me! Let not its gains enchant me! I even profess to be risen with Christ. Oh, God, help me to lead a risen life—the life of one who is risen from the dead with Jesus Christ and quickened with His spirit! Now if that is your thought, that is true worship! That is real sacrifice to the Most High—when a soul desires to walk before the Lord in conformity with its vows and gracious obligations, not with a view of merit—for it lays all its hope upon Jesus and finds all its merit there, and simply cries, "I am His, and I wish to live as one that bears a blood-bought name."

We are told, too, in the text—and that is a very sweet part of it—(I wish I had an hour or two to talk of it)—that *prayer in time of trouble is also a very sweet form of worship*. Men are looking for rubrics, and they are contending whether the rubric is "so-and-so according to the use of Sarum." Now here is a rubric according to the use of the whole Church of God bought with Jesus' blood—"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." You are in great distress of mind—now you have an opportunity of worshiping God! Trust Him with your distress! Call to Him as a child calls to its mother! Show how you honor Him—how you love Him—how you trust Him! You shall honor Him even in that—but when you get the answer to your prayer, which will be a sure proof that God has accepted your offering—then you will honor Him again a second time by devoutly thanking Him that He has heard your prayer! O sinner, this is a way in which you can worship God! Does your sin lie heavy upon your conscience? Call upon God in the day of trouble, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" That is true worship! Have you brought yourself to poverty for your sin? Say, "Lord, help me." That is prayer! Worship, then, can never go up from all the pealing organs in the

world if men's hearts go not with them! Are you a Christian just now under a cloud? Have you lost the light of Jesus' face? Call upon Him now in the day of trouble. Believe that He will appear for you. Say, "I shall praise Him. His countenance is my aid," and you will be bringing better sacrifice than if you brought he-goats, bullocks and rams! This is what the Lord loves—the trust, the child-like confidence, the loving seeking after sympathy which is in His children's hearts. Oh, bring Him this!

Then he adds—if you will turn to the last part of the Psalm, which I must incorporate in the text—"Whoever offers praise, glorifies Him." *True praise glorifies God.* I must confess that I do not particularly like to hear voices that are off-key in the singing, but I should not like to stop one voice, certainly not if it stopped one heart! I think it is said of Mr. Rowland Hill, that an old lady once sat upon his pulpit stairs who sang so very badly—she had a voice that the good gentleman really could not feel that he could worship while he heard her voice in his ears—and he said, "Do be quiet, my good soul." She answered, "I sing from my heart, Mr. Hill." "Sing away!" he said, "and I beg your pardon. I will not stop you." And I think I would beg the pardon of the most cracked voice I ever heard if it is really accompanied with a real loving, grateful heart! God gets some of His richest praise amidst dying groans—and He gets delightful music from His people's triumphant cries. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" To praise God—to sing an *excelsis in extremis*—to give Him the highest praise when we are in the deepest waters—this is acceptable with Him! The best worship comes from the Christian that is most tried—at least in this case. When the soul is most bowed down with trouble, if he can say, "I will praise Him: I will praise Him in the fire: I will praise Him in the jaws of death, itself"—ah, these are sacrifices better than hecatombs of bulls, and better than the blood of fed beasts! Not your architecture, not your music, not your costumes, not your ordinations or your forms, but your prostrate hearts, your souls with veiled faces, worshiping the mysterious, the unseen but everywhere present—the great I AM—this is worship! Through Jesus Christ, it is accepted. It is of the Spirit's own creation. It only comes from truly spiritual, regenerate men and women, boys and girls—and wherever it comes, it reaches the Majesty on high—and God smiles and accepts it!

Now, brothers and sisters, I send you home with this reflection. Some of you have never worshiped God. Then think of that, and God help you to begin! Others of us who have worshiped Him ought to consider how large a proportion of our worship is good for nothing. Oh, how often you come and hear now on Thursday night! Why, have not you sometimes built a ship in the pew—mended a plow—darned your husband's stockings—seen to the sick child—done all sorts of things when you should be worshiping God? Now these distracting thoughts mar worship! And I do pray God that you, as a people, may never get to think that coming here is of any use if you do not bring your hearts with you! Thomas Manton said that if we sent on the Sabbath a man stuffed with

straw to sit in our pews for us, and thought that was worshiping God, it would be very absurd! But not one whit more than when we bring ourselves stuffed with evil thoughts or dead, cold thoughts that cannot rise to God! I cannot always get to God, I know, but I at least hope I may groan until I do. Oh, it does seem an awful thought that some of us may have no more feelings than the pews we sit on—no more worship of God than those iron columns and those lamps! Oh, may you never be that sort of slumbering congregation with whom it is all form! We have read a strange poem of one who has pictured a ship manned by all dead men. Dead men pulled the sails. A dead man steered and a skeleton eye kept a look-out. I am afraid there are congregations like that—where all is dead and all is form. Oh, may it not be so with you or me, but may we all realize, through Jesus Christ, who stands at the throne of God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we "have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ," and that evermore to God's glory! Amen.

I speak on this theme but very feebly, but I do feel it from my very heart. I do pray that we may all be accepted worshipers because the heart is found in us. It was always a bad sign—by the Roman seers it was pretended to be the worst sign—when they found no heart in the victim. It is a dreadful sign when in all our worship there is no heart. God forbid that it may be so! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 50:1-10.
A Psalm of Asaph.

Whether this means that Asaph wrote it, or that it was committed to him to sing, we do not know. Certainly Asaph did write some Psalms. There are 12 ascribed to him in the book of Psalms. He wrote some and it is equally certain that some others were dedicated to him. He had the leadership of the choir who sang the Psalms in the temple. This is a very marvelous Psalm. If we only consider the poetry of it, it is one of the chief of the Psalms, but its matter is very deep—august. It should be read with great reverence of spirit. The Psalm begins with a prologue in which the scene is introduced. God is represented as coming forth out of Zion to judge those who profess to be His people—to discern between the precious and the vile—to separate between mere professors and pretenders. The first six verses represent God as coming.

Verse 1. *The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.* The Hebrew has it, "El Elohim, Jehovah has spoken"—three names of God—great and mysterious—the strong God, the only God, the self-existent God. He speaks—calls upon the whole earth from the east to the west to listen to His voice.

2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.* There He dwelt. Now in this scene He is represented as shining forth from it. As he

had described the earth as being lighted by the sun from the east to the west, so now God, Himself, who at first speaks and demands a hearing, now shines forth with beams of Glory which altogether eclipse the brightness of the sun. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined."

3. *Our God shall come and shall not keep silent: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.* The voice was heard saying that God would come and then the beams of glory which warned men that He was coming—and here His people stand attentive, expecting Him to come. "They expect Him to speak." Fire and rushing wind are usually used in Scripture as attendants of the throne of God—fire representing justice in action, and the tempest representing His power when it is displayed. Think of God's coming thus. The poet here pictures it, but it will be so in very deed. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon you that know not God." He will even come after this manner, "for our God is a consuming fire."

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.* Do you catch the thought? There comes the great Judge with the fire burning before Him. He rides upon a cherub—yes, rides upon the wings of the wind, and then He calls heaven, with all the angels and glorified spirits—and He calls to earth, with all its inhabitants, to stand and witness what He does while He judges His people.

5. *Gather My saints together unto Me: those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.* God has a separated and chosen people. It will be a part of the proceedings at the last great day to gather these together unto God. There will be a day when He will make up His jewels—a time when He will gather His wheat into His garner. And as this Psalm stands, this is a large gathering. It refers to a picture of all professing saints being brought before the throne of God—true saints that made a covenant with God by sacrifice. They see Jesus Christ, who ratifies the covenant of grace by blood, and they have laid their hands on Christ, and the covenant made between them and God. But there were others in the Psalmist's day who had offered sacrifice and pretended to have made a covenant with God—and there are their representatives in these days. They are now to be gathered before the throne of judgment, for God has come to judge them.

6. *And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge, Himself. Selah.* The very heavens, as they look down upon the august assize where God, Himself, not by deputy, but in the person of His dear Son, shall sit and judge—the heavens shall declare His righteousness. Now I doubt not the heavens often wonder how it is that God permits the ungodly to be mixed with the righteous in His Church. But ah, when the fan shall be in His hand and He shall thoroughly purge His floor—when He shall lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet—the angels shall wonder at the exactness and accuracy of the divine

judgment! "Selah." Pause, rest, consider, admire, adore, humble yourself, pray. It is good to have a pause when such a scene as this is before us. Now from the 5th verse down to the 15th verse you have God's dealing with His people. The Judge is sitting on the throne. He begins to speak thus—

7. *Hear, O My people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God.* It is with His nominal people, the Jews. It is with His visible Church, God is now dealing. He Himself has seen the ways of His professing people—He need not, therefore, call any witnesses. He who cannot err will testify against us! And He declares, Himself, here not only as God, but under that name, "Your God." It was thus the law began. "I am the Lord Your God that brought you up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage." It is thus the judgment and rebuke begin—"I am God, even Your God."

8. *I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me.* He is going to deal with weightier matters than that! Whether they have, or have not, offered abundant sacrifices, that is not the thing which God looks at. "I will not reprove you for your sacrifices. No, I have done with your sacrifices."

9. *I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds.* "Do you think that these things in themselves are of any value to Me, O you formalists? I will not even take them."

10. *For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.* Though men call them theirs, yet they are your God's.

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THE SUFFERING CHRIST SATISFIED
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A SERMON
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"He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many." Isaiah 53:11.

IN these words we have God the Father speaking concerning His Son and declaring that since He had endured soul travail, He would guarantee to Him a satisfactory reward. How delightful it is to observe the co-working of the various persons of the sacred Trinity in the matter of salvation! It was so in the creation. It was the Father who said, "Let there be light," and there was light. But we read concerning the eternal Son that, "without Him was not anything made which was made," and we find express mention of the Spirit of God, who moved upon the face of the waters and created order out of chaos. Father, Son and Spirit worked together to make the world and, in the making of man, we all remember that gracious word, "Let *Us* make man in Our own image with Our own likeness." Even so is it in our salvation. The Father has chosen a people unto Himself. These people He has given unto the Son. To these people He has also given the Only-Begotten to be their salvation. It is through the abounding grace of the Father that salvation comes to the chosen, but only through Jesus Christ, for everywhere He is the Savior. We are redeemed by His precious blood. He it is that will bring the many sons unto glory and is the author and the finisher of their faith. Yet not without the Holy Spirit, for the blessed Spirit graciously condescends to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. What God ordains, the Spirit executes. What the Son purchases, the Holy Spirit bestows. 'Tis He who makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light—and when we are so meet—we are introduced to the inheritance by the hand of the glorious Son, and are led up to the throne of the eternal Father. Christians, live much in contemplation upon the God of your salvation! Magnify Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Shun that ministry which dishonors either of these blessed Persons and seek to be fully built up and instructed in the gospel teaching which glorifies Father, Son and Spirit in divine equality, and leads your own hearts into "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit."

With that by way of preface, we shall now come to the text at once, taking the words as well as the sense of them.

The Father says of the Son that, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." The first point of consideration, very briefly, is—

I. OUR LORD'S PAINS AND SUFFERINGS, BY WHICH HE MADE AN ATONEMENT FOR OUR SINS.

These are described in the text as "the travail of His soul." You know the meaning of the word, "travail." I will not explain it—I will the rather do with it as the painter who drew the picture of Agamemnon and the sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia. He painted Agamemnon, but he threw a veil over his face, for he felt he could not express the grief that was in the father's face and, therefore, the face was delicately concealed. Let us do the same. It may suffice for us to say that whenever in Holy Scripture a forcible word is needed to express fear, overwhelming pain, distraction and confusion, the word, "travail," is used. For instance, when the kings looked upon Mount Zion and saw how safe it was from their attacks, "fear took hold upon them, there, and pain as of a woman in travail." And in the description which is given by the prophet of the men of Babylon when their city was overthrown—he represents them as being "full of pain as if they were in travail." It is an unutterable amount of inward grief and trouble and a swelling of the inner man until it seems as if the whole fabric of nature, being delicately convulsed, would be utterly broken up to its ruin.

Observe the text says, "The travail of His soul." We are not to depreciate the bodily sufferings of Christ, but still it has been well said that "the soul-sufferings of Christ were the soul of His sufferings." Brothers and sisters, there was so much in the outward agony of Christ, that my ears have tingled and my heart burned with wrath when I have heard certain theologians speak lightly of it! Speak lightly of the sweat of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane? Speak lightly of the flagellations by Herod and Pilate when the bloody scourges made the sacred drops to roll? Think lightly of the shame, spitting and the crown of thorns? Oh, sirs, dare you think and speak lightly of the piercing of His hands and of His feet, and of the fever which those wounds engendered, and that thirst which the fever and the broiling sun together brought on, and the rending of those hands when the feet could no longer support the body and the iron tore through the nerves? Is nothing or little to be said of all this? God forbid, brothers and sisters! We believe that the body of Christ took its full share of the chastisement. By His stripes we are healed! By His scourging and bodily chastisements we get at least a portion of the healing balm which cures the disease of sin! Our sin was with the body and Christ's atonement was with the body. Our flesh was sinful and, therefore, His flesh must suffer. Had we been simply spirits and as spirits alone had sinned, a spirit might have made atonement for us—and a soul bereft of a body might have been a perfect substitute—but we are sons of Adam and still wear this red earth about us! And as we sin in the body, so must the Savior, with hands, feet, brow and every member of His blessed frame, be made to suffer to make atonement for our guilt! Still, still, the travail of His soul was the chief matter and it is that the text speaks about! Where shall I find a golden reed with which to measure this city, or where shall I find a plumb line with which to

fathom the depths of agony which I now see before me? Jesus Christ suffered so that I despair of conceiving His sufferings, or of conveying them to you by any form of words.

And yet there are two lines of thought which might help us. And the first is this—*the perfection of our Lord's nature*. Just think of this for a minute. Our Lord was utterly and altogether free from sin or any tendencies to sin—and yet He came into this world and He lived in the midst of sinners—and He must, in consequence of this, have suffered a torture to which you and I are utter strangers, except in some small measure! Now think for a while—inasmuch as Christ was perfect, He was capable of an amount of sympathy at which you and I have only made a guess. What a dreadful thing it is for us, sometimes, to have to go and walk through a hospital. I know I would feel it to be one of the most painful days in my life if I had to spend a day in the operating room of a hospital. I think I would have to be taken out within the first five minutes! But to be obliged to stay on and see my fellow creatures suffer beneath the knife, even when used most carefully, and tenderly, and wisely, would, I think, be too much! Some of you who have never seen the depths of poverty, if you were obliged to go to those parts and places where men are dying of starvation—if you were taken away just now to Orissa, or made to stop in the famine-stricken districts of Algeria, or even compelled to live for a while in some of the very poorest districts of this great, but just now, poverty-beaten city, you would feel it to be a great pain. I tell you, when sometimes there are half a dozen poor cases before us and we have to help them, and then there come half a dozen more, and we cannot help them, it is one of the pains of life! It is one of the worst ills a man can have to bear, to be so public as to have all this evil gathered round his feet, and yet be unable to relieve it! Now we will not say that our Savior was unable to relieve it, but some sufferings which men had brought upon themselves by their sin came before Him perpetually, and they must have pierced and penetrated His tender and sympathetic heart, riddling it, as it were, with the barbed arrows of grief. Still, He took upon Himself our infirmities and carried our sorrows all His lifetime.

But there was worse than this. Our Lord, being perfect, *must have shuddered as He came into daily contact with sinners.* Shut a good man up in a den with drunks, unchaste person, and swearers—and what worse hell could you devise for him? Might not one prefer to be enclosed in a den of tigers or vipers sooner than with some classes of society? Now that kind of shuddering which comes over a chaste man when he is obliged to listen to the lascivious song, or the holy heart when it is compelled to hear blasphemy and horrid libels against the Most High—that existed to a pre-eminent degree in the pure and sensitive heart of Christ! Wherever He went, He either saw the profligacy of the publican, or the hypocrisy of the Pharisee, or the infidelity of the Sadducee, or the formalism of the Scribe. There was not a step that He took but there was

something to grieve Him! Even His own disciples—not merely by ignorance, but by worse than that—pierced Him to the very quick, so that He endured a soul travail in some respects during the whole of His life!

But the point I want to bring you to is this. He was such a perfect being and yet *sin was actually laid upon Him*, and what must this have been! I would like to express myself cautiously and carefully. Jesus Christ never was a sinner, never could have been one, never was guilty of sin. In Him was no sin. Yet the sin of His people was imputed to Him, for so I understand the words, "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." What a word! "And He bore the sin of many." This chapter has the expression, I think, three or four times over that God actually laid upon Christ, human sin! Now what a load for Him to carry! What a pain for sin thus to come into contact with the perfectly holy soul of the blessed Jesus! You do not know what a very hell is included in the thought that sin came to be laid upon Christ. Think of it yourselves. You are perfectly innocent, tonight, of anything like murder. Suppose yourselves arraigned tomorrow morning at the police court and accused of it? How would you feel? You may tell me that your innocence might and would, sustain you. I have no doubt it would, but still, what a shame it would be to stand before the vulgar crowd and to be pointed at as having been guilty of an infamous deed! And suppose that, although you had not committed the deed, you were, nevertheless, unable to plead guiltless, for, for certain reasons, it was necessary that the guilt of the action should lie upon you? Can you now conceive what strength you would need to keep your tongue from speaking so as to deny it—and to stand there like the sheep before the shearers—dumb to your own confusion?

Can you imagine yourselves being condemned to die, though the sin was not yours, yet out of some great love which you bore to another, you are condemned? And you can add another supposition—condemned to die justly, too, although you, yourselves, had not personally been guilty. Can you picture yourselves coming shuddering up the gallows stairs to face that dreadful throng assembled around the gallows, with no eye to pity you among them all, but the whole assembled multitude thrusting out the tongue, pointing, mocking, jeering and saying, "He trusted in God that He would deliver him. Let Him deliver him, seeing he delights in Him." Now the mere dying you could bear, as martyrs have done, but not the dying with all that weight of sin legally placed upon you! Oh, who can tell what must have been the horror which took hold upon the Savior, and how true must have been His expression when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"? The holy One in the sinner's place! An angel in a dungeon! The God of heaven veiled in human flesh to be hung upon the gallows as a malefactor—start as you think of it and then try to conceive, if you can, what must have been the horror of His soul!

But I have got another plumb line with which, perhaps, if the Holy Spirit helps us, we shall be able to fathom the depth better. Think, beloved, *of what our sins deserved*. It is undoubtedly the teaching of Scripture that a single sin deserves death from God's hand. The very sparks of sin set hell on a blaze but what do you deserve who have transgressed ten thousand times ten thousand times told? And Christ did not die for you, alone—He died for a multitude that no man can number! Will you multiply, then, the desert of the sin of one human being by that of all the countless myriads who are now before the throne of God and the yet greater numbers that shall yet be brought there? Now I will not say that Christ suffered precisely and exactly what all these ought to have suffered as the result of their sin, but I will say that what He offered to God was certainly not a less vindication of His justice, but a greater one than all that would have been, for if all the myriads of the elect had laid in hell forever and ever, their debt would have been no nearer payment after ten thousand times ten thousand years than at the first! And yet this man, by His one offering of Himself, has put away all the sin and all the punishment to all the multitudes for whom He shed His blood! Transcendent mystery! Angelic minds shall fail to explore the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadth of this atoning sacrifice! Can you now guess at it? You can, yet you cannot tell it, for it surpasses language—the travail of the Redeemer's soul!

I ask you now to think of your Lord in His bitter pangs and tormenting griefs. View Him prostrate in the garden. See Him sweating great drops of blood for you. Behold Him tortured by Pilate and Herod, and then see Him, with broken heart, going up to the accursed tree and there being made a curse for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! We must now pass on to observe that there are—

II. CERTAIN RESULTS GUARANTEED FROM THE SUFFERING OF THE LORD.

The Eternal Father says, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul." That is, *He shall see the fruit of it*. Jesus is not dead! The travail was enough to kill Him, but He remembers no more His travail for the joy of the blessed fruit which is brought into the world thereby. He looks down from heaven, tonight, as He has been looking down ever since He ascended there and He beholds the sweet results of all His pains and griefs. Now attentively observe one thing. It has always seemed to us, and I think it will seem reasonable to you, that if Jesus Christ is to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied, then *whatever was His intention when He laid down His life will be given Him*. This is not far-fetched because if it is written, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied," how is a man satisfied if he does not have the result, the full result of his labor, above all such labor—labor even unto death? If a man does not achieve by his dying all that he died for, then he cannot be satisfied—unless his first intention is amended, which would imply that he had been in error. Do you see the drift of this observation? Jesus

Christ did not, then, on the cross, intend to save every man! It is not true that Jesus Christ died with the intention of saving every man of the human race. But this is true—Christ died that every man might be spared—and they are spared. You are here tonight as the result of His death. And in that sense He "tasted death for every man." He died that every man might have the gospel preached to Him, that there should be an honest declaration that whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved. I this night, for the ten thousandth time, announce to you that gospel—that if you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved! And this gospel is to be preached not to some, but to every creature under heaven! And the proclamation of this gospel comes universally to all mankind as the result of Christ's death—and in that sense He tasted death for every man.

But, mark you, He stood as a substitute for none of you unless you believe in Him, or shall believe in Him. He suffered for those who trust Him, but if you trust Him not, you have no part nor lot in this matter! He had no design to save you. If He had, neither you nor the devil in hell could have frustrated that design. But this is His design, "God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life." This is the mark of the people for whom Christ died—that they come and trust in Jesus! By this "broad arrow" are the blood-bought known, and the blood-redeemed discerned from the unregenerate mass—by their trusting in Jesus! He has redeemed us from among men. He loved His Church and gave His Son for it. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. All that the Father gives Him shall come to Him, and him that comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out. We know and feel, then, that what was Christ's intention by His death, He will certainly accomplish! And oh, what a blessed thought this is for those of us who have to preach the gospel, that the gospel will not be preached in vain, that we do not preach it at haphazard, or perhaps, or casting dice, as it were, for men's souls! He bought them and He will have them! They were given Him of old in the decree, and He will have them, snatching them from between the lion's jaws by the power of His own irresistible grace. Christ sees of the travail of His soul whenever a sinner touches the hem of His garment and receives the virtue that comes out of Him. He is satisfied as saints advance in grace, as they make progress in the divine life. He is most of all satisfied as, one by one, they go up the glittering pathway to the gates of pearl and enter into rest. He will be completely satisfied when all the chosen company shall be on the streets of gold like unto transparent glass and shall, without the lack of a single voice in the divine choir, sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever."

Dear brothers and sisters, comfort one another with these words, that Christ will have His own! He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Up with the red flag once again! Sound the trumpet, you heralds of the cross! Defy the hosts of hell! You may defy modern rationalism and modern Popery, too. You may despise the sneers of the

critics and the banter of the ignorant, and the threats of the persecutors! None of these can trample that flag beneath their feet. The King sits upon the throne of God in Zion, working His way and having His will. Has He said and shall He not do it? Shall He purpose and shall it not come to pass? Over your heads there sounds like the trumpet of doom, the sound of Jehovah's words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion." He does as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world! He shall see His seed! He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands!

But again we must pass on. One of the results of the Savior's passion is now specified in the text, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant *justify many*."

The former part of my discourse has been addressed to believers. I should now like to catch the ear of the unbeliever. Do you know what it means to be justified? It means, very simply, to be made just—to be accepted by God—as if you were always just. You have not been just, but a very long way from it! You have done the things you ought not to have done. Now if ever you are to be saved, you must be, before God, righteous. How can you be made righteous? The only way is the way mentioned in the text—by the knowledge of Christ shall Christ justify many. "What?" says one, "I thought we were to be made holy through what we do!" No, not by what you do, but through what you know! "But I know a great many things," says one. Do you know Jesus Christ? You know *about* Him, you say. Do you know this about Him—that He came into the world to save sinners? Do you know that you are a sinner and do you know that, therefore, if you cast yourself upon Him, He will save you? "Well," you say, "we do know that." Well, I want to know whether you know it in your heart, not merely as a common piece of news, but whether you know it by experience in your soul? In other words, do you trust in Him? Do you know Him so as to believe Him? When you know a man well, if he is a good man, you trust him. You cannot help trusting him when you know him. So do you know Christ so as to trust Him? If you do, you shall be justified—that is, God will treat you as if you were perfectly just and look upon you as if you never did wrong in all your life! And He will bless you and take you to heaven as if you had been an innocent from your mother's breast. "But am I not to *do* something?" Nothing. "But am I not to *feel* something?" Nothing. The doing and the feeling will come afterwards—the way to be justified is by *knowing*.

"How can I know, then?" asks one. Well, listen. Incline your ears and come unto me. Listen, and your souls shall live, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Attend much where the gospel is preached, and when you hear it, do not reject it, but accept it! Oh, my dear hearer, I wish you would accept the gospel now—tonight! It all lies in a nutshell. It is just this—Jesus Christ put Himself into the sinner's place and whoever will trust Him, Christ put Himself into that man's

place. And that man's sins are not his sins any more. They were put on Christ and Christ's righteousness belongs to that man. "What? Even if he has been a drunk?" Yes, if he has been a drunk ever so deep. "What? If he has been a swearer?" Yes, yes! If he trusts Christ, his blasphemy shall not be imputed to him. It was laid on Christ. Christ suffered on the red cross where He poured out His life's blood, suffered for that man's blasphemies. "Well, but he has been in sin all this afternoon." I care not if he has been in sin up till the last tick of the clock—if he comes and casts himself upon what Christ has done, with a simple, hearty, earnest faith—he may come in, for his sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. "Will he go and do as he did before?" Not if his sins are forgiven him, for he will love God and he will so love God that he will hate the things he once loved. He will turn his cups bottom upwards. And his oaths he will vomit forever. And he will begin now, once and for all, to walk in the ways of holiness, serving God whom once he despised. Yes, yes—it is by *knowing Christ* that men are justified, and only by this!

"Oh," says one, "I wish I were justified so!" Well, look at the text, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many." Justify many! Then why not you? "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" And the answer comes, "He shall justify many." Oh, that He would justify all in this Tabernacle! And why not? The justifying righteousness of Christ has an unbounded efficacy about it, just as His blood has—and He will justify not only many—but all who know Him and rely upon Him shall be found just in the sight of God!

The last clause of the text explains the reason of it all, *"For He shall bear their iniquities."* Three or four sentences upon this will be enough, for the clause is so very plain that it needs no explanation. The reason why Jesus Christ is able to forgive sin and to make unjust men, just, is this—because He bears their iniquities. My dear brothers and sisters, you know that in these modern times it is thought to be very old-fashioned and very ignorant to teach the literal substitution of Christ in the place of sinners! And to say that Christ actually bore our sin and that we bear Christ's righteousness is thought to be an absurdity! Well then, absurdity or not, God is responsible for it, for these are His very words, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for"—for this very reason—"for He shall bear their iniquities." Then if Christ did not bear their iniquities, there is no justifying sinners! This is the very top, and bottom, and basis of Christ's power to justify—that He, Himself, took the iniquity of those whom He justifies! There are gentlemen we sometimes meet with who bring forth new theories of the atonement—very pretty and very philosophical ones—and I have sometimes felt inclined to endorse those theories, for there was a great deal of attractiveness and glitter about them. But I now tell you my own experience in the matter. I never find my conscience made peaceful by any theory of the atonement, except this, that my sins were actually laid upon Christ and that His righteousness is put upon me—and it is only when I firmly believe in that divine exchange and blessed Substitution

that I find quiet and rest within! And as long as this is the case, I shall cling to the old anchorage and let who will, try new-fangled ways! If Christ really did suffer for sinners, then God is just in not punishing sinners. But if He did not actually suffer for sinners, then there is no atonement, the justice of God is not satisfied and there is no basis for a sinner to rest upon at all!

Now what say you, my hearers? Can you look to Christ upon the cross, with a load of sin upon Him, and can you say, "I lay my guilt there"? Can you look to Him in the throes of death, bruised beneath His Father's rod, and can you say, "He was bruised for me—my sins I have confessed and laid them upon Him"? Then are you happy! But if there has been none to bear your sins, then remember, I beseech you, that you will have to bear them yourselves! And if they gave Christ a travail, oh, what will they give you? Oh, impenitent ones, if the imputed sins that were laid on Christ made Him sorrowful, even unto death, what will your actual sins do with you when you are made drunk with the wormwood and God makes you to break your teeth with gravel—when you are cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? If the veil were lifted, we might hear, tonight, the cries of spirits that are banished far from God without a hope. Within an hour that may be your portion, unconverted hearer! In a few more years, which will seem as short as an hour when you have looked back upon them, that will be your portion if you die impenitent! And if you do not repent tonight, what cause have you to hope that you will repent tomorrow? Hearts do not soften by delay! Spirits are not rendered more susceptible of gracious influences by procrastination! Christ's word is, "now." Cast it not off with the devil's word—"tomorrow." You must suffer, or Christ must be your Surety. What shall it be? Shall it be the hands fastened to the wood, yonder, or shall *your* hands be tormented in the flame? Shall it be that tongue which said, "I thirst," or shall it be *your* tongue which shall long for a drop of water in vain? Shall it be those feet that were fastened to the tree, or shall it be *your* members which have been servants to unrighteousness, and which shall be partakers in the divine wrath? As the Lord lives who once was crucified, I ask you to remember that I bade you this night in His name, close in with Him and trust Him! There is no door of hope for you but this—believe and live! So stands the Scripture. But if you laugh at this, if you despise this, if you forget this, if in any shape—

"Your ears refuse
The language of His grace
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord, in vengeance,
Will lift His hand and swear—
'You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.'"

If you believe not, it will be because you are not of His sheep, as He said unto you. But think not that you will make void His purpose, or disappoint the bleeding Lamb! Ah, no! If you will not come, others will. If you perish outside the ark, others shall enter and shall be saved. Perhaps your own wife, your own child shall be made willing, while you still reject. Oh, then, I pray you pause awhile this Sabbath evening, when the year is going on apace. When we have not long since passed, as it were, through the gates of the spring, and all the flowers are beginning to bloom, and the buds to burst forth, just ask whether it is not time for your hearts to open and your souls to bud—and your spirits to bring forth some hope, some love, some obedience to your Lord! And oh, may you do it! His shall be the praise, but yours shall be the great joy! And He shall have joy, too, as He shall thus see of the travail of His soul!

I could wish, and I do wish, that some of you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before you go home tonight. You may not have many more times to go home. This may be the very last time that you shall ever come here. It will not make you wretched on earth. It will increase your happiness here. It will help you to live and help you to die. It will make those eyes brighter, and put that heart at greater ease. And as for eternity, this is the true lamp for its darkness; this is the true light for all its gloom! What will you do without Christ? Oh, get Him and you shall be eternally blest! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72:1-16.

"A Psalm for Solomon"—much more for one who is greater than Solomon, the true Prince of Peace!

Verse 1. *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's Son.* So it is decreed, and so it has been accomplished, that Jesus, who is both a King and a King's Son, should have all judgment delivered into His hands. And now, at this time, Christ is the judge. It is He who discerns between the precious and the vile. He sits as King in the midst of Zion.

2. *He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and your poor with judgment.* The kingdom of Christ has a special eye to the poor. They are generally passed by and forgotten in the scope of legislature among men, but Christ makes even His poor people—the poor in spirit, also—to be the objects of His judgment.

3, 4. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.* In the reign of Christ there shall be no treading down of the little by the great—no pressure put upon the feeble by the strong—but His right hand shall get to the weakest cause, the victory!

5. *They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.* For the kingdom of Christ renews itself. It is never broken

in pieces by the power of the enemy, but every piece becomes a new root, and it springs up again. There are some plants of which they say that the more you tread upon them, the more they will spread, and certainly it is the case with the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as there is a sun in the heavens, and a moon to gladden the night, so shall the kingdom of Christ endure!

6. *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.* Christ shall not come like fire to burn up and to destroy, for His kingdom is one of mercy and divine grace. When the grass has just been wounded with the scythe, He shall come down to bring it refreshment that it may spring up again. In plenteous showers of grace shall He visit wounded spirits.

7. *In His days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.* There have been empires which have been propitious to the flourishing of great wrongs. Some of the worst and vilest of men have flourished under certain empires which have but lately passed away. But in the empire of Christ, the righteous alone shall flourish. Everything about Him and about His power shall make it go well for them, and His empire is the most truly peace —"abundance of peace so long as the moon endures."

8. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* Universal monarchy is to be the monarchy of Christ! This is the fifth great monarchy, and there shall never be another! No king or potentate that shall ever rise can possibly have universal dominion again. We need not fear that, for the fifth empire is that of the Christ of God, and behold He comes to claim it!

9. *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust.* The most distant tribes—those that wander and have no settled dwelling place—shall, nevertheless, bow before Him. The Arab boasts that he never knew a master—that even Caesar could not penetrate into his deserts and subdue him! But Christ shall be his Lord, and he will be glad to acknowledge Him!

10. *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.* We need not be afraid if this Psalm refers to Christ—and we do not doubt that it does. He must reign. The end of the world is not coming until there shall be a conquest for Him. He may come before that time, but certainly there shall be no winding up of history until this shall be literally true! "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents."

11, 12. *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and he that has no helper.* The Psalmist seems glad to dwell upon that. It seems to be the joy note in his mind—that the great King—the greatest of all kings—will care for the lowly and the humble. Let us rejoice in this, dear friends. Christ is chosen out of the people and exalted by God—and He is

the Christ not only ready to save the highest, but to save the lowest! From His kingdom we may say—

"None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude!
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude."

13-15. *He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live.* They say, "O king, live forever." It can never happen to their kings, but to our King it will happen! "He shall live."

15. *And to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba*—He shall have the best the world can find willingly given to Him. I am sure that we who know His love think that we have nothing good enough for Him. We would render to Him all that we have.

15. *Prayer also shall be made for Him continually.* With the gold shall come the golden prayer—the prayer for Christ. But how can we pray *for* Him? Why, that He may have the reward of His sufferings and see of the travail of His soul—that His kingdom may come and that His name may be dear in the hearts of men!

15. *And daily shall He be praised.* He shall have praise as well as prayer and gold.

16. *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.* It was corn—good seed corn, but there was only a handful of it. So there were saints in the world, but there were very few of them. And where were they? On the tops of the mountains! A strange place for corn—not a likely place for a harvest. So have God's servants been pushed into the corners of the earth. There they were in the valleys of Piedmont for many a year fighting for dear life. And in all lands, those that have been faithful to God have been put away into the corners—driven, as it were, to the mountaintops. But what has come of it, and what will come of it? Why, the fruit shall shake like Lebanon. The golden corn, standing upright in its strength, adorned with its ear, shall wave in the breeze as pleasing a sight even as the cedar of Lebanon!

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

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A WARNING TO BELIEVERS
NO. 3466

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1915,
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"Let no man beguile you of your reward."
Colossians 2:18.

THERE is an allusion here to the prize which was offered to the runners in the Olympic games. And at the outset it is well for us to remark how very frequently the Apostle Paul conducts us by his metaphors to the racecourse. Over and over again he is telling us so to run that we may obtain, bidding us to strive and, at other times, to agonize, and speaks of wrestling and contending. Ought not this make us feel what an intense thing the Christian life is—not a thing of sleepiness or haphazard, not a thing to be left, now and then, to a little superficial consideration? It must be a matter which demands all our strength, so that when we are saved there is a living principle put within us which demands all our energies and gives us energy over and above any that we ever had before! Those who dream that carelessness will find its way to heaven have made a great mistake. The way to hell is neglect, but the way to heaven is very different. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" A little matter of neglect brings you to ruin, but our Master's words are, "*Strive* to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek"—merely seek—"to enter in, and shall not be able." Striving is needed more than seeking! Let us pray that God the Holy Spirit would always enable us to be in downright, awful earnest about the salvation of our souls. May we never count this a matter of secondary importance, but may we seek first and beyond everything else, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. May we lay hold on eternal life—may we so run that we may obtain.

I would press this upon your memories because I observe—observe it in myself as well as in my fellow Christians, that we are often more earnest about the things of this life than we are about the things of the life to come. We are all impressed with the fact that in these days of competition, if a man would not be run over and crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of poverty, he must exert himself. No man now seems able to keep his head above water with the faint swimmer strokes which our forefathers used to give. We have to strive—and the bread that perishes has to be labored for. Shall it be that this poor world shall engross our earliest thoughts and our latest cares, and shall the world to come have only now and then a consideration? No! May we love our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength—and may we lay our body, soul and spirit upon the altar of Christ's service—for these are but our reasonable sacrifices to Him.

Now the Apostle, in the text before us, gives us a warning which comes to the same thing, however it is interpreted. But the passage is somewhat difficult of rendering and there have been several meanings given to it. Out of these there are three meanings which have been given of the text before us which are worthy of notice. "Let no man beguile you of your reward" The Apostle, in the first place, may mean here—

I. LET NO MAN BEGUILE ANY OF YOU who profess to be followers of Christ, *of the great reward that will await the faithful at the last.*

Now, my brothers and sisters, we have, many of us, commenced the Christian race, or we profess to have done so—but the number of the starters is far greater than the number of the winners! "They that run in a race, run all, but one receives the prize." "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many commence, apparently, in the Christian career, but after a while, though they did run well, something hinders them that they do not obey the truths of God and they go out from us because they were not of us, or if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. Now we may expect, now that we have commenced to run, that *some will come and try to turn us out of the racecourse openly*—not plausibly and with sophistry—but with an open and honest wickedness. Some will tell us plainly that there is no reward to run for, that our religion is all a mistake, that the pleasures of this world are the only things worth seeking, that there are delights of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and that we should do well to enjoy them. We all meet the Atheist with his sneer and with his ringing laugh. We shall meet with all kinds of persons who will, to our faces, tell us to turn back, for there is no heaven, there is no Christ, or, if there is, it is not worth our while to take so much trouble to find Him. Take heed of these people! Meet them face to face with dauntless courage. Mind not their sneers. If they persecute you, only, reckon this to be an honor to you—for what is persecution but the tribute which wickedness pays to righteousness? And what is it, indeed, but the recognition of the seed of the woman when the seed of the serpent would gladly bite His heel?

But the Apostle does not warn you so much against those people who openly come to you in this way. He knows that you will be on the alert against them. He gives a special warning against some others who would beguile you—that is to say—*who will try to turn you out of the right road, but who will not tell you that they mean to do so.* They pretend that they are going to show you something better than what you have, to teach you something that you knew not before, some improvement upon what you have here learned. In Paul's day there were some who took off the attention of the Christian from the worship of God to the worship of angels. "Angels," they said, "these are holy beings. They keep watch over you—you should speak of them with great respect." And then, when they grew bolder, they said, "You should ask for their protection." And then after a little while they said, "You should worship them. You should make them intermediate intercessors!" And so, step by step, they went on and established an old heresy which lasted for many years in the Christian Church—and which is not dead, even now—and thus the worship of angels crept in.

And now-a-days you will meet with men who will say, "That bread upon the Table—why, it represents the body of Jesus Christ to you when you come to the Lord's Supper. Therefore you ought to treat that bread with great respect." By-and-by they will get a little bolder, and then they say, "As it represents Christ, you may worship it, pay it respect as if it were Christ." By-and-by it will come to this, that you must have a napkin under your chin, lest you should drop a crumb. And they will say it would be very wicked if a drop of the sacred wine should cling to your moustache when you drink! And there will be the directions which are given in some of the papers coming out from the High Church party—absurdities which are only worthy of the nursery—about the way in which the holy bread is to be eaten and the holy wine is to be drunk—bringing in idolatry—sheer, clear idolatry, under the pretense of improving upon the too bare simplicity of the worship of Christ! Be careful of the very first step, I pray you.

Or, perhaps, it may come to you in another shape. One will say to you, "The place in which you worship—is it not very dear to you? That seat where you have been accustomed to sit and listen, is it not dear?" And your natural instincts will say, "Yes." Then it will go a little farther. "That place is holy—it ought never to be used for anything but worship." Then a little farther it will be, "Oh, that is the house of God," and you will come to believe that, contrary to the words which you know are given to you by the Holy Spirit, that God dwells not in temples made with hands—that is to say, in these buildings—and you will have, by degrees, a worship of places, and a worship of days, and a worship of bread, and a worship of wine! And then it will be said to you, "Your minister, has he not often cheered you? Well then, you should reverence him—call him, 'Reverend.'" Go a little farther and you will call him, "Father." Yet a little farther and he will be your confessor! Get a little farther and he will be your infallible Pope! It is all done step by step! The first step seems to be very harmless, indeed. Indeed, it is a kind of voluntary humility! You look as if you were humbling yourselves and were paying reverence to these things for God's sake—whereas the objective is to get you to pay reverence to *them*, instead of to *God*—and here the Apostle's words come in, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." They will often attack you in that insidious manner by setting up other objects of reverence besides those which spiritual men worship!

So, too, they will, by slow degrees, try to *insinuate a different way of living from that which is the true life of the Christian*. You who have believed in Jesus are saved. Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. You are accustomed to go to Jesus Christ constantly to receive that washing of the feet of which He spoke to Peter when He said, "He that is washed needs not except to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit." You go to Him with, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But there will be some who will come in and tell you that to live in that way by a simple faith in Jesus Christ is not, perhaps, the best way. Could you not get a little farther? Could you not lead the life of those recluses who mortify the flesh in such a way that at

last they come to have no sins, but commence to be perfect in themselves? Could you not begin, at least in some degree, to commit your soul's care to some priest, or to some friend? And instead of making every place holy and every day a holy day, would it not be well to fast on such-and-such days in the week, to scrupulously observe this rule and the other rule and walk by the general opinion of the ancient Church, or by the *Anglicanum Directorium*, or some one of those books which profess to show how they used to do it a thousand years ago? All this may have a great show of wisdom, antiquity and beauty—there may be a semblance of everything that is holy about it and names that should never be mentioned without reverence may be appended to it all—but listen to the Apostle as he says, "Beware lest any man beguile you of your reward," for if they get you away from living upon Christ as a poor sinner from day to day by simple confidence in Him, they *will beguile you of your reward*!

There is another party who will seek to beguile you of your reward *by bringing in speculative notions instead of the simple truths of God's Word*. There is a certain class of persons who think that a sermon is a good one when they cannot understand it and who are always impressed with a man whose words are long! And if his sentences are involved, they feel, poor souls, that because they do not know what he is talking about, there is no doubt that he is a very wise and learned man! And after a while, when he does propound something that they can catch at, though it may be quite contrary to what they have learned at their mother's knee or from their father's Bible, yet they are ready to be led off by it! There are many men, now-a-days, who seem to spend their time in nothing else but in spinning new theories and inventing new systems. They gut the gospel, taking the very soul and heart out of it, and leave nothing but the mere skin and outward bones. The life and marrow of the gospel is being taken away by their learning, by their philosophies, by their refinements, by their bringing everything down to the test of this wonderfully enlightened 19th Century, to which we are all, I suppose, bound to defer! But a voice comes to us, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Stand fast to the old truths of God—they will outlast all these philosophies! Stand fast to the old way of living—it will outlast all the inventions of men! Stand fast by Christ, for you need no other object of worship but Himself!

The Apostle gives us this warning, "Let no man beguile you of your reward," reminding us that these persons are very likely to beguile us. They will beguile us *by their character*. Have I not often heard young people say of such-and-such a preacher who preaches error, "But he is so good a man!" That is not the point. "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." If the life of the man should be blameless as the life of Christ, yet if he preaches to you other than the gospel of Jesus Christ, take no heed of him! He wears but the sheep's clothing, and is a wolf, after all. Some will plead, "But such-and-such a man is so eloquent." Ah, brothers and sisters, may the day never come when your faith shall stand in the words of men! What is a ready orator, after all, that he should convince your hearts? Are there not ready

orators caught any day for everything? Men speak, speak fluently, and speak well in the cause of evil! And there are some that can speak much more fluently and more eloquently for evil than any of our poor tongues are ever likely to do for the right! But words, words, words, flowers of rhetoric, oratory—are these the things that saved you? Are you so foolish that having begun in the spirit by being convicted of your sins, having begun by being led simply to Christ and putting your trust in Him—are you now to be led astray by these poetic utterances and flowery periods of men? God forbid! Let nothing of this kind beguile you!

Then there will be added to these remarks that the man is not only very good and very eloquent, but *that he is very earnest—he seems very humble-minded*. Yes, and of old they wore rough garments to deceive, and in the context of the text we find that those persons were noted for their voluntary humility and their worship of angels! Satan knows very well that if he comes in black, he will be discovered, but if he puts on the garb of an angel of light, then men will think he comes from God and so will be deceived. "By their fruits you shall know them." If they give you not the gospel—if they exalt not Christ, if they bear not witness to salvation through the precious blood, if they do not lift up Jesus Christ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness—have nothing to do with them, speak they as they may! "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Through it should happen to be your relative, one whom you love, one who may have many claims on your respect—let no man, let no man, however plausible may be his speech or eminent his character—beguile you of your reward!

Recollect, you professors, you lose the reward *if you lose the road to the reward*. He that runs may run very fast, but if he does not run the course, he wins not the prize. You may believe false doctrine with great earnestness, but you will find it false, for all that! You may give yourself up indefatigably to the pursuit of the wrong religion, but it will ruin your souls! A notion is abroad that if you are but earnest and sincere, you will be all right. Permit me to remind you that if you travel ever so earnestly to the north, you will never reach the south. And if you earnestly take prussic acid, you will die! And if you earnestly cut off a limb, you will be wounded. You must not only be earnest, but you must be right in it! Hence is it necessary to say, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." "I bear them witness," said the Apostle, "that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, but went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Oh, may we not be beguiled, then, so as to miss the reward of heaven at the last!

But I must pass on, especially as the light fails us this evening—I hope it is prognostic of a coming shower. Here is a second rendering which may be given to the text—

II. LET NO MAN DOMINEER OVER YOU.

This rendering, or something analogous to it, is in the French translation. One of the great expositors in his commentary upon this passage refers it to the judges at the end of the course who sometimes

would give the reward to the wrong person, and the person who had really run well might thus be deprived of his reward. Now, however close a man may be to Christ, the world, instead of honoring him for it, will, on the contrary, censure and condemn him—and hence the Apostle's exhortation is, "Let no man domineer over you."

And, my brothers and sisters, I would earnestly ask you to remember this, first, *as to your course of action.* If you conscientiously believe that you are right in what you are doing, care very little who is pleased or who is displeased. If you are persuaded in your own soul that what you believe and what you do are acceptable to God, whether they are acceptable to man or not is of very small consequence! You are not man's servant, you do not look to man for your reward and, therefore, you need not care what man's opinion may be in this matter. Be just and fear not! Tread in the footsteps of Christ, follow what may. Live not on the breath of men. Let not their applause make you feel great, for perhaps then their censure will make you faint. Let no man in this respect domineer over you, but let Christ be your Master, and look to His smile.

So not only with regard to your course of action, *but also with reference to your confidence*, let no man domineer over you. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, there are some who will say it is presumption. Let them say it is presumption! "Wisdom is justified of all her children," and so shall faith be. If you take the promise of God and rest upon it, there will be some who will say that you are hare-brained fanatics. Let them say it! They that trust in Him shall never be confounded. The result will honor your faith. You have but to wait a little while and, perhaps, they that now censure you will have to hold up their hands in astonishment and say with you, "What has God worked?" Your confidence in Christ, especially my dear young friend, I trust does not depend upon the smile of your relatives. If it did, then their frown might crush it. Walk with your Savior in the lowly walk of holy confidence, and let not your faith rest in man, but in the smile of God!

Let no man domineer over you, again, *by judging your motives*. Men will always give as bad a reason as they can for a good man's actions. It seems to be innate in human nature never to give man credit for being right if you can help it, and often tender minds have been greatly wounded when they have been misrepresented and their actions have been imputed to sinister and selfish motives—when they have really desired to serve Christ. But do not let your heart be broken about that. You will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ—do not care about the petty judgment-seats of men! Go on with your Master's work dauntlessly and fearlessly. Let them say, as David's brothers said of him, "Because of your pride and the naughtiness of your heart have you come to see the battle." You go and get Goliath's head and bring it back—and that shall be the best answer to these sneering ones. When they see that God is with you and that He has given you the triumph, you shall have honor, even in the eyes of those who now ridicule you! I think sometimes the Christian should have very much the same bravado against the judgment of men as David had when Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel, today, who uncovered

himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants." And he said, "It was before the Lord, and I will yet be viler than thus." Let your eyes be to God and forget the eyes of men! Live so that whether they know what you do, or do not know, you will not care, for your conduct will bear the blaze of the great Judgment Day and, therefore, the criticisms of earth do not affect you! Let no man domineer over you.

So may I put it in another light—*let no man sway your conscience so as to lead you*. I am always anxious, my dear hearers, that whatever respect I may ever win from you—and I trust I may have your esteem and your affection—yet that you will never believe a doctrine simply because I utter it! Unless I can confirm it from the Word of God, away with it! If it is not according to the teaching of the Lord and Master, I beseech you follow me not. Follow me only as far as I follow Christ! And so with every other man. Let it be God's truth, God's Word, the Holy Spirit's witness to that Word in your soul that you are seeking after! And rest, I pray you, never short of that, for if you do, your faith will stand merely in the wisdom of men—and when the man who helped you to believe is gone, perhaps your faith may be gone, too—when you most need its comforting power! No, let no man domineer over you, but press forward in the Christian race, looking unto Jesus, and looking unto Jesus only!

But now a third meaning belongs to the text. A happy circumstance it is, this dark night, that the preacher does not need to use his manuscript, for if he did, his sermon would certainly come to an end right now. But here is this point, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." It may mean this—

III. LET NO MAN ROB YOU OF THE PRESENT REWARD WHICH YOU HAVE IN BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Let no man deprive you of the present comfort which your faith should bring to you. Let me, just for a few minutes, have your attention while I speak upon this. Dear brothers and sisters, you and I, if we are believers in Christ, are this day completely pardoned. There is no sin in God's book against us. We are wholly and completely justified! The righteousness of Jesus Christ covers us from head to foot and we stand before God as if we had never sinned! Now let no man rob you of this reward. Do not be tempted by anything that is said to doubt the completeness of a believer in Christ. Hold this, and as you hold it, enjoy it! Do not let the man whom you have most to fear, beguile you. Even though conscience should upbraid you and you should have many grave reasons for doubt, as you imagine, yet if you believe in Jesus, stand to it—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus! He that believes in Him is not condemned! I have believed and I am not condemned. Neither will He permit condemnation to be thundered against me, for Christ has borne my sin for me and I am clear in Him." Let no man beguile you of the reward of feeling that you are complete in Christ!

Further, you who have believed in Jesus Christ *are safe in Christ*. Because He lives, you shall live also. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? He has said, "I give unto My

sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." Now there are some who will tell you that you are *not* safe and that it is dangerous for you to believe that you are. Let no man beguile you of this reward! You are saved. If you are believing on Him, He will keep you, and you may sing, "Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy, unto Him be glory." Hold to that blessed truth of God that you are in Jesus—safe in Jesus Christ!

There is a third blessed truth, that not only are you pardoned and safe in Christ, but you are accepted at this moment in the Beloved. Your acceptance with God *does not rest upon anything in you.* You are accepted because you are in Christ, accepted for Christ's sake. Now sometimes you will get robbed of this reward if you listen to the voice which says, "Why, there is still sin in you! Your prayers are imperfect! Your actions are stained." Yes, but let no men beguile you of this conviction that, sinner as you are, you are still accepted in Christ Jesus!

The Lord grant that you may feel this within, and let no man beguile you of your reward as long as you live! May you live and die in the enjoyment of it, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 4; 6:1-15.

EPHESIANS 4.

Verses 1, 2. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* It is a loving call. Walk lovingly. It is the condescension of God that called you. Be, therefore, lowly. It is God in tenderness who has loved you. Be, therefore, meek, "forbearing one another in love."

3-6. *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Therefore, strive for unity. Woe unto those who divide believers—who rob them of love to one another—who set up another gospel which is not another, or in any way detract from the unity of the body of Christ.

7. *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* It does not mean that God gives stingingly, but that He gives according to our capacity to receive. We are not all made with the same measure of capacity because we are not all intended to fill the same office—and God gives everyone of us as much grace as we are prepared to receive. The Lord enlarge our hearts that we may hold more of His grace, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

8-10. *Therefore He said, When he ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.* Now what were the gifts He gave? He rode up

to heaven in triumph. And in Roman triumphs they scattered gold and silver among the people to show the greatness of the trophies which the warriors had brought home. So Christ, when He ascended up on high, scattered gifts among the sons of men. And what were these? Why they were men, for men are God's possession—the man Christ Jesus first, and then those whom He uses for Himself afterwards.

11-13. *And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* We have not come to that yet. Therefore we need instruction. We need edifying or building up, and so the Lord gives to His Church according to His own mind and will, evangelists, pastors and the like. Sometimes there are pastors whom God never sent—and a man may take upon himself the voice of an evangelist who was never called—and consequently they are not gifts of God to the churches and is a waste of their strength. But if we have those whom God gives, we shall find a priceless gift in the bestowal of such men upon the Church of God!

14-16. *That we henceforth are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.* You see then, brothers and sisters, where we are. We are each one put into his place to do something for the entire body. No limb of the body lives to itself. It is only healthy when it ministers to the health of the whole body. We are nothing, except as we are joined to the rest of God's people, and especially joined to Him who is our glorious Head.

17-19. *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* This, the member of the body of Christ will never do! The Head is holy, so will the members be by that Holy Spirit who sanctifies us!

20. *But you have not so learned Christ.* What a beautiful expression this is! It does not say, "Learned the doctrine of Christ," or, "the precept of Christ," though that were a grand truth, but we learn Christ, Himself! Our school book is Christ! The copy by which we write is Christ! The image to which we desire to be conformed is Christ! "You have not so learned Christ."

21, 22. *If so be that you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That you put off concerning the former*

conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—You have done with it. You put it off as a beggar puts off his rags when he has fresh garments given him!

23-25. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.* You know the eye will not deceive the head. There is no part of the body that will deceive the rest. If the foot perceives that there is a trap, it tells the body and it does not lead it astray. If the nostril perceives an evil smell, it tells the body, that it may escape from the noxious odor. The body is true to itself. So if we are members, one of another, lying must be abhorrent. Every thought of it in any shape must be detestable to us.

26. *Be you angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* Be angry sometimes. A man that is never angry, surely has no strong convictions in him, for he that is not angry at evil can scarcely be thought to rejoice in that which is good. But anger is a dog that is very apt to bite the wrong persons. Therefore, be you angry, and sin not. Anger is like fire. Let it always be put out at night. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," but if it lights during the day, keep it in the grate—keep it in its proper place, for if fire takes hold where it should not, the house may be destroyed and the man, himself, may perish in the fire. If you are angry, as you sometimes must be, "be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down on your wrath." They say that the stings of some obnoxious creatures will not die until the sun goes down. Well, let the sting of anger die when the sun goes down. Rake out the fire when the sun is down. Do not keep it blazing all night long, ready for the morning. Let it go out, lest our anger become hatred and become malice.

27. *Neither give place to the devil.* He is standing at the door. If you give him a seat, he will come in and it is very easy to do so—to make an opportunity for the devil to come in. "Neither give place to the devil." Idle persons tempt the devil to depart by being busy—by being prayerful, and by being much with God. Give no place to the devil.

28. *Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor*—Honest industry is the cure for dishonesty.

28. *Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.* What a splendid change from a thief, up to one that gives to him that needs! Now, between them, we should have put, "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor with his hands"—a thing which is good—"that he may be able to provide things honest for himself." A very good idea, too, but the like Christian thought is that he may labor, working with his hands that he may have, to *give*. I wonder how many, even of professing Christians, think of this—that the objective of labor should be that they may have to give? There are some who think the objective is that we may have, to *keep*—that we may have, to *hoard*—but I say Christ, by His apostle, teaches us that we should labor that we may have, *to give to him that needs.*

29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.* Putrid is the word—"no putrid communication"—no word, therefore, which tends

to do harm to the purest mind—nothing which is unsavory. Therefore, also, nothing that is untrue—nothing that is slanderous—nothing that would injure my neighbor. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." "You may as well say it as think it," says one. By no manner of means! If you think it, it will do you harm—if you say it, it will do hurt to others! You may have a bottle of poison and it is much better to keep the cork in, for if somebody should drink it, then they will die. No, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

30-31. *But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* Why does the apostle say "clamor"? Why, because when people are angry they generally talk very loud, and I believe that if persons would correct their tone of voice and resolve, they will not speak above their usual tone! When they feel heated and provoked, it would greatly assist to check the abolition of passion. So the apostle puts in, "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and *clamor*, and loud talking—all clamor and evil speaking—be put away from you with all malice."

32. *And be you kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*

EPHESIANS 6.

Verse 1. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.* Fitting by nature and pleasing in the sight of God.

2-4. *Honor your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* For the duties are like birds with two wings, or like a pair of scales—balance for each side. There is the child's duty, but there is the parent's duty, too.

5-9. *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he is bond or free. And, you masters, do the same things unto them.* Mind that! We may hear a good deal about the duties of servants. Let us hear something about the duties of masters and mistresses. "You masters, do the same things unto them."

9. *Forbearing threats: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.* Very beautifully balanced is the whole system of gospel morals. There is no undue advantage given by the fact of our being rendered equal in Christ, so that the servant is to be less obedient to the master, or the child to the parent—neither is there any undue power given to those who are in authority! But the grace of God teaches all to do unto all as we would that they should do unto us.

10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord.* You cannot do right if you are not strong. Unless you have the backbone of principle—unless you have spiritual muscle and sinew by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in you, you cannot continue to do that which is right. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord."

10, 11. *And in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God.* First, be strong, and then put on armor. It is no use putting armor on a weak man, or else it will be what James I said it was—a capital invention, he said, because he who wore it would come to no harm and certainly do no harm, for he could not stir in it. Now you must be strong, first, but then not trust in your strength, but put on the armor which is here described. And yet it would be useless to have the armor unless you are first strong. "Put on the whole armor of God."

11-13. *That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.* To keep your ground, not to give way in any respect! And blessed is that man whose name is Stand-fast, and whose practice is to hold fast—"having done all to stand."

14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.* Nothing will so tighten up your garments and keep them right as a belt of sincerity and truthfulness. If we are not true, whatever else we are, we are but loosely arrayed. We shall come to mischief. "Having your loins girt about with truth."

14. *And having on the breastplate of righteousness.* A grand protection when God has given you to be holy, and when the principle which covers your heart and shields your members is righteousness!

15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* Peace in your own heart, peace with God, peace with man. Peacefulness and peace. No shoes like these! A man that has a merry heart makes many a mile fly beneath him, but a heavy heart is a slow traveler. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

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A NEW CREATION
NO. 3467

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He who sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."
Revelation 21:5.

MEN generally venerate antiquity. It were hard to say which has the stronger power over the human mind—antiquity or novelty. While men will frequently dote upon the old, they are most easily dazzled by the new. Anything new has at least one attraction. Restless spirits consider that the new must be better than the old. Though often disappointed, they are still ready to be caught by the same bait and, like the Athenians of Mars Hill, spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And as for ourselves, dear friends, as we sometimes mournfully think of the flight of time, we are known to cheerfully look out upon the new epochs as they begin to dawn upon us. If our calendar suggests some dismal memories in the past, our calculation predicts some happier prospects in the future! And it will sometimes happen that we leave so much anxiety, adversity and chastisement behind us, that it is a relief to hope that the tide has turned, and that a course of comfort, prosperity and mercy lies before us. One weeps over the past and the lost. I suppose the best of men must do so at times. I am sure those of us who are not the best, feel often constrained to pour out some such a lamentation as this—

"Much of our time has run to waste—
Our sins, how great the sum!
Lord, give us pardon for the past
And strength for days to come."

I do not know but it is sometimes as well, when one has been plunged in sorrow, or feels ashamed of his past life—after having regretted that which is bygone and repented of it, and over it—to feel as if he breathed another atmosphere and had started on a fresh career. Having thrown away the old sword, he is now about to see what he can do with the new. Having put off an old garment, he is desirous to walk more worthily of his vocation with fresh ones that are provided for him. Perhaps the thought of freshness, the fact of new times having dawned on our path, may be a little help to those of us who are dull and heavy. And we may be stirred up to action, or, if not to action, it may awaken earnest hope that the infusion of a new start into our lives, new vigor instead of the old lethargy, new love instead of the old lukewarmness, new zeal instead of the old death-likeness—new, pertinacious, persevering industry for Christ instead of the old idleness, may result. God grant that it may be so!

Looking at the text in this light, I think it speaks to everyone here present. Would you begin anew, lo, there is one who can help you to do so! From the throne of God where sits the once crucified but now glorified Savior, there comes a whisper of hope to each and every soul who would be made new and would begin life anew. "Behold I make all things new." In trying to bring out the thoughts contained in this exclamation from the throne—from the Emperor of the Universe, from the court of the King of Kings—we shall first speak, very briefly, *of the new creation*. Secondly, we *should bid you adore the great Regenerator.* And, in the third place, we shall ask you *to behold with attention, the fact before you, with a view of receiving benefit from it*. Observe the text speaks of—

I. A NEW CREATION.

"I *make*." That is a divine word. "I make *all things*." That, also, is divine. "I make all things *new*." That seems to reach the third stage, wherein the thrice holy God appears glorious in the highest degree! "I make all things new." This our Lord Jesus Christ has done upon the greatest scale! We must view His purpose. It is the purpose and intention of the Lord Jesus to make this world entirely new. You recollect how it was made at first—pure and perfect. It sang with its sister spheres the song of joy and reverence. It was a fair world, full of everything that was lovely, beautiful, happy, holy. And if we might be permitted to dream for a moment of what it would have been if it had continued as God created it, one might fancy what a blessed world it would be at this moment! Had it possessed a teeming population like its present one, and if, one by one, those godly ones had been caught away, like Elijah, without knowing death, to be succeeded by pious descendants—oh, what a blessed world it would have been! A world where every man would have been a priest and every house a temple, and every garment a vestment, and every meal a sacrifice, and every place holiness to the Lord, for the tabernacle of God would have been among them and God Himself would have dwelt among them! What songs would have hailed the rising of the sun—the birds of paradise caroling on every hill and in every dale their Maker's praise! What songs would have ushered in the stillness of the night! Yes, and angels, hovering over this fair world, would oft have heard the strain of joy breaking the silence of midnight, as glad and pure hearts beheld the eyes of the Creator beaming down upon them from the stars which stud the vault of heaven!

But there came a serpent and his craft spoiled it all. He whispered into the ears of mother Eve—she fell, and we fell with her—and what a world this now is! If a man walks about in it with his eyes open, he will see it to be a horrible sphere. I do not mean that its rivers, its lakes, its valleys, its mountains are repulsive. No, it is a world fit for angels, naturally, but it is a horrible world *morally*! As I walked the other day down the streets of Paris and saw the soldiers with their pretty dresses—and the knives and forks which they carried with them to carve men and make a meal for death—I could not help thinking this is a pretty world, this is. Only let one man lift his finger and a hundred thousand men are ready to

meet a hundred thousand other men, all intent upon doing—what? Why, upon cutting each other's throats! Upon tearing out each other's bleeding hearts and wading up to their knees in each other's gore till the ditches are full of blood, horses and men all mingled, and left to be food for dogs and for carrion crows! And then the victors on either side in the fray, return, beat the drums and sound the trumpets and say, "Glory! glory! Look what we have done!" Devils could not be worse than men when their passions are let loose. Dogs would scarcely tear each other as men do. Men of intellect sit down and put their fingers to their foreheads, racking their brains to find out new ways of using gunpowder, and shot, and shell—so as to be able to blow twenty thousand souls into eternity as easily as 20 might be massacred by present appliances! And he is considered a clever man, a patriot, a benefactor of his own nation, who, by dint of genius, can discover some new way of destroying his fellow creatures. Oh, it is a horrible world, appalling to think of! When God looks at it, I wonder why He does not stamp it out, just as you and I do a spark of coal that flies upon our carpet from the fire! It is a dreadful world.

But Jesus Christ, who knew that we would never make this world much better, let us do what we would with it. He designed from the very first to make a new world of it. Truly, truly, this seems to me to be a glorious purpose! To make a world is something wonderful, but to make a world new is something more wonderful still! When God spoke and said, "Let there be light," it was a fiat which showed Him to be divine. Yet there was nothing, then, to resist His will. He had no opponent—He could build as He pleased and there were none to pluck down. But when Jesus Christ comes to make a new world, there is everything opposed to Him. When He says, "Let there be light," darkness says, "There shall not be light." When He says, "Let there be order," chaos says, "No, I will maintain confusion." When He says, "Let there be holiness, let there be love, let there be truth," the principalities and powers of evil withstand Him and say, "There shall not be holiness, there shall be sin! There shall not be love, there shall be hate! There shall not be truth, there shall be error! There shall not be the worship of God, there shall be the worship of sticks and stones—men shall bow down before idols which their own hands have made!"

And yet, for all that, Jesus Christ, coming in the form of a man, revealing Himself as the Son of God, determines to make all things new! And be assured, brothers and sisters, He will do it! Though He pleases to take His time and to use humble instrumentalities to effect His purposes, yet do it He will! The day shall come when this world shall be as fair as it was at the primeval Sabbath. When there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. The ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled to the letter! God shall dwell among men. Peace shall be domiciled on earth and glory shall be ascribed to God in the highest! This great work of Christ, this grand design of making this old world into a new one shall be carried into effect!

In order to accomplish this, it has come to pass that *Christ has made for us a new covenant*. The old covenant was, "Do this and live." That covenant was a sentence of death upon us all. We could not do, therefore we could not live, and so we died. The new covenant has nothing in it contingent upon creature doing, but it bases all its provisions upon Christ having done the work! "I will, and you shall," this is the language of the new covenant? The covenant of law, in which we were weak through the flesh, left us mangled and broken. The covenant of grace reveals God's kindness towards us and our part, thereof, has been fulfilled for us by our surety, Christ Jesus. Thus it runs, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever; a new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." The old world is still under the old covenant of works and its children perish, for they cannot carry out the conditions of the covenant—they cannot keep God's law—they break it constantly, and they die. But the children of grace are under the new covenant of grace, and through the precious blood, which is the penalty of the old broken covenant, and through the spotless righteousness of Christ, which is the fulfillment and magnifying of the old covenant, the Christian stands secure and rejoices that he is saved! Christ has thus made His people dwell under a new covenant, instead of under the old one.

In addition to the new covenant, Christ has been pleased *to make us new men*. His saints are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." They have a new nature! God has breathed into them a new life. The Holy Spirit, though the old nature is still there, has been pleased to put within them a new nature. There is now a contending force within them—the old carnal nature inclining to evil and the new God-given nature panting after perfection. They are new men, "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This new nature is moved by new principles. The old nature needed to be awed with threats, or bribed with rewards—the new nature feels the impulse of love! Gratitude is its mainspring—"We love Him because He first loved us." No mercenary motive now stirs the new creature—

"My God, I love You not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love You not
Must burn eternally."

I love You, O my Savior, because on the cross You did bear shame, and spitting, and manifold disgrace for me. New principles stir the new nature which God has given! And this new nature is conscious of new emotions. It loves what once it hated—it hates what once it loved. It finds blight where once it sought for bliss, and finds bliss where once it found nothing but bitterness. It leaps at the sound which was once dull to its ears—the name of a precious Christ! It rejoices in hopes which once seemed idle as dreams. It is filled with a divine enthusiasm which it once rejected as fanatical! It is now conscious of living in a new element, breathing a fresh air, partaking of new food, drinking out of new wells

not dug by men or filled from the earth. The man is new—new in principles and new in emotions!

And now the man is also *new in relationship*. He was an heir to wrath—he is now a child of God. He was a bond-slave—he is now a free man. He was the Ishmael who dwelt in the wilderness—he is now the Isaac, and dwells with Sarah after the tenor of the new covenant. He rejoices in Christ Jesus and feasts to the full! He was once the citizen of earth—he is now a citizen of heaven. He once found his all beneath the clouds, but now his all is beyond the stars! He has new relationships. Christ is his brother. God is his father. The angels are his friends and the despised people of God are his best and nearest kinsfolk! And therefore the man has new aspirations. He now pants to glorify God! What cared he about the glory of God once? He now pants to see God—once he would have paid the fare, if it had cost his life, that he might escape from the presence of the Lord! Now he hungers and thirsts after the living God. Yes, if his soul had wings, and he could break the fetters of this mortality, he would mount at once to dwell where Jesus is! Dear friends, are you new men and women? If you are, you understand what it is. If you are not, I know I cannot explain it to you. Oh, to be born-again is a great mystery! Blessed is the soul that comprehends it! But he that knows it not, will never learn it by the lips—he can only know it by the Spirit of God causing him to also be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Thus far I have said that the objective of Christ was to make a new world, and He began by making a new covenant. Then, through His Spirit, He goes on to make new men under the new covenant, and you will see that by this means *He makes a new society*. Swelling words have been spoken and great attempts taken in hand to renovate society, but you can never renovate society till you have renovated the individual members who compose society! You may build a brick house, if you please, but, build it as you like, it will be a house of brick upon whatever principles of architecture it may be constructed! Not until that brick shall be transformed to marble can you hope to "dwell in marble halls." So men may launch their divers theories and patent their social inventions, but after they have reshaped the society of sinners, it will still be a sinful society! It is otherwise with Christ. By making new men, He makes a new society, which society He calls His "Church." That Church He sends into the world to act upon the rest of mankind. Verily, the day will come—whether it shall be at His second advent or before His second advent, I do not know—the day will come when, from the east to the west, and from the north to the south, there shall be a new world as far as men are concerned! There shall be no injustice towards the poor. There shall be no envying of the rich. There shall be no law to make men slaves. There shall be no power to oppress because there shall be no will to do it! Our Lord Jesus Christ shall put a new heart into earth's kings and then He shall come Himself to take their thrones and their crowns, and to be, Himself, our Universal King, and in His day shall the righteous flourish!

Now I believe the way for us to regard that happy day in which He will make all things new—that happy day when the lion shall eat straw like the ox and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the sword shall be turned into the sickle, and the spear into the pruning hook—the way for us to regard that day, I think, is not standing with our mouths open expecting it, but by setting to work after the Master's own fashion, seeking to bring it about! To gather out the elect from mankind, to illustrate the gospel practically in our lives and so to do as Jesus did among the sons of men—promoting light, and peace, and truth, and holiness and happiness as God may help us!

I wish we had more time to enter fully into this part of the subject. We have not and, therefore, we must leave it, but may you and I have a part in this new creation! Turning to our second point, I want you to—

II. ADORE THIS GREAT REGENERATOR.

He says, "Behold I make all things new." Behold Him! He is a man dressed in the common garments of the poor! He has neither form nor comeliness and when you shall see Him there is no beauty in Him that you should desire Him. He has come to make the world new. He has no soldiery, no book of laws, no new philosophy. He has come to make the world new and to do this He has brought with Him—what? Why, *Himself*! He spends a life of weariness and sorrow among those who despise Him—and if you want to know first and foremost how He makes all things new, you must see Him sweating great drops of blood in the Garden—that is the blood of the new world which He is pouring forth! You must see Him bound, scourged, spat upon, led to the accursed tree! While God's wrath for sin is yet unspent, the world cannot be new, but when that wrath on account of sin is all poured upon the head of the great Substitute, then the world stands in a new relation to God and it can be a new world! See the Savior, then, in groans and pangs which cannot be described, bearing the curse of God, for He made Him to be sin for us, though He knew no sin. The curse fell on Him, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief. He has made His soul to be an offering for sin." That dolorous pain, then, of the Master, was the world's new-making! It was then and there that the world was born-again. No mother's pangs, when she brought forth a man-child, were such as those of Christ when He brought forth the new creation! It was there in the travail of His soul—did you ever catch that idea, "the travail of His soul"?—it was there that the new world was born! "Behold I make all things new" is a mysterious voice from the broken heart of a dying Savior! From the empty tomb, as He rises, I hear it come in silvery notes, "Behold I make all things new." You must trace the birth of the new creation up to the grave of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the place where the cross stood and where His body lay.

But the actual operations of new-making the world takes place *through the truth which Christ promulgated*. After the relation of the world to God had been changed by the sufferings of Jesus, the world's thought concerning God came to be changed by the preaching of Jesus. He came

and revealed God to man as man had never before seen God. It was through Him we learned that "God is love." It was through Him that we understood that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the preaching of the cross of Jesus that is to make the world new! It is not the philosophies of men, but the wisdom of God which effects the change! In the presence of Christ your philosophies must sink into darkness as stars in the presence of the sun!

And it is also *by the giving of the Holy Spirit*, as the result of the ascension of Christ on high, that the world is made new. Thus He gives power to the ministry. There were 3,000 new creations in one day when Peter preached the gospel under the influence of the Holy Spirit! And that blessed Spirit of God is here tonight! Oh, I would that there might be some new creations tonight—that that divine heavenly Spirit would come into some of your souls and drop there that vital spark of heavenly flame which shall never be quenched, but shall burn brightly in heaven forever! Wherever the gospel is preached, the Spirit is present in that gospel, and He gives faith to men, gives life to men, and so they are made new and the new-making thus goes on! I have not time—though thoughts crowd into my mind—to speak about the way in which Christ thus new-makes the world. It is quite certain that three parts of His history are connected with it. I have only referred to His death, His burial and His resurrection, but I might go on to speak of His constant and prevalent intercessions, for His pleading before the throne of God is also a part of the mighty operation! Nor can I doubt but that His second advent will be the bringing out of the top stone with shouts of, "Grace, grace unto it!" Then shall be fulfilled—finally and exhaustively fulfilled—the saying that is written, "Behold I make all things new." The text begins with, "Behold!" and I am going to close with that same note of admiration. I want you to—

III. BEHOLD AND TO BELIEVE.

Behold the Lord Jesus is now enthroned in heaven! He it is who makes all things new. Is not this what some of you here present deeply need? If you look within yourselves, you will see much to disgust and alarm you. Perhaps you dare not take stock of yourselves—you dare not consider where you are, or what you are, or where you are bound. "To speak candidly," you say, "I need reforming." Very likely, but you need a great deal more than mere reformation! I have heard of a being who habitually used to swear, "God mend me!" Somebody said, "Better make a new one." That is the case with full many of you. You are saying, "Well, I will turn over a new leaf." You had better shut the book up, altogether, and never turn over any more leaves, for all the pages are alike bad! "Oh, well," says one, "I shall try if I cannot alter." I wish you would try God's altering of you, instead of altering yourselves. "Well, but surely, surely, I may wash and be clean! I will try to make myself as clean as possible!" Yes, yes, that is all very well—but what if you have a corpse in the house? I would have you make it clean, yet that will not make it live!

However much you may wash it, it is still corrupt. You may reform yourselves as much as ever you please—all your reformation will be futile—you need more, a great deal more than that! The fact is, you must be made new! Nothing less will do! You must be made new! You must be born-again!

"Ah!" says one, "if I could be made new, there might be a chance for me." Well now, Christ looks down from His throne in heaven and He says, "Behold I will make all things new." "Yes," you say, "but He will not make *me* new." Why not? Does He not say, "*I make all things new*"? "But my heart is as hard as a rock," you say. Well, but He says, "I will make all things news," so He can give you a new heart! "Oh, but I am so very stubborn." Yes, yes, but He makes all things new, and He can make you as tender and sensitive as a little child! Oftentimes a gray-headed sinner has looked back to his childhood and remembered the time when he used to sing his little hymn at his mother's knee—and he has said, "Ah! I have been in many strange places since then, and my heart has got seared and hard! I wish I could get back to what I was then!" Well, you can, you can! Christ can bring you there! No, He can bring you to something *better than you ever were when those golden ringlets hung so plentifully about that pretty little head of yours*, for you were not so innocent, then, as you now think you were! Christ can make you really pure in heart. He can make you a new creature, so that you shall be converted and become as a little child. "Oh," you say, "how can I get it? How can I prepare myself for Him?" You do not need to prepare yourself for Him! Go to Him just as you are—trust Him to do it and He will do it! That is faith, you know—trust, dependence. Can you believe that Christ can save you? Oh, can you believe that? Well now, will you try Him to save you? Will you trust Him to deliver you from your drunkenness, from your angry temper, your pride, your love of self, your lusts? Do you desire to be a new creature in Christ Jesus? If so, that very desire must have come from heaven! I hope that He has already begun the good work in you and He that begins it will carry it on. Do not be afraid, however bad your character, or however vicious your disposition. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new."

What a wonder it is that a man should ever hate a new heart! You know if a lobster loses its claw in a fight, it can grow a new claw—and that is thought to be very marvelous. It would be very wonderful if men would be able to grow new arms and new legs, but who ever heard of a creature who grew a new heart? You may have seen a branch lopped off a tree, and you may have thought that, perhaps, the tree will sprout again, and there will be a new limb, but who ever heard of old trees getting new sap and a new core? But my Lord and Master, the crucified and exalted Savior, has given new hearts and new cores! He has put the vital substance into men afresh and made new creatures of them! I am glad to notice the tears in your eyes when you think on the past—but wipe them away, now, and look up to the cross and say—

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,

And that You bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb, O God, I come."

"Oh, make me a new creature!" If you have said that from your heart, you are a new creature, dear brother or sister, and we will rejoice together in this regenerating Savior!

Let me just say a few words to those of you who love the Lord. You may have some very bad children, or you may have some relatives who are going on in sin from bad to worse. I earnestly recommend you attentively consider my text. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." "No, no," says the old father, "I used to pray for my boy. He broke my heart. He brought his mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. But he has gone away, and I have not heard from him for years—and I am almost afraid to wish I ever hear from him again—for he seemed so reckless, that my only comfort is in trying to forget him." "Yes," says a husband here, "I have prayed for my wife so many times that I feel tempted to give it up—it is not likely that I shall ever live to see her saved." Oh, but, brothers and sisters, we do not know! Since the Lord saved *us*, there cannot be any limits as to what He can do! Look at the text, "Behold I make all things new." I will pray, "Lord, make my children new." You shall pray, "Lord, make my wife new." You godly wives who have ungodly husbands, you shall pray, "Lord, make our husbands new." You who have dear friends, who lie upon your bosom, as you anxiously think of them, pray the Lord Jesus to make them new! When our friends are made new, ah, what a great comfort they are—just as much so as they formerly were a sorrow. The greater the sinner, the greater the joy to loving believers when they see him saved! "Behold," says Christ—I do like that word—"Behold it! Stand and look at it! See how I took the man when he was up to his neck in sin and made him preach the gospel! Can I not do the same again? Look there and see the dying thief upon the cross, black with a thousand crimes—I washed him and took him to Paradise the same day! What can I not do? Behold I make all things new."

Courage, my brothers and sisters; we will not entertain any more doubt about Christ's power to save! Rather, by God's grace, may we henceforth believe more in Him and, according, to our faith, so shall it be done unto us. If we can only trust Him for those of our friends whose faults seem to us few and light, our little trust will reap little reward. But if we can go with strong faith in a great God, and bring great sinners in our arms and put them down before this mighty Regenerator of men and say, "Lord, if You will, You can make them new"—and if we will never cease the pleading till we get the blessing, then we shall see ever-accumulating illustrations of the fact that Jesus makes all things new—and calling up the witnesses of His redeeming power, we shall cry in the ears of a drowsy Church and an incredulous world, "Behold, behold, behold! He makes all things new." The Lord give us to see it! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 1:1-14.

Verse 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.* Twice is that title used—"servant." This is a revelation to Christ's servants, made first unto His servant, John. There is no higher honor under heaven than to be the servant of such a Master. His servants we are this day, and we find in that service perfect freedom and the highest imaginable delight. This, then is to us.

2-3. *Who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* It is not said, "Blessed is he that understands the book of Revelation," or else I am afraid very few would come in for that benediction, but, "Blessed is he that reads and they that hear," for it is a blessed thing to hear our Father speaking, even when we cannot understand it. When you were a little child, how did you learn to understand your father but by at first hearing him say a great deal which was far above you and out of your reach? I love to read those parts of God's Word which I cannot yet understand, because I remember there are some parts which I do understand, now, which I did not once—and it was by reading them, hearing them and thinking of them, that gradually light broke into my soul! Why, then, should I not go on reading this book of Revelation, though as yet I may be able to sustain no theory about it, may not as yet, indeed, understand it? But notice this. The doctrine of this book is practical after all. I think this book has been trailed in the mire by being used as a sort of astrologer's book to tell us about the future, instead of being used practically to humble us before God, and to teach us to lean upon eternal wisdom, which knows all things from the beginning. Oh, that we might more practically use the doctrine of the second advent than has generally been done—not to speculate upon it—but to be warned by it to be on the watch for the coming of the Lord!

4. *John to the seven churches, which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.* Is not this the Father, Jehovah, the I AM, who lives in all tenses and fills all time?

4. *And from the seven Spirits which are before His throne.* Are not these the symbols of the Holy Spirit, whose varied and perfect work are seen today among men, not only on the throne of God, but before the throne, working in the midst of the people of God?

5. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness.* Telling us the truth of God and only the truth—the witness to be relied upon, deserving of our faith.

5, 6. *And the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. And that made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

7. *Behold.* Regard it attentively. Think of it, and meditate upon it.

7. *Behold, He comes with clouds.* This is a grand doctrine which should never be kept in the background! The Scriptures are not fully to be understood, except with this addition—they are not, indeed, complete unless we understand that there is something yet to come. The Old Testament without the first coming of Christ is a riddle without a key—and the New Testament without the Second Coming of Christ is somewhat in the same condition.

7. *Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.* Your eyes, dear friend, and mine. "Every eye shall see Him." Whatever in the future we shall not see, we shall see Him! We may depend upon that. "And they also which pierced Him." What a sight it will be for them—not only for those Romans and Jews who actually put Him to death, but for all of us who by our sins have pierced Him, by our evil words, our backslidings, have put Him to shame!

7. *And they also which pierced Him: and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.* It is certain—here is the seal, the great divine affirmative put to this—"Even so, Amen."

8, 9. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.* Being there for having preached the gospel—no doubt sent there as a punishment that that eloquent tongue also might, for a while, be silenced, and that his loving precepts might not so build up the Church. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"—the first day of the week, especially set apart for the Lord's worship. Notice that John observed this day. Though he was on a desert island, though he was far away from all Christian companionship, yet he took care to spend that day in worship, to draw near to God! Let us, then, never make excuses when we are traveling, and when we are away for purposes of recreation. The Lord's day is as much the Lord's day to us in one part of the world as another, and let us take care that we get the advantage of it. He has fenced it about on purpose for our benefit. It is not a day of bondage, but a day of holy joy and rest. Let us not miss the blessings which are so ripe this day. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"—that is the Spirit of God came upon him, gave him to understand, and see, and feel spiritual things. Oh, that this might be the condition of all God's people here this morning!

10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.* Clear, shrill, musical.

11. *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and what you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.* There were churches in each of these places. It is not the custom of the Holy Spirit to talk of the Church of England, but He would speak of the

Church in London, the Church in Birmingham, the Church in Newcastle. These are each separate and distinct, independent Churches, though they are one in Christ Jesus—yes, each church is, in itself, complete and entire if it is ordered according to the mind of the Holy Spirit.

12. *And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me.* Very naturally. When we hear a voice, we like to see the person from whom the voice comes. Hence I believe the reason why we often like the portrait of the preacher, and it is not, after all, anything more than an innocent infirmity that a man should wish to see the face of him who has spoken to him.

12. *And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.* Or candelabra or lamp stands. Not, as you get in the Old Testament, one great seven-branched golden candlestick, but seven *distinct* candelabra, for these churches are separate and entire, each church in its own individuality.

13. *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.* Or probably unto a son of man—like unto a man, for, notwithstanding all the majesty, the person was that of a man, and we are never to forget that, glorious as is the godhead of Christ, and majestic as He is in all His sublime offices, yet, nevertheless, He most surely is man—a very sweet consoling thought.

13. *Clothed with a garment down to the feet.*

"Oh, joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright."

13. *And girt about the chest with a golden band.* A royal robe. A band all decked and adorned with jewelry.

14. *His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow.* For He is the Ancient of Days, and all the wisdom that is supposed to belong to gray hair is with Him.

14. *And His eyes were as a flame of fire.* Discerning, burning into everything.

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"Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: my eyes fail with looking upward. O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me." Isaiah 38:14.

HEZEKIAH finds fault with his prayers, but he did pray. God's children cannot at all times speak distinctly, but they all cry. There is no true child of God that is possessed of a dumb spirit. "Behold he prays" may be said of each of the divine family—and place them in what circumstances you will, you might sooner call a man, living, and prevent his breathing, than call a man, Christian, and prevent his praying! If he is living, he must breathe—if he is a Christian, he must pray! And observe further as Hezekiah, with all the faults that he finds with his prayers, did pray, so equally certain is it that he did prevail with those imperfect prayers! He may call those prayers chattering—I have no doubt he felt them to be so—but, after all, he has an answer to his prayers—he had 15 years added to his life and, therefore, his chatter were marvelously successful. From which I gather that those prayers we think the worst, may turn out to be the best. And those prayers which, judged by human judgments, might be considered unworthy of the name of prayer, may, nevertheless, be so acceptable to the Most High that they shall throughout life become the fountain of our praise!

I purpose this evening to speak to you, believing that many of you have passed through the same experience as Hezekiah with regard to your prayers. I shall speak to you about his estimation, *his own estimation of his prayers.* Then we shall turn to consider *the real value of those prayers.* And then, thirdly, we shall notice *what there is that may afford us plentiful consolation* if we find the same fault with our petitions as Hezekiah did with his. First, then, let us look at—

I. HEZEKIAH'S ESTIMATE OF HIS PRAYERS, for our estimate of our petitions has often been the same. He compares his prayers to the chattering of a swallow. If we had time to spare, we might go into the question of the exact meaning, but I am content with believing that this translation will do. You know the crane makes a harsh, unmelodious, discordant sound, and when cranes are flying by night in great companies in the air, the rustic cannot see them—does not know there are any birds there and he often hears the most extraordinary sounds which he cannot account for—and he goes home and fills the whole parish with a story of ghosts which he has seen and strange, unearthly sounds which he has heard! The crane makes a very unmusical, harsh,

discordant, grating kind of noise, and the swallow makes a kind of chattering. You know the shrill, sharp shriek, piercing like sharp needles, which the swallows make when they are going over your head towards the end of summer—not a tune, nothing very musical, but just a sharp, shrill, piercing note. Now such, Hezekiah says, his prayers were, but, in addition, they were as mournful as the constant cooing of the dove. Turtledoves sometimes, if they are listened to long, are enough to make a man feel wretched to hear them—their sound is the very embodiment of the utterance of sorrow! "I did mourn," he said, "like a dove," and then he declares that his prayers were long, that he grew weary, that his prayers and his eyes failed with looking upwards for an answer.

Now let us put all these things together, and I gather from them that Hezekiah, first of all, in his sickness prayed often and much, *but his prayers seemed to himself to be quite meaningless*—as if they had no meaning to him and no meaning to God. You who have suffered from certain kinds of disorders will know how you tried to pray again and again, and again, but you cannot tell, yourself, what it is you were asking for, and when you look back in the evening at a day in which you have prayed a thousand times, perhaps, it seems to you as if you had not prayed at all! The thoughts are so tossed up and down, the mind is so incapable of its proper action, that although the prayer is genuine enough, yet to you, when you look back upon it, it seems to have no meaning in it whatever! Better to be compared to the involuntary cry of a wounded beast or bird than to anything like a reasonable, intelligent utterance of a soul that is pleading with God! I do know—I speak from my inmost heart—what it is, day after day, to pray no better prayers than just that—not because I would not, but because I *could* not! When the head has been aching, when the bones seemed to be crushed with pain, then the soul turns to God in her bitterness and she feels as if she did not pray at all—the utterances seem to have no meaning to herself, and she fears they have no meaning to God. Meaningless, then, Hezekiah thought his prayers to be.

Next, *he knew them to be disconnected*. The cry of the crane is no continuous song. You cannot make anything of it—chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter, and that is all. In the song of some birds there is a regular cadence, the note rises or falls, and you can almost commit it to paper. In fact, bird music *can* be committed to paper and imitated—but with the mere chattering of cranes and swallows there is no connection between one note and another, none whatever! And oh, how many of God's people's prayers are to themselves and, perhaps, really are, very disconnected, indeed! They need one mercy, but before they have definitely asked for that, their needs rush in so upon them that they ask not only for that, but another, and another, and hardly know what it is that they ask for! They seem to have so much distress, so much sorrow, so much need that their troubles come in troops. "Gad," they say, "a troop comes," and they know not how to order their prayer before the Lord, and set it out, item by item, and plead for this and that, and the

next, and the next mercy as they did, perhaps, in brighter days when their mind was more at home and their thoughts more under their control. Hezekiah means his prayers were disconnected as well as meaningless.

And further, does not he mean that those *were very inharmonious and discordant*, just like the crane's chattering or the swallow's screams? Now sometimes when you hear a brother pray who has a great gift and at the same time has an unction of divine grace, how delightful prayer is to the Christian ear! I think I have enjoyed the prayers of some of God's people—I can say even intellectually, more than I have some of the best effusions of poetry—and spiritually they have been intensely musical to my soul's ears! I believe that the harps of heaven will be sweeter than the prayers of God's people on earth, but then they must be very, very sweet, indeed, for a prayer that comes to the living soul in the power of the Holy Spirit has an element of divinity about it! The human is there, but there is something of the divine, also, and very, very delightful is it to the Christian to hear his brother pray. But ah, there are times with us when our prayers seem to have no sweetness whatever. There is the entire human—and that is jarring. There is the entire mortal—and that sets our teeth on edge. Every single thought we have seems to be out of order, and every word seems to be unfitted! And all that we can do is to pour out our heart, like water as in a tumult bubbling forth without order, shape, or form, without anything beautiful in it that could attract the eyes of God! This is what Hezekiah thought of his prayer—it was disconnected and discordant.

But further, I think that he meant that *his supplications were clamorous*, for the crane's voice is heard afar and the shrill scream of the swallow must pierce the ears—and such were his prayers. If not sweet, yet they were cutting. If not delightful to the ears, yet they must be heard. He would be heard of God—he cried so out of his inmost soul with such fervor, such intensity, that it was clamorous before the throne of God. He seems to look upon it, however, not as having the orderly force that should be of importunity, but rather the clamorous power which forgets order and decorum and only remembers the impulse of the sorrow within! Well, though we may find fault with prayer when we feel as if we clamored to God, as if we had been rough and rude before the august Majesty and had forgotten to take off our shoes, it may sometimes happen that where we think we have been irreverent, we have been most reverent of all! And where we can come back from our prayers and feel, "I have expressed myself as I ought not to have done in the bitterness and anguish of my spirit," it may be said that the Lord has most accepted the honest outpouring of our soul! However, to Hezekiah, his prayer seemed inharmonious and clamorous.

Again, I think I see in this description *an idea of its being repetitious*—like the crane that goes on, chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter. Like the swallow that uses the same note. It is one of the marks of deep anguish in prayer that you use the same word. Our Lord Himself did it when

three times He prayed using the same words. Repetition in prayer is to be avoided—it doubtless wearies those whom we expect to unite with us—but in our private supplications, when the heart feels she has a wish—one wish, but very, very few words—she may even repeat herself again and again in the very same words and tone, and yet not come under the condemnation of using vain repetitions, like the heathen do, for it is not vain repetition that makes the soul cry out before the Lord with the same note when her mind is too distracted to find a variety of notes! Now, you have made your prayers often, no doubt, just like that. You have said, "Oh, I have prayed over and over and over again the same thing. I wish I could pray like brother so-and-so at the prayer-meeting, with such choice expressions and such a wonderful variety! But I, alas, when I come before the Lord, I am so bowed down that just a few words and many tears, and that is all I can get out, and it is a broken prayer—there does not seem to be anything at all in it. When God Himself looks upon it, only His omniscience can spy out some little meaning, but I alas, seem as if I had no meaning at all in what I had said before the throne of God."

If you look at the text again, you will see that in Hezekiah's mind there was also the idea that his prayer was *quite unworthy of anybody's attention*, for when a crane chatters, or when a swallow makes its twittering, nobody is expected to stand still and listen. Nobody who is going to his business would have thought of standing to enquire what the swallow means. It matters not what these birds mean by their cry, and so he seems to say, "My God, my God, You are governing the world! You are reigning in heaven! You are listening to the praise of angels! You have within Your mind grand, incomprehensible designs. You are fulfilling Your marvelous decrees. What can it be to You that a poor man, a worm like myself, should lie on the bed and toss to and fro, and pour out such utter chattering as my prayers are? That You should have heard Elijah upon Carmel I can understand, for his was mighty prayer. That You should have heard David when he cried to You in such language as he had written in the Psalms, I can understand, for these were prayers that had divine inspiration in them. That you should listen to our fathers and hear their groans—that I believe, and I think I can see a reason for it. But that You should listen to *me*—Lord, I might as well stand and listen to a chattering crane as expect You to stop and listen to me. Have you ever thought that about your prayers? Perhaps tonight there is some poor sinner here who thinks that of his prayers. Ah, soul, God does listen to the chattering of cranes! I know He does, for I have read in His Word what is tantamount to that in the text, "He hears the young ravens when they cry." And surely if He hears a raven's cry, if not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, your prayer, though it may be very indistinct and the language, itself, may be very unworthy of the divine ear, yet it shall command an audience and will bring down a blessing from above!

If I do not weary you in looking at this prayer, I think I am holding up a mirror for your own memory. I would note that Hezekiah meant in the next sentence that *his prayer was very dolorous and very mournful.* "I

mourned. I did mourn as a dove. My God! My prayer once was cheerful. I dropped a tear, but then I lifted a note of praise. I confessed my sin but then I thanked You for Your forgiving love. But now it is all sorrow! I harp on one string, and that string is all out of tune. I can do nothing but sob, and sigh, and confess my broken-heartedness, my misery, my hopelessness."

And then he closes the description of his prayer by saying that *he was getting weary of it.* He looked up in prayer till his eyes had grown weak and failing, and he could hardly look up again. His voice was failing so that he chattered like a crane, instead of speaking like a man. His heart was failing and so, instead of hoping with the eagle's eye that looks up and sees into the heart of God's love, he had got the dove's heart that was failing—and now he was led almost to give it up! It seemed to be of little use to pray. The heavens were as brass—no answer came from God. He waited—he had waited long and was still waiting—but as yet no blessing seemed to come. Do not some of us know what this lesson means? We remember it, when we were seeking our own salvation, how we seemed to seek in vain and now, today, we are seeking some special gift from God. It may be He has delayed to answer us and we are beginning to think He will not answer us, forgetting that that sentence, *God never is before His time, but He never is behind* is most true. Thus I give you Hezekiah's estimate of his own prayer. Now, secondly, let us dwell for a minute upon—

II. THE REAL VALUE OF OUR PRAYERS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

I think we can spy a little of that out for ourselves. First of all, it is quite certain that *Hezekiah's prayers were unaffected*, for when the crane chatters, it is never hypocritical. It chatters thus because that is the way the cranes talk. And so with the swallow—it does not try to imitate the tones of the nightingale or catch the sound of the eagle—no, it is a swallow and it makes the sound of a swallow! And so with Hezekiah: It was a strange prayer, but it was his own prayer. It might be to anybody else very wild and mystical, but to himself it was the natural effusion of his own soul—it was the truthful exposition of the state of his own heart—and that is always a mark in prayer. Oh, one loathes to hear people get up and pray—pray on stilts. I have heard such prayer. If a man is a plowman, let him pray like a plowman, and he will pray well. If a man is a scholar, let him pray like a scholar. If a man is unlettered, let him pray what he knows and not copy somebody else's prayer. It must be the soul running out in its own language! God abhors, I believe, artificialities in prayer! They are sickly to us who hear them from our fellow mortals—but what must they be to God when men trick, and toy, and adorn themselves with tinsel, gewgaws and a sort of spiritual rhetoric in the presence of the eternal God—what must that be? I can scarcely tell. Certainly there was nothing of that in Hezekiah's prayer. Whatever there was in it was real. It might be very strangely shaped, but it was of the right sort—it was Hezekiah's own, whatever it was—not a

borrowed prayer or anything fetched out from borrowed experience. There was something good about it.

In the next place, it might have had many imperfections, but *it certainly was intense*, for though he chatters like a crane or a swallow, yet his whole heart was in it. The sound might have no charm, but the prayer had a deep sense in it and though, to himself, there was no connected meaning, yet his heart was in the little brief parentheses of meaning! The little scraps and flashes of meaning that were there were sincere meanings and not false. And so here was another virtue in it—it was an intense prayer, a burning, fervent prayer that pierced its way even to the ears of God!

Certainly, again, as we look at it, *it was a persevering prayer*, for when he said his eyes failed, he was incidentally saying that he had looked until they failed, and that he had not left off looking, though he feared he almost would leave off looking, and he considered it would be a calamity to leave off looking up. I think there was a stern resolution in the good man's soul. He did not leave off prayer—there was this golden, this diamond element in him that he continued in prayer—that he was importunate in prayer.

And further, if we take the last sentence of the verse as a specimen of the prayer, as the condensed essence of the prayer, as I think it is what *a grand kind of praying it was, after all*. I wish our grand prayers were half as good as Hezekiah's chattering if this was the style of it, "I am oppressed; undertake for me." Why is that prayer so admirable? It is as full as it needs to be, it is brief—and that is often a virtue, but it is very full. He states his case. He pleads with God. O Jehovah, I am oppressed! Undertake for me! You alone can deliver me. Look at my sin and undertake to bring me out of it. Hezekiah is so reliant—he seems to feel that if God does but undertake it, it is all he needs. He needs nothing—no one—only his God. "Undertake for me," and the word is, "Be surety for me—give me a promise, enter into suretyship engagement with me." Do but say it shall be so, and I will be content, even though I wait the fulfillment for a while. It is a reliant prayer.

And observe further, *it is an acquiescent prayer*. He does not put stipulations before God, but he says, "Lord, undertake for me. That is my case, only carry it through. There let it end as You will. I will give it up to You. I, a poor oppressed soul, oppressed by sickness, put my double plight of misery into Your hands and say, 'Do with me as You will, and I will be content.'"

Moreover, if I may say so, this prayer is such *an undiluted prayer*. So many people's prayers are mixed up with dependence upon something else, or with secondary seeking. There are some back reckonings with God, but this is all clear and straightforward. Lord, I ask no one else for help. I would not look within for help, but to You I come. I am afraid, but You, O You undertake for me! There is my hope, and there alone. From You comes my salvation. "Undertake for me."

And once again, *the prayer might well be prevalent*, as it was. With all the faults Hezekiah had to find with his prayers—though he chattered

like a crane, he won 15 years of life by his chattering! His prayers were disconnected and they were discordant, and they were all the various things I have said, but for all that, in answer to these prayers, he was delivered from the gates of the grave and he went up to the home of God with joyful songs because the Lord had heard his prayers! Oh, it is wonderful what weak prayers can do—what imperfect prayers can do! What prayers that need to be prayed over again can do when they are washed with the precious blood of Jesus and come up with a sweet perfume of Him that is a surety for the oppressed and undertakes for us! Oh, what prevalence there is in heaven in the prayer that comes up from a sincere soul burdened here below!

Thus I have very briefly hinted at the value of the prayer which Hezekiah thought so little of. And now supposing you and I are in this state that our prayers seem to be a very poor sort of thing, I am sure they are very good.

And now let us turn to another line of teaching that is here, and ask—

III. WHAT IS THERE TO COMFORT US?

Why, there are several considerations which I will give you briefly. And, first, you find it is nowhere said that prayer will not be heard unless it is perfect. And *it is nowhere said that prayer, when it is imperfect, will be rejected*. Suppose my prayer is disconnected, did the Lord ever say that it must be connected, or else He would not hear it? Suppose my prayer is discordant, does He ever look for music in His people's cries? I dare say He finds it, for a father hears music in his baby's cries, and so may God hear music in His children's cries! But it is not there—it is only in His ears that the music is—the love of God puts it there. What is my crime, if my prayer is clamorous? Did the Lord ever say He would not hear a clamorous prayer? Has not He rather told us a parable in which the woman gained by clamor from the unjust judge the vindication of her rights? What if my prayer is repetitious? Did He ever say He would not hear me because I had no variety of expression? Oh, I must not condemn what God has not condemned! What He calls clean, let me not call common. If my prayer is sincere, then if He does not say I shall not succeed, let me hold on! And if my imperfections do not shut out my prayer according to His Word, why should I raise up a fancied reason why they should? Remember, brothers and sisters, when we cannot pray in our hearts as we would, there are still some promises on record that we may still plead before God—such as this, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." My Lord has not said, "I will never leave you while your prayers are connected and full of harmony and power." If He had, then my soul might have despaired, but He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you—never." Then let not the imperfections of my prayer drive me away! And if I do chatter, You will not say, "I cannot bear that chattering." No, but You will still stop and listen, for You have said, I will never leave you." Oh, Your promises, then, shall comfort and sustain me!

Moreover, brothers and sisters, *there are many instances in Scripture of prayers which are said to be prevalent with God* that do not appear to

have any of the excellences about them that we think there ought to be in our prayers to God. Take Moses' prayer to God at the Red Sea—I do not find that he said a word, and yet the Lord said, "Why do you cry unto Me?" I dare say he was much disturbed in spirit—he had not time and opportunity in such a plight as that to pour out many sentences. But God heard it! And there was poor Hannah when she went up to the temple. You know her prayer was such—she only moved her lips—and I am sure she must have been in a very disturbed state of mind, for Eli thought that she was drunk! He rebuked her for being drunk and she said, "O my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit," and God heard Hannah's prayer. David often in the Psalms speaks of himself as roaring. He declares he could not look up and he pictures himself as very far gone in sorrow. But the Lord heard him! O brothers and sisters, you have cases upon cases in the Word of God and many all down the ages in the history of the Church showing that the Lord hears His children's broken prayers! Perhaps you have sometimes experienced it. Oh, I have, and I bear witness—prayers that I would have flung on a dunghill—He has answered them! I know the reason—it was not became the prayers had anything in them, but He has answered me as if they had been prayers of the greatest of the saints. Has not it been so with you—your groans have come back to you in songs, and your tears drop back on you in showers of mercy, and your biggest bursts of agony have yet been returned to you in gracious words of promise from the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Himself?

Now these things may help to cheer and comfort you. And I want to mention these points, and one or two others, and I have done.

The next is this—we never need be discouraged about the brokenness of our prayers when we recollect this, "The Spirit makes intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered." It seems, then, that when I have got right out of words and cannot pray in words—when I have such great meaning that I do not find language can help me—such awful meanings that I have come to the deeps and, "Deep called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspout," and if I speak, I speak in language which seems to be the language of the waves and billows, the deep, hollow, solemn, sounding foam, for I can say nothing else—then I am getting near the Spirit's praying—my soul is getting tuned to its matchless intercession! The groans we cannot utter—He can utter—and when we scarcely know our own meaning, He can translate for us. He makes intercession for us according to the will of God!

The next sweet reflection is that *our prayers have to deal with the heart of a Father*. Now a little child—let us alter the illustration but in one small particular—a little child needs something and I am in the room and have no idea of what the child wants. I am rather vexed to hear its cry and, perhaps, it disturbs me. But there is one in the room that knows exactly what the child means as well as if it had put it into speech, though it cannot talk a note! It is the mother who loves so much, and her love translates the indistinct language of the cry. Now, like as a father pities his child, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. "As one whom his

mother comforts," so He comforts us! And when He hears us cry, His love is more intense to us than that of the mother to her babe, and He reads our meaning. Oh, He needs not words! He is a Spirit. He needs not sounds, as though He heard with ears—He hears the Spirit's sounds and the deep groan is often the very thunder of the Spirit when the soul's best word may be nothing better than the Spirit's whisper!

Lastly, and this, perhaps, is the most full of comfort, *Christ pleads for us*. He is at the Father's side—the man of love, the crucified. We have not only the Spirit that searches—the Spirit that knows our mind and God's mind, and the Father's love that reads our heart so that He knows the things we have need of before we ask Him, but we have the man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who in His measure feels afresh what every member bears—like ourselves, a man and, therefore, moved with every feeling of human sympathy! He has gone through this brokenness of prayer, Himself! He prayed like that, Himself, when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death," and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. His cries on the cross, also—what are they but broken prayers, fragmentary prayers? He knows what sore temptation means, for He has felt the same, and He knows what these griefs and inward anguishes of prayer mean, for He has passed through them all! Come, come, then, disconsolate to the mercy-seat, though your eyes still fail, yet keep them upwards! Though you have no comfortable answer just yet, tarry at the posts of your Master's door! Wait, for the day dawns. When the night grows darkest, the day draws near. Wait still, and cry on, still, for He hears you! To Him there is music in a sigh and beauty in a tear! The humble suppliant cannot fail. "He that asks receives; he that seeks finds; to him that knocks, it shall be opened."

Now do you not perceive that while very much of this discourse must belong to the child of God, yet there is a sidelight in it for the poor sinner whose prayer is of this sort? You hardly dare come even into this Tabernacle—and when you have got a seat, and the hymn is being sung, you feel you dare not sing—you cannot sing it. And if there is a promise being read out of the Bible, you say, "I cannot take it, it is not mine. I am not worthy." Yes, but I know what you did when nobody looked on—you said, "God be merciful unto me a sinner." Your Father heard you! Your Father will answer you! He sets before you, tonight, the atoning sacrifice of His dear Son. Jesus loves sinners! He died for sinners! He pleads for sinners! Trust Him and your sins, which are many, are forgiven you, and though you chatter like a crane or a swallow, yet shall you go your way in peace, justified far rather than the man whose long prayer is a pretense, and whose speech is but the coverlet for a hypocritical heart. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 77; REVELATION 1:15-20.

PSALM 77.

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* The writer was in very deep trouble. The trouble forced from him a loud and bitter cry. His heart was wrung with anguish, but the cry which was the weakness of the flesh was, by divine grace, turned upward, and so became the strength of his grace. He cried, but it was to God, not to men, as many of us do. "Unto God," he says twice over, "did I cry." But God hears when others hear not and, blessed be His name, He answers when others cannot! There are so many instances in which God has heard the prayer of persons in deep trouble that the most troubled of all men ought to be encouraged to pray! Did not Jonah pray, even out of the belly of the whale, and God delivered him? Did not Manasseh pray out of the low dungeon? Great sinner as he was, God delivered him—oh, let us believe that there is power in prayer, for God listens to the request of those that seek His face!

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.* He would not take the common comfort which friendly words would have yielded him—his case was so desperate that he must have divine comfort, and nothing else. I will not be comforted till Jesus comfort me, and this is a very good and holy resolution. I wish that some who snatch at comfort—unhealthy comfort—too soon, would resolve upon this, "My cry shall go to God, and God only, and I will take no comfort till God the Holy Spirit brings it to me."

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* Yet it was the right thing to do to remember God—the most comfortable thing in the world! And though it failed at first, it did not fail in the long run.

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.* It is no new thing, then, for the best of God's people to be in the deepest trouble. The path which you are traveling, O mourner, is well marked with footprints!

3-5. *Selah. You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.* Turned over the experience of Your people written in Your Word to see if You ever did forsake one of them.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* To see whether You did forsake *me* in days gone by—marked my past experience of Your faithfulness.

6-9. *I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?* Will He be favorable no more? Very proper questions to put. They answer themselves when we put then plainly, but while they lie festering in our spirits—misshapen things like ghosts that haunt our hearts—then they alarm us. It is well to come to plain dealings with our soul and to say, "Why are you cast down, O my soul; why are you disquieted within me?"

9, 10. *Selah. And I said.* When I came to reckon all up, and make a righteous judgment. When I bid my fears lie still awhile and let me listen to reason, I said—

10. *This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.* I will remember God's faithfulness in the past, in years when I lived at His right hand and basked in the sunlight of His love—I will snatch firebrands from the altars of the past to light up the fires of today!

11-13. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work, and talk of Your doings. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* Or better, "Your way is in holiness." What You do is right, my God. I feared and trembled, but now I know it is so.

13, 14. *Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people.* Oh, if we could all proclaim what God has done for us, we could prove it true that God has declared His strength among us! The might of His grace has He displayed in our case.

15. *You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.* Saints in the olden times were very fond of falling back upon the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. It was a favorite subject of their contemplation—it yielded them great comfort, and very, very frequently they turned it into sacred song. Now in heaven we shall do the same, for we shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Let not the Church in modern times forget to draw consolation out of that well! Here the Psalmist gives us a description, as I think it is, of the passage of the Red Sea—giving it as a sort of type of the way in which God will always deliver His people to the world's end.

16-20. *The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the heaven: the lightning lighted the world: the earth trembled and shook. Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You lead Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* For one moment just look at this picture. You will be delivered and God will be glorified in your deliverance just as He was in the coming out of Egypt, but it will be by a mysterious way, perhaps a way little guessed at by you. God's path will be in the great waters. You will see the power, but before you see it, you will little guess how it will be displayed. Only follow where He leads, for as amidst the thunder and the lightning, He led His people as calmly on as a shepherd leads his flock. So shall you, whatever happens, with Jehovah for Your shepherd, be led safely on till you come to the celestial city! Let us sing the song of the Red Sea.

REVELATION 1:15-20.

In the first 14 verses (see Exposition—Sermon #3467, Volume 61—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org) we have given to us part of the glowing description of the Glories of the ascended Christ, and here it is completed.

15. *And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.* Seas lashed to tempests, cataracts leaping from their stupendous heights—such was the voice of Christ!

16. *And He had in His right hand seven stars. And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.* For His Word is a killing thing.

16. *And His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength.* What magnificent figures put together! We are well prepared to find that John could not long endure this majestic representation of the Lord.

17. *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.* He was not only brought to the posture of reverence, but he was so overawed that he became unconscious! It is the same person upon whose breast John had laid his head, yet now He is represented as John had never seen Him before! He was not so at the Last Supper. He was not so upon the cross. He was not so on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was not so even when He had risen from the dead, and, perhaps, He will not be so when we see Him in His glory. This was an especially instructive representation of Christ, and it was too much even for the trained and educated spirit of John the Divine.

17, 18. *And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death.* This is the great consolation of the people of God when they are brought very low—that Jesus lives, that Jesus reigns, that Jesus still comforts us and draws near to us in all the majesty of His power!

19, 20. *Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.*

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MARTHA AND MARY
NO. 3469

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42.

I THINK I see the Man of Sorrows as He is traversing the high road, attended by His few friends and disciples. Where will He refresh Himself when the time is come to cease from toil and take food? Where is His house? Surely the Great Prophet has some place wherein to rest? Alas, He has none! "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." However, what He has not of His own, friends will afford Him. Martha, a disciple—not a full-grown one, but one who had begun to learn something of the truth of God—meets Him at the door of her house, at the entrance to the village of Bethany, and she invites Him to come in. Jesus Christ, who had often accepted an invitation from an enemy, was glad to accept one from a friend. So He goes into the house, with His friend, Lazarus, and sits down. No sooner is He sat down, with His disciples around Him, than He falls to preaching. A sermon is none the worse for being preached in a private house. Martha and Mary stood listening to Him. Stood, did I say? Mary sits down at His feet and Martha, having listened for a little while, remembers that she has many family cares. The dinner must be made ready, so she betakes herself into her kitchen and is very busy with her necessary cookery. She needs a little extra help, and she comes back into the room and sees Mary sitting at Jesus' feet. Seeming rather irritable, Martha appeals to Jesus, "Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?"—hoping that the Master would chide Mary—but He rather defends her, and implies a gentle censure upon Martha, when He says, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

This little quick reply must have surprised Martha! She did not expect it would come to herself being reproved and Mary being commended! But so it was—and the incident, we think, may give us some profitable instruction. Let us see if we can find out what it is.

I. WE WILL TAKE THE CASE OF MARTHA FIRST.

There is no reason to find any great fault with her. Martha was a good woman. The Lord "Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus." Since

He appreciated Martha's character, it is not for us to depreciate it. Martha was an excellent housewife. Perhaps a little too fussy—I know not what better word to use—a little too particular about the little things. Troubling and vexing herself about domestic arrangements in spreading the board and serving the provisions. She was, perhaps, a little too prone to disquiet her mind by the scrupulousness of her tastes—still she was an admirable woman, one who kept her house in good order. No mean prize is it, especially for the working man, to have a Martha for his wife—one who orders her household well. Indeed, so commendable is this in Christian women, that the Apostle might well say, "Let them first learn to show piety at home." If your children's stockings are not darned, if their clothes are not mended, if the buttons are not put on their dresses at the proper time, I would not give much for your Christian example! A housewife should see to these details and, before all others, for neatness and industry should be the woman whose heart is right before the Lord. One or two friends, I see, are smiling. Let them smile if they like. I only hope they will mind my homely advice and attend to their home duties—then they will make their husbands smile with satisfaction and their families will look brighter. If they have ungodly husbands, it will tend to paint religion in fairer colors, and to commend it to their esteem.

In what respect, then, was Martha to blame? Well, though she got a little censure, you see Jesus does not upbraid her severely. His words are very kind—"Martha, Martha." We do not address women thus familiarly by name, you know, unless we are very intimate with them. I would not venture to call you by your Christian name, because I do not know you well enough. We only do that with our friends and kinsfolk. So in the kindest way, making Himself very familiar with her, Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things" 'Twas little to say. He only indicated the fact, without uttering half as much complaint as she made against her sister, Mary. What was her fault, then? Well, we think it was just this—the Lord Jesus Christ did not often come round those parts preaching. He had a large diocese—He was the traveling bishop of the whole land. And it did seem to cast a little slight on His ministry for Martha to think more of the beef that was being roasted and the vegetables that were being prepared for the table, than of that rich food, that bread which came from heaven, which He was giving them! If a preacher came to us but every now and then, dear brothers and sisters, I think the Word of God would become so precious to us that we might be pardoned neglecting some family cares in order to listen to him. But Martha, you see, *put her family cares somewhat before the precious Word of Christ*. And, besides, she seems rather to have looked at her religion as a doing something which Christ needed of her, than as a taking the one thing necessary which she needed from Christ! Of such people there is now no lack. I trust they are in the faith, though they are but babes in grace. Their practical piety consists, to a large extent, in what they ought to do for Christ, and what He expects from them, rather than in realizing

that delightful sense which some believers have of what Jesus has done for them!

Now what I can do for Christ is, I am sure, very little, and is a poor subject to engross all my thoughts. What He did for me is so amazing—so matchless, so unspeakable, so glorious, that I ought to give that the major part of my attention! I may sometimes run with Martha to do what Christ needs of me, but I think I ought more frequently to sit with Mary to receive from Christ what I need from Him. Your religion is not of a first-class order if it is altogether looking at your practice, and not at the finished and perfect work of Christ. There will be at least a tendency in you to legality, and that tendency is so dangerous that it deserves to be rebuked. Though I would rebuke it as tenderly as I can, yet it must be somewhat sharply, that you may be sound in the faith. Martha, Martha, Christ does not stand in need of you half as much as you do of Him! It is meet and proper for you to think how you may economize time to attend the house of prayer, and how you shall bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and how you shall save a little money to give to the poor or to Christ's Church. All these things are right. It is well you should do them, but oh, remember, Christ did *more* for you! Let your thoughts be fixed on His cross, on His life, on His death, or else you will get to be a Pharisee. Ah, Martha, you will get to think that you are saved by your own doings—and then it is all over with you if you ever come to think that! This was one of Martha's faults. She seemed to be more anxious about what she should do for Christ than she was grateful about what Christ had done for her!

Then, you see, *this led her to fret*, and that is always wrong. She began to be peevish and be vexed. Oh, she wanted to have a fine entertainment for Christ. She had out all the best dishes and she would have all the food served in the daintiest manner. She would have nothing put on the table but what was the best of the best for such a one as her Lord! So far this was right and much to her credit, but as little mishaps are apt to cause great annoyances, so she got her mind troubled and her temper irritated. Thus she fretted and vexed herself till the day that ought to have been all happiness and sunshine, because Christ had come, became all worry and hurry, distracting to her mind and distressing to her nerves. Now that is wrong and lamentable. Remember, Christian, whatever you have to do, you should always cast all your care on Him who cares for you! Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, make known your needs unto God. You are to be thoughtful, diligent, prudent—but anxious, carking, vexatious cares you are to turn out of the house as soon as possible, or else you will hear your Master say, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things." You must not be fretful about trifles, provoked with other people, or disquieted with yourself. Your fretting will not make things better—the ruffling of your temper will not smooth the current of affairs.

Be calm. Be quiet. Be patient. Then the multitude of your labors will not disturb the serenity of your mind though many things may have to be done! Much care may be greatly lightened, if it is not altogether avoided.

The next thing to blame in Martha was that while she was earnest, herself, in serving the Lord, *she began to upbraid her dear sister Mary*. Some minds are naturally censorious and prone to fault-finding. There are others who under exciting emotions, begin to criticize, censure and accuse. No, Martha, you have no right to judge Mary. You are doing what you think to be right—she is doing what she thinks to be right—let her alone. There are some earnest young men I know who would have everybody quite as zealous as they—and so would I—but there may happen to be some Christians who cannot, through infirmity, do quite as much. And some of these young men will lose their temper with them and, perhaps, speak disrespectful words of them. This is not right of you. You must not judge another man's servant—to his own master he shall stand or fall. Martha, Martha, Martha, you have no business to find fault with Mary! And you busy Christians, you good, busy people who do so much for Jesus, and wish you could do more—do not sometimes grow angry because others are not as zealous as you are! Never let a bad temper be mixed with earnestness, for it will be like a dead fly in a pot of ointment—it will spoil the whole. Be not rash, Martha, in your judgment of Mary?

I fear, too, that *Martha censured her Lord a little*—and was not that a harsh thing to do? Let us read the words, for fear I should do her an injustice. "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me." Was not that an unkind thing to say? "Jesus, do You not care?" Of course—He was always caring for every one of them! They never had a care but what He had it before them. All their burdens He was willing to bear! All their sufferings He was willing to relieve! And He came into this world on purpose to redeem them with His blood. It was a harsh thing to say, "Master, do You not care?" And so it is with some Christians—they do not set their eyes enough upon Christ's work and are all too busy with work for Christ. Hence they will even upbraid the Master, Himself! These elder brothers—and Martha, you know, was an elder sister—these elder brothers say, "Lo, these many years have I served you, and yet you never gave me a kid that I should 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." This is a bad spirit, a very bad spirit. I heard of a man, some time ago, calling himself a minister of Christ, who said he did not believe in revivals, nor did he look for any good from preaching in theaters, "For," he said, "If God designs to bless the Church, it stands to reason that He will first save those people who usually go to a place of worship, and not the riffraff." Now I did not like that speech! I hope he was a good man, but I am sure he spoke in a bad spirit—and it was with something like that spirit Martha spoke. She seemed to feel, "I have done

all sorts of things. I have been busy and anxious, and I have taken no rest. Nobody knows how hot I have made myself, working with my own hands, and superintending other people's work. I have hurried up and down stairs, with all the toil and all the responsibility upon me—yet here is Mary, doing nothing, and Christ is just as pleased with her as if she were doing a thousand things." Now I think Christ said, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things," to rebuke the cropping up of a little of that ill spirit which is always culpable and mischievous whenever it appears.

To close with Martha—I hope we have not been too severe upon her conduct, or reflected too much upon her character—*she may be used as a picture of the self-righteous*. Perhaps there are such here. There is a John or a James among you, perhaps, who says, "I go to my place of worship very punctually. I order my household with propriety. I conduct my business with integrity. I give to the poor. I subscribe to charities. I take my part in works of benevolence," and so on. Ah, friends, you are cumbered with much serving, but you will never get to heaven that way! Only one thing is necessary, and that is the finished righteousness of Christ! Or is it Martha, there, that good woman I think I heard say, "Well, I have brought up my children creditably. I have always behaved in such a manner that the neighbors give me a good character. I have never neglected my religious duties, so I trust I shall go to heaven." Ah, Martha, Martha! Those good things of yours will sink you! You cannot swim to heaven with them! One thing is necessary—and that one thing is the finished righteousness of Jesus! Leave these fine things that cumber you, and come to Jesus just as you are, and you shall have the good part which cannot be taken from you!

But it is treating Martha too badly to make her a picture of the self-righteous. I shall only notice, now, that *she is only like what some of us sometimes are*. When the minister comes into the pulpit he sometimes feels—at least I myself do—a great deal of concern about the friends that have to stand about the lights, about the draughts and numerous other trivial matters. Full often I reproach myself for being thus cumbered about many things. Instead of being like Martha, the minister should be like Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet, and giving his undivided attention to the Master's words! This is too often the case with the deacons and the elders. They may be thinking about how arrangements may be made for the convenience of the congregation, and filled with anxiety that all may go off well, especially at extraordinary services. They are exposed to the same temptation that Martha was. I dare say my dear brothers who carry round the bread and the cup at the Lord's Supper sometimes feel that they miss some of Mary's repose, and get some of Martha's cares in attending to that service! They would rather, perhaps, sit with you in the pew, like Mary, to enjoy the feast, rather than be like Martha to serve the tables. Others of you are thinking about your children, your sons and

your daughters. As you are anxiously praying the Lord to bless the Word to their souls, you, too, may sometimes get into such an anxious state as to be like Martha. Oh, it will be well for you if you can take the attitude of Mary—sitting at the Savior's feet, profound in reverence, yet familiar in communion with your blessed Lord—awed by His presence, cheered by His smile, impressed with His Word, delighted with His voice, catching the faintest syllable which shall fall from His divine lips—finding in Him enough to enthrall your soul with sacred love and leaving Him to care for you, while you only care to sit at His feet and learn of Him—stationed where no grievous looks or hasty words of Martha can tempt you to move away!

II. LET US NOW TURN TO THE CHARACTER OF MARY and see if we can find anything in that for practical use.

Do not think that Mary was lazy, or that she preferred hearing sermons to doing her work. On another occasion she proved that she did not withhold her service or spare her substance, for she anointed the head of our Lord. She showed that she did not mind a sacrifice, for she did for Jesus what only one other person ever did—she anointed Him! But here was the point about Mary's character—may it be found in yours and in mine—*she gave her attention less to the care of the body than to a care for the soul*! In truth, she loved to drink of the living water which Christ gives to those who are thirsty. She attended to the one thing necessary. Alas, the world does not think that the care of the soul is the one thing necessary. As a good old writer says, "The world thinks this is the one thing needless." They can dispense with religion, because, to their notion, it is an encumbrance. We have heard some people call money the one thing necessary. They despise religion and find their treasure in vanities that perish with the using—and their joy in the things of earth that pass away like the rippling current or the revolving seasons!

Religion is the one thing necessary to us all. It is the one thing necessary to the minister. Without true religion in his heart, he is an impostor! He has taken upon himself an errand upon which the Master never sent him—a responsibility which shall crush his soul lower than the lowest hell! Lord, have mercy upon those ministers who dare to preach what they have not felt. But religion is also the one thing necessary for the hearers—so necessary, indeed, that if they have it not, all the sermons and prayers in the world will be but as fuel for their condemnation! We must have you, my dear hearers, brought to lay hold on Christ, or else impress signs and professions, formality and morality, vows and votive offerings will but drug your conscience, threaten your hope and end in black despair! True religion is the one thing necessary for the aged. I see some here whose bald heads and gray hairs admonish them that they are drawing near to the grave. Ah, my aged friend, what will you do, where will you be a little while hence, unless you have a Savior to rest upon? In the swellings of Jordan, how will you fare if there

is no kind Spirit near you to say, "I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God"? This, too, is the one thing necessary for the middle-aged. Busy with care, toiling from morning till night as some of you are—if you have not the grace of God in your hearts, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit in your experience, what will you do? You will bring up your children for Satan! You will be the instruments of unrighteousness! All your works shall but earn for you the wages of heavy sorrow and bitter lamentations—your present life an endless regret! And how necessary is true religion for the young! It makes the young man wise. It makes the maiden fair—

"A flower, when offered in the bud,
Is no vain sacrifice."

We should not wait until we have grown old and decrepit, and then bring to God the blind and the lame for a sacrifice! Let us give Him the young bullock. Let us offer to Him the lambs of a year old. Since some die while they are young, let us repent while we are young, and believe in Jesus while the charm of springtime enlivens us, for it is the one thing necessary to have faith in Him! There are other things, you will tell me, that are necessary. I answer, Yes, but this is the especially, pre-eminently, and universally necessary thing! Imagine a man in the condemned cell at Newgate. There he sits, busy writing letters. He is going to die a felon's death, knowing it will cruelly grieve his family. He is doing the best thing he can do—writing letters of consolation to them and trying to settle his little affairs. In comes the King's messenger and he says to the man—only the man is too busy to listen to him—"I have his Majesty's free pardon." The condemned man says, "I cannot attend to you. I cannot attend to you. I have got a letter to write to my wife." He goes on with his writing, but he is interrupted again with the news of his Majesty's free pardon. "I cannot attend to it," he says, "I have to write to my children, for I have to die next Monday," and he goes on writing. Now do you not see, if the man will but stop and think, the free pardon will do far more for him than all his letters can? And if he shall but get that, he can attend to all the rest, by-and-by! So is it with faith. A free pardon is offered by God, but you say, "Oh, but I have other things to look to." I tell you, you can look to them afterwards, but while the angel of mercy stands by and presents you with a free pardon, I pray you take the one thing necessary and mind the other things in due time!

There is a wreck, yonder, a wreck far out upon the waste salt sea, and on it are men who are starving, till the bones start through their skin. They have hoisted a flag upon a pole. Those poor creatures are almost destitute of clothing—the salt sea washes them, and at night they are all but frozen to death, and they only preserve their lives by huddling one upon another. These people need a thousand things, you tell me. They need some generous diet to restore their flesh. They need their friends. They need their native country. They need their families and households. They need fresh clothing. Yes, but I tell you one thing is necessary—they

need a friendly sail and if they can but see a ship in the distance, and that ship can come to them, they have all they need! And so you that are looking after bread, and after your families, and so on—oh, this is all well, but still, while you are on the raft, and are perishing, what you really need is Christ, who, like a friendly sail in the distance, comes to save you and is willing to take you on board His ship at once—and to give you all you need! One thing is necessary! Oh, Jane, may you hold onto that! And John, and Thomas, and William, and Margaret—any of you, all of you—do the same! Leave other things for a little while. You know you can work and pray. You can go about your business and yet have faith in Christ. This will not interfere with your household cares. But do, I pray you, imitate Mary in getting hold of the all-important, the absolutely necessary one thing—a living faith in a living Savior! This was the first reason why Mary was commended—she got a hold of the one thing necessary.

The next thing she was commended for was this—*it was her own choice*—"Mary has chosen the good part." Some of our captious friends will be saying, "Ah! Ah! Are you now going to preach free-will and tell us that it is man's choice?" Oh, brothers and sisters, you know what I think of man's will—that it is a slave, bound in iron fetters—but yet God forbid that I should alter Scripture to suit anybody's doctrine, or even my own! Mary did choose the better part, and every man that is saved chooses to be saved. I know that at the back of his choice, and as the cause of his choice, there is God's choice, but still, the grace of God always imparts grace to the man's heart. No one is dragged to heaven! Nor does anyone ever go to Christ against his will—*the soul must be made willing in the day of God's power*. This is the triumph of God's grace—not that He takes men to heaven as we might carry machines there, but that He expressly acts upon the human mind, leaves it as free as ever it was, and yet makes it perfectly obedient to His own will! Mary chooses. God had chosen her in old eternity and, therefore, she chooses Him—

"Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return."

Now let us ask, for we cannot merit any commendation—have we chosen Christ? Have we chosen His cause, His truth, His cross? If you have got a religion that is not a matter of choice to you, I am afraid it is not of much use. If you attend any religion because you must—if you follow it of necessity, from a sense of duty, from the goading of fear, or from the dictates of custom—I am afraid, when your religion is put in the scales, it will be found wanting. It must be a matter of solemn and deliberate choice with you! Now which would be your present choice? Could the pleasures of this world be all daintily painted before your eyes—every joy that could regale the senses—music to charm the ears, perfumes for the nostrils, sweets for the mouth and landscapes for the eyes, on the one side. And on the other side, let Christ and His cross be put before you—which would you chose? I know which some of you have

chosen—may God alter your choice! But I trust there are some here who can say, "Choose? Why, I have once and for all chosen Christ! I have counted the cost and I reckon the reproach of Christ to be greater treasures than all the riches of Egypt." You are commended. Christ gently speaks to you a word of love when He says, "Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her."

Mary was commended, too, because she *had chosen the good part*. It is good to know Christ, good in every sense—it is good for ourselves—it is good toward God, and good toward man. It is good in the sense of comfort. It is good in the sense of morality. Nobody can say anything against true religion who judges fairly. Even the judge upon the bench dares not say that to have a new heart and a right spirit is not good. True religion has in it everything that is lovely and of good repute, honest in the sight of men and devout in the sight of God. Oh, Mary, now you have left your Martha-cares, and are resting wholly and only on Jesus, you have this, for your heart's content—that you have not merely chosen the good, but that you have chosen the best of all the good—the good part with which no other portion can bear the least comparison!

There is one other commendation, and with that we close. *Mary had chosen that which could never be taken away from her*. Of the many things which some of us take a pride and a pleasure in possessing, we have not many that cannot be easily taken away. Though we may have a fair character, any lying slanderer may take that away for a time. We have a house—the flames may take that away and leave nothing but a heap of ashes. We have a beloved spouse—grim death may stretch her in the coffin. We have dear children, the delight of our eyes, but we know that mortal is written on their brows. We have friends with whom we take sweet counsel, but they are dropping off one by one—

"Who has not lost a friend?"

We have many comforts of which adversity might deprive us in a moment. Those that were once highly esteemed among men are soon forgotten, even by their neighbors. Their choice companions do not know them in the day of their poverty. Riches take to themselves wings and flee away. All the creature things we have may be taken away from us. The poor man, perhaps, thinks that he is exempt from the peril because he has no riches to be taken from him, but he has other things than silver and gold which pertain to the life that now is—and they will all be taken away. And at last there will come the greatest thief, Death, the Spoiler. When he finds us weak, stretched upon the bed and utterly helpless, how he will take all our things away! He will clutch the miser's gold. Though he seeks with eager grasp to retain it, Death will tear it away from his expiring grip. He will take away from the dying one all dear friends, his consort and offspring. Closing his eyes and blinding them, he shall see no more forever. Stopping his ears and sealing them, he shall hear no more the way of loving consolation. Touching his heart and

arresting its beat, his desire will cease. All things shall then be taken away. But there is one thing—oh, that we may choose it—there is one thing that neither life nor death can take away! It is the good part, a good hope in Jesus, a true faith in Jesus, a perfect love to Jesus, a vital union with Jesus! Come, death, you may clutch, but you cannot take away that which Jesus holds with living hands! Come, you devils of hell, you may seek to tear away these jewels from me, but—

"Stronger is He than death or hell,
His Majesty's unsearchable."

And He defies the sons of darkness and repels all their rage! These things cannot be taken away from you!

I think I see you going through the dark valley. Doubts, like troops of robbers, seek to slay you, but they cannot take away your jewels. The great robber comes, Diabolus, the old accuser of the brethren, and he fumbles for your treasures, and he takes away some of your comforts, but he cannot take away your faith. The great dogs of hell howl at you as though they would tear you in pieces, but those dogs cannot rob you of your good part! I think I see you in that river, when the water comes even to the chin, and you are ready to say, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing"—but even that black stream cannot drown your comfort! You have a hope that swims above the biggest billow! You have a song that sounds louder than the wailing of the tempest! No fatal shipwreck shall I fear, for Christ, my treasure, is with me there, and He preserves Himself and preserves me! Having chosen the good part, which cannot be taken from me, I am safe!

And now, dear friends, the question comes—question which I hope all who mean to be communicants at the Lord's Table, especially will ask themselves—"Have I chosen the good part?" Forget religious cares! Forget ecclesiastical troubles! Forget all that you have to do for Christ, and only think of what Christ has done for you! Have you chosen Him? Can you say in the language of that hymn, which makes us so happy when we sing it—

"On Christ, the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand"?

If so, come you saints, come and sit down! Be as lowly as Mary was. If there is a low place in the valley, the water is sure to run into it. And if there is a lowly heart, grace is sure to pour in there, though it should flow nowhere else! Go and take your seat at Jesus' feet. Come to the table and sit at Jesus' feet and have fellowship with Him. And oh, you that have not chosen this good part, remember that in having despised it, you have despised your own mercy! The day will come when you will wish to alter your choice. May God change it now! If there is one here who says, "Oh, I wish I could have the good part!" I tell you, you may have it! If there is one soul here that desires to be saved, you may be saved! Christ desires you more than you can possibly desire Him. Christ died for sinners—you are a sinner—trust Him and you are saved! Then

your sins are gone, His righteousness covers you with imperial purple and you stand an heir of heaven, an adopted child of God—

"Oh, believe the record true,
God has given His Son to you."

Trust in His blood! Trust in His merits and you shall be saved! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:45-57.

Lazarus had been publicly raised from the dead. A great number of persons saw the miracle and there was never any question about its having been worked.

Verses 45, 46. *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their way to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done.* We could hardly have conceived it possible that men would have been guilty of such conduct as this to go to Christ's enemies and lay it as an accusation against Him, that He had raised a man from the dead!

47, 48. *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What shall we do? For this man does many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.* They pretended that if Jesus Christ gathered to Himself a great party, the Romans would take umbrage at it—pounce upon the whole nation and destroy it, for fear of its revolting from under their sway. A gross lie throughout!

49, 50. *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all. Nor do you consider that it is expedients for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* That was his advice. You are, none of you, up to the mark. You do not handle this thing rightly. Let us kill this man. Let Him be put to death—not that He deserves it, but that it is expedient that it should be, lest our nation should be destroyed—and this is the way that governors and kings have been accustomed to think! Not, "Is it right?" But, "Is it expedient?" And we may always pray to God that we may have a Government that will do that which is right, and not be guided by the evil direction of that which is expedient! One has well said that if the death of a righteous man would save ten thousand, yet it would be an atrocious thing that he should be put to death unwillingly for the saving of any. The right is, after all, expedient. Yet Caiaphas did not know what he said. He was speaking a great truth of God.

51. *And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation.* He did not understand his own words. He was saying a great deal more than he meant to say—for it was expedient—blessedly expedient—that Jesus should die willingly and of His own accord, giving Himself up to death for the sake of His people.

52, 53. *And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together to put Him to death.* One bold wicked man can often sway the counsels of men who are equally bad, but more cowardly. It had not yet come to this—that they would hurt Him to the death, but now they take counsel to do it!

54. *Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples.* We do not find that He worked miracles there or preached, but in a holy and devout retirement, it may be, He prepared His mind for the last great week—the week of His passion and His death. It is generally best for us to imitate Him in this—when we have some great work to do—something that will need all the grace that we can get, it is well to make a retreat. Get into retirement and school the heart—seek to drink in fresh strength that we may be prepared for that which lies before us.

55, 56. *And the Jews' Passover was near at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spoke among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What do you think, will He not come to the feast?* They had heard much of Him in the country. Country people coming to town want to hear the great minister—to see the great Prophet. So that is their question, "Will He come to the feast?"

57. *Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where He was, he should report it, that they might take Him.* They could not deny the miracles—they could arrest and punish the miracle-worker.

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AN EARNEST ENTREATY
NO. 3470

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Show Your marvelous loving-kindness."
Psalm 17:7.

IF one were about to have an audience with the Queen, or with some other royal personage, he might be apt to say, "How shall I behave myself? What am I expected to do? What is the proper form of address?" Now, in entering into the presence of the great King of Kings, the eternal God, we may suppose the trembling penitent saying, "What shall I do? How shall I come before the Most High God? What words shall I use and into what fashion shall I cast my desires?" Well, Holy Scripture has been very rich in answers to this question, for you have hundreds of most appropriate prayers made ready to your hand! We might readily enough compose a Biblical Liturgy, if one believed in Liturgies at all! Nor would it be difficult to find Scriptural words for every desire that could possibly strike the human heart. The Bible, besides all its other excellences, is a great and universal prayer-book, and has in it petitions suited to all classes and conditions of men at all times, whatever their desires and necessities may be. Now I take out of this prayer book this one short supplication. I know the children of God will join with me in praying it, and I trust that before we have done, some who never prayed before may make this their firm prayer, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness." Now, in the first place, we may offer up this prayer—

I. DESIRING THAT GOD WOULD SHOW MARVELOUS LOVING-KINDNESS IN OUR MEDITATIONS.

What marvelous loving-kindness there is for us to look at! Old as the everlasting hills—but old as it is, and majestic as it must be—there are some eyes that never saw it! Others, too, who, though they have read their Bibles and heard gospel sermons from their infancy, have never yet seen God's marvelous loving-kindness! Let us spend, then, a few minutes in meditation, in order that the Lord may hear this prayer and show us His loving-kindness while we muse upon it.

You see the *root-word, the core-word of the text is* "love." The rest is a description of that love. Well now, in meditating upon God's love, let us remember how extraordinary it has been. It was in love that, before the world was formed, God chose His people and enrolled them in His covenant. When, with prescient eyes, the Almighty beheld all men immersed in ruin by their sin, His finger pointed to one man and another, "There will I dwell forever. There shall be My rest," said the Lord of Hosts, "for I have chosen him." What love was that which made him choose you and me? Or what motive could prompt Him but that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion

on whom He will have compassion? Electing love having dug the fountain, consider, beloved, how vast that love which entered into the covenant of grace to effect the purpose of our redemption—when there was a striking of hands between the Persons of the Trinity, that by that covenant transaction, promises might be made sure to all the seed by the covenanting God in Christ. Ponder, I pray you, upon the love that did not cool when the covenant required sacrifice—which did not refrain when the well-beloved Son of the Father must be the victim! Surely Solomon must have had this in his mind when he said, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Did not Jesus leave His father and His mother that He might cleave unto His Spouse, and that they two might be made one flesh? Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be our Redeemer!

Need I tell the story of the sufferings of Calvary again? We have painted that picture a thousand times in crimson colors. Dipping our brush into the bloody sweat, we have tried to set forth the agonies of the saints' great Substitute. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! You know the results of that love. 'Twas love that called you when you were afar off, quickened you when you were dead in sin and raised you out of the grave of your corruption! It was love that turned your face Zionward, and is it not love that has kept it there? Shall we not say that love laid the foundation stone, and love has gone on piling up the walls, stone by stone, and love shall bring in the top stone with shouts of, "Grace, Grace unto it"? Oh, as I read the matchless story of love without beginning, which can never, never cease, I marvel that our hearts are not all on fire, that our passions do not boil over and that our lips do not become like the red lips of Vesuvius when the burning lava sweeps down her sides! Surely our souls ought to feel a fervor and a heavenly flame for love like this! Lord, while we turn these matters over, "show Your marvelous loving-kindness."

But you perceive that *this love issues in "kindness."* There may be a sort of kindness that is not loving and, on the other hand, there may be a sort of love that is not kindness. We have known man to be very kind to the poor but he never thought of loving them. What thousands of people we meet with every day who would be kind to negroes, but they would not think of loving them. And we know, too, that there is a sort of love that is not kind—or if there is kindness at the bottom, it is not very gentle and tender in its manifestation. Love can sometimes be cruel, or at least it can give hard cuts and cause acute pain, forgetful of that debt of mercy and compassion which is due to the infirmities of man's nature. Now we ought, while we look over the Lord's dealings with us, to remember the minute traits of His kindness as well as the majestic tokens of His love. Beloved, when the Lord made provision for us in the covenant, He did not merely provide bread and water for us—just enough to keep His people alive—but He provided for you the generous wine of Jesus' blood! He provided for you the scarlet and fine linen of Jesus' righteousness, the downy pillow of the divine promise and the soft bed of gracious, sweet, everlasting peace. He did not provide for you a place

where you might take refuge from the storm and solace your soul with humble contentment, but He provided for you a heaven of delights—a heaven which eyes have not seen, of which ears have not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive! There are streams of kindness gushing up and flowing out from the fountain of love! When He called you by His grace, how kindly He did it! You were not whipped to Christ, or if you were, how soon the stripes disappeared from off your back! How kindly He met you! Oh, that day when you tremblingly came to the foot of His cross! How He fell upon your neck and kissed you! How He cried, "Take off his rags and put on the best robe!" How He healed the blisters of your weary feet, put silver sandals upon them and taught you how to dance! How generously He attired you in the sumptuous robe of a prince's son, put a crown of pure gold upon your head and gave you such thoughts of mercy and such gentle words of loving-kindness that your heart, which was earlier ready to burst with grief, was well near bursting with joy! Lord, while we think how kind You have been to us from the day when we first knew You, even until now, we may truly wonder that we do not love You better, and pray that while we turn over Your acts of mercy, You will show Your marvelous loving-kindness.

Oh, yes, it is indeed "marvelous!" We must say a word upon that. *What is so fit to excite wonder and keep up a sense of continual surprise as the love of God?* Do men tell us there are no such things as miracles? Why, every Christian is a living reply to their allegation! No such thing as a miracle? The existence of a believer from day to day is a string of miracles which the laws of nature will not account for. Every Christian will tell you that his experience is miraculous from the beginning of his faith to this day, and so will it continue to be to the end. What a marvel it was, brothers and sisters that God should ever have bestowed His loving-kindness upon such as we have been! We were not among those good people who never did anything wrong. There was nothing in our disposition or character to recommend us. We were sinners, and in our own esteem, sinners of the most crimsoned dye whose iniquities were like scarlet double-dyed! Yet He had mercy on us! We were poor and unlettered, feeble and unbefriended, yet He was moved with compassion toward us! Passing by many of the great and deserving of esteem, He called the base things of our order and the things that men despise, that these might be nurslings of His care and precious in His sight. From what did He call us; from the silliness of the foolish? Some of us from the fellowship of drunkards, from the harlot's haunts, or it may be others of you from the thief's den, from the seat of the scorner, or from the chair of the blasphemer. And if not steeped in crime, you were, perhaps, puffed up with self-righteousness and so fast held in Satan's stronghold. When we think of what we were and what we came from, we see that the loving kindness must be marvelous, indeed!

And then, if you recollect what you would have been if He had not called you, here again is a marvel! Why, we might have been in hell! Certainly we should have been ripening for it, going on with rapid footsteps down to the place where hope could never reach us! And think

yet further of what He has called us to. Oh, how marvelous is this! The criminal has become a child, the rebel has become a prince, the traitor wears a crown—we who were like firebrands fitted for the flame, are waving the palm, wearing the crown and singing the song! I know not what you think of it, brothers and sisters, but in every view I take of the great acts of God's grace towards believers, it is to me, marvelous loving kindness! Meditation upon these great acts of divine grace might tend very much to promote gratitude, and it were well if we sometimes set apart a time to go over in our thought and recollection all the mighty acts of the gracious God of Israel. But I have said enough upon the first point—so let me proceed briefly to speak upon a second. Surely David meant to say—

II. "SHOW YOUR MARVELOUS LOVING-KINDNESS IN OUR EXPERIENCE."

It may be there is a man over yonder who did not think of coming in here tonight at all, till, as he was passing by the building, he saw so large a crowd that he decided he would step in, though he fully meant to go out again. But, somehow or other, here he is. Man, you know what you have been. It is not for me to recount your sins before this assembly, but be assured the darkness of night has not covered them—neither has the silence of your confederates concealed them! The Lord that searches all hearts and tries the reins knows your iniquity. No feature of it is hidden from His eyes. Still, thus says the Lord of Hosts unto you this night, "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die?" And thus say I unto you—Pray this prayer this evening and who can tell but God may have mercy upon you, that you perish not? Pray it now. Let me offer it aloud for you, "Show Your loving-kindness." I know you say, "If God should have mercy on me, it will be a great wonder! If He should change my heart and make me a saint, it would be a marvel, indeed!" Just so, sinner, but that is just why I put this prayer into your mouth, for it suits you—"Show me Your marvelous loving-kindness." Do you not see that you have been a marvelous sinner? Marvelously ungrateful have you been! Marvelously have you aggravated your sins! Marvelously did you kick against a mother's tears! Marvelously did you defy a father's counsel! Marvelously have you laughed at death! Marvelously have you made a covenant with death and a league with hell! But your covenant with death is broken, and your league with hell is disannulled—and He who does great wonders meets you tonight and says, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Believe on Him that died upon the tree, who Himself bore our sins in His own body! There is life in Jesus Christ for those who turn their eyes on Him! Look to Him! Look to Him, now, and live! I wish this prayer might be taken up in many parts of this congregation by some who have been outcasts in Israel, that they might pray, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness."

Yes, I know that young man yonder, and his history. He has been for months anxious about his soul. Sermon after sermon has stirred him up. He gets no sleep. He goes to his little chamber and cries to his God. He is almost despairing and the devil almost tempts him to make away with

himself, or to give up all hope. "Oh," he says, "God will never have mercy on me! It is too great a thing to hope, too great a wonder to expect!" Young man, here is a new prayer for you, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness." I have heard of a poor old woman who had long been bowed down with a sense of guilt, who said, when she found the Savior, that if Jesus Christ would but save her, He would never hear the last of it, for she would praise Him as long as she had any being! I remember that I thought, myself, if Jesus Christ would but save me, that I would do anything for His sake—and if anybody had told me that I should ever be such a sorry coldhearted dolt as I have been, I would not have believed him nor would any Christian believe it if he were told it about himself! We thought we could do anything for Christ, burn like martyrs, or live like servants! We have not done it, but yet it is a marvelous thing that God should save us! Young man, take that prayer. I was going to say, take it home, but I do not like to put even half an hour between you and this prayer! Now put your hands to your eyes, or, if you do not care to do that, yet say in your soul, "Oh, God, You that do great wonders, You who are the Miracle-worker, show Your marvelous loving-kindness." Why, this prayer will just suit my Christian brother, there, who has come in here tonight. He is a Christian, but he has long been a backslider. Poor man! His brothers and sisters have looked very coolly on him—and well they may—for he certainly did disgrace the cause. But he is a child of God for all that, and the Lord still loves him! Brother, you have been much depressed—you have thought the Lord had forsaken you and now you almost think it is impossible that you should be one of His. Well now, here is a prayer that will suit you, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness." Surely it will be a marvel if He should again make your bones which have been broken to rejoice, and restore unto you the joy of His salvation! And He will do it, if you can but plead this prayer!

And I know my friend over yonder, too, who has had so many losses in business, and such a succession of trials, wave upon wave—

"You see each day new straits attend,
And wonder where the scene will end."

Brother, God can deliver you! Oh, what a blessing it is to have such a God to deal with! Come to Him with your great load and say, "Lord, here is wondrous work needed—show Your marvelous loving kindness." But, you say, you are placed in very peculiar circumstances. Just so: Now take the words of my text, you that are growing old in grace, and are growing feeble in body at the same time—can you not say, "Now, Lord, now, before Your servant goes hence. Before these gray hairs shall lie with the clods of the valley, show me once more Your marvelous loving-kindness." And, I think, this is a prayer I would like to die with, when the cold stream begins to rise above the ankles, even up to the knees—when the floods overflow till they come even unto the chin—how sweet it will be to say in death, "Show Your loving-kindness." This will help you to die! It will enable you to meet the adversary with the shout of victory! Yes, as you stand on Jordan's shore, you will raise one more sacred pillar, and then mount with joy and sing in heaven, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness."

So this prayer will do for beginners; but it is also suitable for those who are ending their course. I may call it the Alpha-prayer and the Omega-prayer—fit for babes, and fit for strong men! Take it up, each one of you, and say, "Show me Your marvelous loving-kindness." Having thus taken this prayer first as to meditation, and then as to experience, we will now take it as—

III. A REQUEST PREFERRED FOR SOME SIGNAL GIFT.

"Show Your marvelous loving-kindness by some special revelation to me at this time." I think one of the best translators of the Hebrew gives it, "Distinguish Your loving-kindness." I do not know which to quote, but several of them seem to treat the passage in this way, "Lord, You have a great many loving kindnesses. I am just now in great trouble. Pick out one of Your loving-kindnesses—distinguish—give me in my time of extraordinary need some extraordinary loving-kindness. Show Your marvelous loving kindness." If you lay the stress on the word, "marvelous," you will then get the pith of it. I think it is Trapp who said that "God is good at a dead-lift"—and he has put a deal of meaning into that homely phrase. When you and I can do nothing, and it has come to a dead-lift, then we need our God and then we may say to Him, "Now, Lord, show me more than Your known goodness—show Your marvelous loving-kindness. Oh, let us see what Omnipotence can do! Human wisdom fails—let Omniscience come to our aid! Lord, we are at our wits' end—may this, our extremity, prove to be Your opportunity. Show Your *marvelous* loving-kindness." Do you not think we shall be warranted in using this prayer as we gather round the table, tonight, to partake of the Lord's Supper? (My sermon seems to have more praying than preaching in it). Lord, here are the emblems that set forth Your body and Your blood—now "show Your marvelous loving-kindness." Oh, do give us some choice token for good, some special mercy such as we received not when last we met for this communion! Lord, we are very weary. We have been harassed in the world. We need rest—give us some marvelous peace, some sacred calm, some sweet repose which we have not known before! Gathered as we are here, can we not, as believers, cry, "Have You not a blessing, O my Father? Give it to me, even to me, O my Father"?

I am always afraid lest, as a church, your graces should droop, lest your zeal should cool, lest your prayers should grow feeble, lest the green, vigorous life of the church should begin to wither and lose its force. I put up this prayer for you all—Lord, give us a revival season tonight! "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness." Let us now feel the quickening touch of Your divine presence. Let us now be illuminated by the presence of Your Spirit, and comforted with the whispers of Your Son! If any of you here are despondent, I pray that you have "marvelous loving-kindness shown you tonight, that the Lord may dip your morsel in His cup that you may lean on His bosom and feed from His table! You feeble saints, I pray that the Lord, your Strength, may manifest Himself to you—that He would be pleased to cheer and refresh you by choice revelations, by the outgoings of His grace towards you, and by the drawings of your heart towards Himself. Thus you may get the full

meaning of this prayer unfolded and verified to you tonight, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness."

I do not know, dear brothers and sisters, how it is with you, but there are times with me when I do get visions of "marvelous loving-kindness." No doubts cast their shadows across my soul, then! No fears alarm, no cares distract me, then. Even my anxieties for you are hushed. I have no remembrance of anybody's faults, no recollection of my own troubles, no thought about the pressure of work, or the perils of adversity—all is loving-kindness from beginning to end! My soul revels in it. Like a strong swimmer, we bathe and swim in the river of His pleasure! We dive to the bottom and rise up again. The spirit is filled with ecstasy and flooded with delight! These seasons, when they do come, give us strength to perform fresh labor and to endure future trial. They are, indeed, the wells of Elim and the palm trees thereof under which we sit and drink! May this night be to us some such season as that!

But you are going away, many of you. I beg you not to pass from under yonder columns until you have paused a minute and said, "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness." Let us all pray that prayer, "O Lord, show Your marvelous loving-kindness. Show it to me."—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.

'Show Your marvelous loving-kindness.' Oh, forgive me. I do accept Your Son. I do believe in Jesus, that He is able to save my soul, and my soul does rest on Him alone. Lord, for Jesus' sake 'show Your marvelous loving-kindness.'" Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51; PSALM 119:145-168.

PSALM 51.

There are seven penitential Psalms, but this seems to be the chief one of the seven. The language of David is as suitable to us today as it was to him. And though much was lost to the cause of righteousness by David's sin, yet the Church is enriched for all ages by the possession of such a Psalm as this. It is a marvelous recompense. Surely here the Lord reigns, bringing good out of evil, blessing generation after generation through that which in itself was a great evil!

VERSE 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness: according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Observe he appeals to mercy, and mercy only—to mercy, abounding mercy in its most tender and kindest aspect. "According to Your tender mercies." Note here David does not use his name. He does not say, "Lord remember David"—he is ashamed of his name. And he does not seem to want God to remember that, but to remember mercy—and to have pity upon this nameless sinner. He does not say, "Save the son of Your handmaid," or "Deliver Your servant," as he was known to do. He just appeals to mercy, and that is all. And observe it is not, "Have mercy upon me, oh my God." He is far off now. He has lost the comfortable assurance of the covenant of grace and so it is rather more

like the cry of the prodigal when he returned and said, "I am not worthy to be called your son." Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out—(or as more correctly it might be rendered, "wash out"—"wipe out")—my transgressions. The allusion is rather to a dish—wipe it out, turn it upside down and turn out all that is in it, sweep it away—wipe out all my transgressions. Or it may be as a withdrawal of a record in court when the indictment is withdrawn, "Lord be pleased to quash the indictment against me. Blot out all my transgressions."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* Nothing about the punishment—he does not mention that. The true penitent, though he dreads punishment, much more dreads sin. It is sinfulness—sin that he would be delivered from! "Wash me." *You* must do it, no other washing will suffice. Wash me thoroughly, till I am perfectly cleansed. Cleanse me from my sin—*my* sin. I do not lay it on anyone else. Cleanse me from it.

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* Unless sin is before us, we shall not be likely to spread it before God. But when we have knowledge of it, then we shall make acknowledgment of it to God. "My sin is always before me." He was in such a state of heart that the remembrance of sin seemed painted on his eyeballs. Even in his dreams he remembered it—he was never free from the dread remembrance of it.

4. *Against You only have I sinned.* Yet he had sinned against many more! But just now the thought of his sin against God swallowed up all else. All his offenses against his fellow men were trivial compared with the high treason which he had committed against his God. This is the virus of sin—that it is sin against God.

4. *And done this evil in Your sight.* While You were looking on. For a thief to steal in the presence of the Judge is impudence, indeed, but yet in Your presence, O my God, I have done this evil.

4. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* As much as to say, "I make this confession of sin, which is so black that if You should judge me, however severely, or sentence me to however exemplary a punishment, You will be quite clear and quite just. I could put in no plea against whatever You should command. I richly deserve all Your wrath can bring upon me."

5. *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* The black stream leads him to look at the black fountain. How can we expect from parents who have sinned, that there should be born unto them pure and spotless children? No, the tendencies in us all towards evil are there at the very first. He does not at all venture to excuse himself, but rather to aggravate his sin, that he had been a sinner from his very birth!

6, 7. *Behold You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.* He had seen the leper pronounced clean when the hyssop was dipped in blood and sprinkled on him—but then the leper had to be clean beforehand before this could make him ceremonially clean. He is

leaping through the first process and coming to the closing one—his soul anxious to be accepted with God at once!

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* Yet what can be whiter than snow? Snow is not like a white wall that is but white on the surface—it is white all through. And yet when God washes the believer, He makes him whiter than snow, for the snow soon becomes tainted, soon loses its purity—but we never shall if God shall wash us! There was no provision made for the cleansing of an adulterer under the law of God. David, therefore, had to look beyond all the sacrifices of the law to the cleansing power of the great coming sacrifice, and he so believed in it that with a brave faith—(I know no more brave expression in all Scripture than this)—he says, "Wash me, filthy as I am, and I shall be whiter than snow."

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* The original expression is "bones cracked," or, as one puts it, smashed. His sense of sin had been so great that he felt as one might feel whose very bones had been smashed by some terrible blow. So he seems to say, that as there may be a delightful pleasure in having every one of these broken bones restored, such would be his pleasure if God would pardon his sins.

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* If we hide our sins before our faces, then God will turn His face away from our sins. If we hide our sins from our faces, God will set them before His face. But when they are always before us they shall never be before Him.

9, 10. *And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God.* It is a *creation*—the very word is used which is employed concerning the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

11. *Cast me not away from Your presence: and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* I have put You away from my presence by forgetting You, but put me not away from Your presence. I have been filled with an unholy spirit, but oh, take not your Holy Spirit from me!

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me.* He feels how much he needs it. The burnt child dreads the fire. "Uphold me with Your free Spirit."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways: and sinners shall be converted unto You.* And David has been doing that ever since, for this Psalm has been a continual sermon to sinners, teaching them God's ways in pardoning sin! And many, I doubt not, have been converted unto God by His Spirit through the language of this Psalm. When you and I find Christ, let us tell of our blessed discovery! Have you honey? Eat it not all yourself—go, tell your fellow men. Are you saved? Tarry not, but go and spread the news that others may be saved, too!

14. *Deliver me from the guilt of shedding blood, O God, You God of my salvation.* His faith is growing. He has humbled himself. It is the way to rise. Weaken yourself before God and you shall grow strong. Empty yourself and you shall be filled! Bow low and He will lift you up. "You God of my salvation."

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* Those tongues that confess sins are the best tongues to sing with! That tongue which has been salted with the brine of penitence is fitted to be sweet with the honey of praise!

15. *O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.* You know the leper when he was unclean—what did he do? He covered his lips, as much as to confess that he was not fit to speak. So here the unclean David, with the covering of his lips, will not venture to speak until the Lord has taken away his sin and opened his mouth for him. It was this that Isaiah meant when he said, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips"—but when it was said concerning the live coal, "Lo, this has touched your lips," then he spoke right eloquently. "Lord, open You my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise."

16. *For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings.* Here we have what God does desire, and what He does not. If you turn to the sixth verse, you will see what He does desire. "You desire truth in the inward parts." Now here He does not desire the mere outward and external worship rendered by sacrifice. It was not the type alone that satisfied Him.

17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* There are some spices that are never perfect in fragrance till they are pounded with the pestle in the mortar, and so is a broken heart. If it is made to suffer and to smart, yet there is sweet pleasure to the Lord when He perceives in His people the smart concerning sin—when they hate and loathe it.

18, 19. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offerings: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Gratitude ascends when sin is forgiven, and when God appears to bless His church, then she blesses her God.

PSALM 119:145-168.

Verse 145. *I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes.* It is sweet to look back upon our prayers, if those prayers were uttered with our whole heart, for it is no small work of divine grace to enable us to throw the whole heart into prayer! And when we get that, we may be quite sure that our prayer will succeed. The God who gives us grace to pray with the whole heart will be sure to reply to the prayer! After prayer David uttered a resolution, "I will keep Your statutes." He was resolved upon this with his whole heart, and though a resolution is not enough, for many make resolves and break them, yet no man is likely to keep God's Word who does not resolve to do so. Therefore it is necessary, first, to cry in prayer, and then to resolve with the whole heart to walk according to God's will.

146. *I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.* He has got on this string, you see, and he touches it again. First he said, "I cried with my whole heart." Now again he says, "I cried unto You." When you are in trouble, if you can remember that you were much in prayer before you entered into the experience which led into the trouble, you

can plead with God that you did not rush into it carelessly and prayerlessly—and you have a good argument to urge with Him why He should help you in your time of need.

147, 148. *I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help. I hoped in Your Word. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate in Your Word.* It was not now and then that David was in a devotional frame of mind! He continued so. He began early, but he continued late. The prayer of the dawn was followed by the watch of the midnight!

149. *Hear my voice according unto Your loving-kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment.* He is accustomed to put these two things together, all through this judgment—as much as if he felt that he could—as if he felt that he could appeal both to the tenderness and to the justice of God for help in his time of need. For with a God who has entered into the bonds of the covenant with us, and pledged Himself by promise and by oath, we may plead both His loving-kindness and His judgment.

150, 151. *They draw near that follow after mischief: they are far from Your law. You are near, O LORD: And all Your commandments are truth.* How beautiful is this! The enemies are coming near, but You are nearer. They approach me, but I abide with You, and You abide with me. I am safe!

152. *Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.* Oh, believer, what comfort there is in this for you! If you have known it all your years, it has been a blessed thing to know that God changes not—that as He spoke before the earth was, so will that Word abide when this world shall cease to be!

153. *Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forgot Your law.* Lord, Your grace has helped me to remember You. I pray You, therefore, remember my affliction. Look at it with Your eyes of wisdom and deliver me.

154-155. *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to Your Word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes.* Salvation is near to any man who seeks it, but the ungodly, as they will not have God's Word, so shall they not have God's saving grace They are far from it.

156. *Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Your judgments.* Here again, you see, he puts judgment and mercy together—the justice and the tenderness of God—and he leans on both. It is a mark of an instructed Christian when he is able to derive comfort, not merely from the love of God, but also from the holiness and the justice of God, seeing that these are on his side through Jesus Christ's atoning blood.

157-158. *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.* O child of God, whenever you look upon the transgressors, your heart should bleed that they should transgress so good a law—that they should grieve so gracious a God—

that they should bring upon themselves so terrible a penalty. "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved."

159, 160. *Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving kindness Your Word is true from the beginning: and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.* And here is the very sweetness of the gospel—that it is not a thing of today, which will lose its efficiency tomorrow! "It endures forever." You that have got it have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from you! All the blessings of the covenant are everlasting blessings. They are "the sure mercies of David." And he that gets them gets an inheritance which he shall not lose.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of Your Word.* Not in awe of *their* word, but in awe of Your Word. The fear of God is the best cure for the fear of men! No man who is devout is cowardly. If you fear God with all your heart, you will defy all the devils in hell, and fear none.

162-165. *I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil. I hate and abhor lying; but Your law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Your law: and nothing shall offend them.* Whatever happens, they shall suffer no ill from it. "There shall no evil befall such, neither shall any plague come near their dwelling," for they "dwell under the shadow of the Almighty."

166. *LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.* Now, cannot some of you feeble people say that? You that cannot talk of full assurance and are half afraid that you are none of the Lord's people at all, yet you can say, "Lord, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments." And, if so, you have done that which proves you to be His!

167, 168. *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.* And no man will ever take comfort in that if he is not a renewed man, for to know that all our ways are before God is ground for great distress if we are ungodly—if we are walking contrary to His mind. But if we are, indeed, His children, we love to feel that we are always living under His eye—that there is nothing about us unknown to Him—no secret sorrow which He does not read—no invisible burden which He does not see.

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THE THREE HOURS' DARKNESS
NO. 3471

A SERMON
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"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness
over all the land until the ninth hour."
Matthew 27:45.

THIS darkness was not occasioned by any of the natural causes which generally produce darkness. It was in the middle of the day, precisely at noon, that the darkness came. It could not have been caused by an eclipse, for, it being the time of the Passover, we know that the moon was just then at its fullest—at which period no such thing as an eclipse of the sun could possibly occur. It could not, then, have been produced from that cause. And from the way in which Luke describes it, it does not seem to have been occasioned by the sun being eclipsed by any other body, for if you look to his narrative you will find he seems to say that the darkness came first, and that afterwards the sun became dark. Whether this was through some dense vapor coming over the face of the earth, an intensification of some of these fogs to which we are so accustomed, or whether it was through a miraculous action upon the atmosphere, so that while the sun shone its light was no longer able to reach the eye, we cannot tell, but in some way or other darkness prevailed over all the land from twelve o'clock till three in the afternoon. We suppose that this darkness came on suddenly and, if so, it must have been most striking. Just in the midst of their ribald mirth, while they were staring at the naked body of their victim and insulting Him with their jests and jeers, wagging their heads, and thrusting out their tongues—just at that very moment total darkness came on! We suppose it to have been total, or, at any rate, such a gloom as to be a "darkness" which "was over all the land." We suppose, too, that just as suddenly this darkness was withdrawn. As soon as the Savior expired, just at the moment when He gave His last triumphant shout, "It is finished," the sun gleamed forth again and the earth laughed once more in the sunlight—for the great trial of Christ, the great struggle for man's salvation—was then all over! Such a phenomenon must have been most striking. The sudden darkening and the sudden lighting up of the world must have been a thing to be remembered and to be talked of by all who saw it!

As for ourselves at this time, we have not so much to do with the physical causes or with the appearance, itself, as with the *spiritual*

meaning of this darkness. There is light in this darkness, if not to the natural, yet to the spiritual eye, if we have grace to discern it.

There is something to be learned, *even from the darkness*—something to be learned *from the light*, and something to be learned from *both the darkness and the light* together. In the first place, there is, we believe—

I. SOMETHING TO BE LEARNED IN THIS REMARKABLE DARKNESS which covered all the land during the sharpest and severest part of our Savior's agony.

We learn, first, *the sympathy of creation with her Lord*. There is a singular sympathy in creation between God's vicegerent on earth, namely, man, and the world. When man was in his integrity, then the earth was fruitful, but when man fell, the curse fell upon the ground as well as upon man. "Cursed is the ground for your sake." Then the thorn and the thistle sprang up, being sent by God as a token of His displeasure with man. We believe, brothers and sisters, that "the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly," and that in due time, when sin has been cleansed away; this earth of ours will be redeemed from the curse. We are looking for the happy and halcyon time when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God, and then this poor darkened planet shall be washed from her night garments of mist, and shall shine out like her sister stars, the unfallen worlds, praising and magnifying the God who created her! Now if there is this sympathy, as we are sure there is, between the earth and man, much more is there a sympathy between the earth and God—and still more between the earth and that Man who was God as well as man! Observe that when He was born, midnight turned to midday, and when He died mid-day turned to midnight. When He was born, heaven was lit up with splendor and from angelic choirs the Bethlehem song was heard, while men also rejoiced, because unto them a child was born, unto them a Son was given. But when he died, heaven put out her brightest light! "You sun, of this great world, both eye and soul," you did—

"Acknowledge Him your greater,"

and, perceiving it in midday—midnight, with your face all wrapped as in a mantle for very shame, you did lament Him whom men scoffed and mocked, for you were the chief mourner at the death of the King of Kings. The earth, then, thus showed her sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ by her darkness. Remember, too, that she also trembled through her ribs of stone, for there was an earthquake and the veil of the temple was split in two—and even death acknowledged its defeat, for many of the saints that slept, arose. There is a wondrous sympathy, then, between the world and He who made and redeemed the world—and this was manifested by the darkening of the world at the time of His death!

But, secondly, there was in great deal more in the darkness than this. *It was surely a rebuke and a check to the insulting cruelty of man!* What louder rebuke, though without a sound! What stronger check, though

without a voice, could have been offered to that assembled throng? The Roman in his pride, the Jew in his bigotry and the Gentile in his hatred of all that was sacred, were all there—and all did their utmost to pour contempt on Christ! And just in the midst of it they were like the men who sought after a light in Sodom—as if they were all smitten with blindness—they could not find their way! It was all dark round about Him. Now they could no longer scoff at Him. They dared not now say, "Let Him come down from the cross!" I suppose that during those three hours there must have been an intense silence, or if men ventured to use their lips, they whispered to one another, "What is this that has come upon us? Is this the judgment, and is that man, after all, the King of the Jews, and is this darkness, this darkness which may be felt, the taking away of the light of mercy from our eyes that we may perish in everlasting darkness?" I think I can hear them muttering thus, as some of them found their way to their homes, stumbling and falling to the ground, and others of them coming together for the sake of company to keep up their courage—but all of them sitting astonished in the thick darkness and wondering what it could mean—when a tremor went through all the earth and the veil of the temple was split and even the heathen centurion, astonished by all these surprising concomitants of the death of this crucified man, said, "Surely this must be the Son of God!" It was an amazing rebuke, then, to the wickedness of man which then came to its climax round about the cross.

Was it not also, in the third place, *the furnishing of our Savior with a retiring room*, not that He might get a shelter, but that He might now be able to do His great work—bear the full weight of our sins and endure the extremities of the divine wrath? I must not say it, but I do think it would have been impossible for human eyes to have looked upon the Savior when He was in the full vortex of the storm of wrath which fell upon Him—and that God, even in mercy to man, shut the door that man's eyes might not see the Savior in that fearful extremity of misery! It was not meet, when He trod the winepress, that He should be gazed upon. He must tread the winepress alone in all the fullest meaning of that word, with not even an eye to gaze upon Him! It must be in the thick that He must press those grapes of wrath and stain His garments with His blood. Oh, brothers and sisters, you can have no thought—it is impossible you should—of the depth of the Savior's sufferings! The Greek liturgy, when it speaks of Christ's sufferings as "Your unknown sufferings," has just hit the mark. They were unknown—unknown to us and unknown, also, perhaps, to lost souls in hell, so dire and so extreme were they! He was shut up in the darkness that He might there alone bear the whole of it.

And was not this darkness, too, *intended to be to us a sort of emblem of His state?* It is as much as if God had said to us, "You want to know what Christ had to suffer? You cannot know, but that black darkness is the emblem of it." The darkness seems to say to us, "Oh, mortal, you

cannot understand me—those poor optics of yours are meant for another element, namely, for light—you lose yourself in me! You cannot find a pathway in the thick black darkness." So Christ on the cross seems to say to us, "My people, you can follow Me to some extent. In some of My paths you *must* follow Me, but here, as your atoning surety and as the vicarious sacrifice for your sins—*here you cannot follow Me*. This is not your element—you will lose yourselves here. You cannot comprehend it! It is only I, only I who have endured the wrath of God, and know what it means, who can travel on this road." Christian, when you are must oppressed in soul with fellowship with Christ, and when you feel that when asked the question, with James and John, "Are you able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?" you could answer, "Yes, we are able"—mind, there is a point where you are *not* able—there is something in that cup which you cannot drink. There is a depth in that baptism which you cannot know. Thank God that you cannot know it! Bless the Master that those paths of horrid gloom, where hell's blackest nights thicken into the most intense infinitude of darkness, you can never know! "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" was not a cry for you, but for the Savior! To be cast out of God's presence and to bear the weight of sin, is not for you, but for Christ. He has done it for you, and so the darkness becomes a fit emblem to you because you cannot understand it, neither can you fathom nor understand the depths of the Savior's sufferings.

Once more. Does not the darkness, inasmuch as it is an emblem of Christ's sufferings, also set forth to us our own condition? I suppose the Savior was, by force of His suretyship, compelled to take the very place which the sinner should have occupied. The plan of salvation is just this, that Christ shall take the sinner's place and suffer in the sinner's stead what the sinner ought to have suffered. The very pith and marrow of the gospel lies in that word—"substitution." Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We take Christ's place because Christ took our place! He stood in the place of lost sinners. Well now, the place of a lost sinner is the place of darkness. Outer darkness will be his eternal place, and darkness is his present state—his natural condition—as the Apostle said, "We were sometimes darkness." So the Savior is made to be in darkness and as man would have had to abide forever in darkness, misery, despair, and hopelessness, so the Savior is, for three hours, denied the light of the sun! He is denied all comfort, denied all mercies—He is left without a glimpse of His Father, or a ray from the light of the sun because He then stood in the place of His people! Ah, Christian, ought not this to make you hate sin, to think that sin thus put you in the dark and would have kept you there, and continued you in the bleakness of darkness forever? Ought it not, too, to make you hate it when you remember that it put your Lord in the dark, and made Him hang bleeding from His wounds without a light to cheer Him or a glimpse to comfort Him? If, Christian,

you do not hate sin when you think of this darkness, surely you must be still in the dark! We gather, then, these few lessons from the darkness, though we are persuaded that there are many more in it. But now we come to—

II. GATHER SOME LESSONS FROM THE LIGHT.

It is fair to say that the darkness continued till just about the time when the Savior died, and that the light came as the Savior expired. The light broke upon Him a few minutes, or perhaps less, after He had cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani," and after He had received the vinegar, and with a loud voice had given up the ghost. It is fair to say, then, that the darkness lasted till the Savior died. *A dying Savior lights up the world.* His expiring groan bids the sun come back. He raises His triumphant shout and, "It is finished" kindles, like a torch, the lamp of day once more, and earth is glad, for salvation's work is accomplished!

What do we learn, then, from the fact of the light returning as soon as the Savior died? Why, in the first place, we learn *that the darkness was gone forever from Himself—that the wrath of God no longer continues to bind or threaten Him!* Sometimes, when speaking of our justification, we have compared ourselves to a woman in debt. Now this woman though immersed in debt and unable to pay, becomes the object of affection and is married. No sooner is the nuptial knot tied and the ring placed upon her finger than she is free from debt. No sheriff's officer can arrest her—whatever her debts may have been, she is not in debt any longer, because her debts are all transferred to her husband and are no longer hers! Now this may be some sort of comfort to her, but if she is of a loving and tender heart, she still feels that she is in bondage because he whom she loves is in bondage. "My husband," she says, "has the debt and I feel that as heavily as if I had it myself." But as soon as ever he has discharged the debt, she then has this as a double ground for confidence and joy—she is free twice—free, first, by the debt being laid on her husband. Free, secondly, by his discharging the debt. Now look here, Christian—you are clear, for your sin was laid on Christ! It is a law that a thing cannot be in two places at one time—if my sin was on Christ, it cannot be on me! If it was laid on Him according to God's Word, "He has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"—then it cannot lie on me and on Christ, too, and, therefore, I am clear!

But supposing it still laid on Him? There would still be cause for grief and sorrow of heart. But it does not, for Christ has discharged the debt and, in token thereof, the black darkness which brooded over Him during the three hours of His passion suddenly turned to the bright light of day! Now He no more stands before God as an outcast, but He, Himself, is justified and has risen again for our justification! This clearing of the sky was, as it were, a declaration on the part of heaven that the debt which Christ had taken had been paid! The Surety had smarted and now those for whom He had been surety might go free. In this returning light, my

cheerful eyes see the fact that Christ is free as well as those for whom He stood!

Again, we see something else, namely, *that the curse has also gone from the world*. The darkness was on Christ and the darkness was also over all the land. Now when the darkness went away from Christ, it also went away from the land. I have already said that there is a sympathy between Nature and its Maker. When the curse fell upon Him, "without whom was not anything made that was made," it was on Nature, too. Now Christ has put that away. I do not know whether you ever indulge in the sweet thought, but one likes, sometimes, to revel in it. "The creature itself also shall be delivered from bondage." There is a day coming in which this world shall not bring forth thorns and thistles, in which it shall not be a wilderness—a howling and a barren place—but it shall be literally true that, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." And though the prophecy bears a spiritual meaning, yet it shall also bear a literal one, that "instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle, and instead of the briar shall come up the fir tree and the box tree together," for the Lord God, who cleared His Son from the curse, will also clear the world from the curse and revoke the sentence, "Cursed shall the ground be for your sake," for earth shall yet again be blessed! Is it not written that Christ was revealed to destroy the works of the devil? And as it was one of the works of the devil to pollute and defile this world, so shall it be one of the works of Christ to cleanse and purify it! This world has been the theater of sin, but it will be cleansed and purged, and made the theater of holiness! "I looked," says John, "and I saw a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." Perhaps there will be purifying fires, according to the word of Peter, "The elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth, also, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up." And then afterwards, once again refitted, freed from the last relic of man's evil doings, there shall be heard the shout, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell among them! Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" May such happy days soon come! We expect them because the darkness was rolled away when Jesus died! This, however, is but speculative. We will, therefore, turn to something that is more solid.

It seems to me that the moving off of this darkness when the Master died *was a picture of the lifting of the veil of despair from the face of the whole human family*. Brothers and sisters, did you ever feel yourselves forced to read a description of heathenism in India? I remember to have listened with extreme pain to a description given of the idolatries of India by one who knew them thoroughly and had seen them. One could hardly bear a recapitulation of the sacred rites of the Hindus without feeling that one's mind was polluted, quite polluted by knowing what their religion was! It was so debasing and degrading to the mind that one felt it was a dangerous experiment even to know about it. Now those Christian

people who have lived in such a country as India, and have marked how the people are set upon their idols, though, even according to their own description of them, those idols are monsters of filth—those who have lived there, I say, might well say, "It is of no use; no light will never come here." But the Christian is forbidden to say this, for Christ has taken the darkness from off all the face of the land! So, as far as this is concerned, we must never despair of any cases! Christ's death took the veil away and there is no reason now why India's teeming millions should not stretch out their hands to Christ!

Cast your eye to China. A million souls a month die unsaved in China, never having heard of Christ! It is an awful thought, and one that might break one's heart if one indulged in it. Now what is there to be done for such teeming multitudes? The whole world still lies in the wicked one, what with Mohammedanism, idolatry, Romanism and all the other forms of self-worship. What is to be done? Christian, do what you can and then leave it with Christ! He took away the darkness by His dying, and rest assured that the proclamation of His death will take away all the darkness of despair from the face of the world! Now the next time you look upon some person who has been a very gross sinner, if there is a temptation in your mind to say, "It is no use trying after *him*—he must be given up—that man cannot be saved," check that thought! Even if the man is a drunk, or swearer, or thief, or all these things in one, remember that Christ took away the darkness of despair from off all the land and so He has taken away despair even from that soul! You have no right to say that that soul cannot be saved—your business is to pray for it and labor for it, if haply it may find the light of God! If this darkness had not all been removed; if there had been but one spot left, I might have said, "There is no hope for me," but if the dying Christ lights the whole world over, then why, oh why should I lie down in despair? Why not say, "Who can tell, perhaps He will have mercy upon me? Who can tell, perhaps even my sin may be forgiven? Who, knows, the black darkness may yet be swept away from me and even I may rejoice in the light of His countenance?" Christ, in taking away the darkness, then, removed the despair which was the black Egyptian night that covered the world!

Yet, farther, there was another darkness which covered the earth in Christ's day, namely, *the darkness of soul-ignorance*. This darkness, also, Christ, by dying, took away. Up till the death of Christ, if man had desired salvation, he could not have found the way. He was in total darkness. No man could ever, by his own scheming, have found out the plan of substitution. Socrates and Plato were two men of masterminds—if any of woman born could have found out the way of salvation, they would have done it—but their discoveries were of very little worth to mankind. It was only when Christ bowed His head in the agonies of death that man knew there was a gate to Paradise! I mean not that the saints did not know it, but they only knew that this was the gate, that it was the dying Savior who was the road to heaven. It was the fact of

Christ coming in human flesh and suffering for man which was the answer to the world's great riddle. The world's riddle was, "How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" Man tried to spell it out, but never could. But when Jesus died, the darkness was taken away, and man then understood the way to God. Now, beloved friends, the business we have to do is to tell to those who are still in the dark the story of Christ. If you know any people in the world who are ignorant about soul-matters, do not begin to talk to them about the existence of a God. Do not commence with the doctrine of election—begin with the story of a dying Savior—that is the way to teach! When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland there were many who tried to teach the Greenlanders about God. They thought they were not in a prepared state to know about Christ till, by accident, one of them happened to read the chapter containing the words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "Oh," said the Greenlanders, "why did you not tell us this before? This is the one thing we need to know." So it is. It is not merely that there is a God, for Nature teaches that, but that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. This, this is the great lesson! And if you want to take away darkness from the soul, you must teach this!

A great deal is said about the usefulness of education and I suppose that no intelligent person would say a word against it. The more education the better, but it is outrageous to suppose that education, even carried to the highest degree, will necessarily better a man! A man may be all the worse for education unless the spiritual part of his nature is educated. He may be a profound philosopher and yet he may justify the butchery of innocent men and women! He may be one of the finest art critics in the world, and yet he may back up a monster who could allow men to whip pregnant women and to shoot down poor creatures who were fugitives in cold-blood! The highest education does not keep a man from justifying inhumanity! A man needs to have his *heart* right, or everything else will go wrong, let him learn whatever he may. But when a man has the story of Christ in his heart and sees that Jesus died, then soul-ignorance flies away. He sees true light in seeing Christ as the substitute for human guilt. His soul clings to God, understands Him, lays hold upon Him, rejoices in Him—and this is the point where education must begin. It must begin at the cross. Teach men all else you please, but if you leave out the *scientia scientiarum*—the science of sciences, the knowledge of knowledge—you have done but little. You have only helped the man to a greater responsibility and to a direr ruin.

Again, the moving away of the darkness when the Savior died was not merely the taking away of soul-ignorance, but also of *moral guilt*. There was the darkness of sin over the world—a thick darkness covered all mankind, even as it does now. The only place of light in the world is where the cross beams. All other systems have tried, but they have only

increased the darkness. Mohammedanism was, for a time, a great improvement on anything that went before it, but what is it now? What is its teaching and what is its influence upon man now? It is "evil, only evil, and that continually." But the doctrine that Christ was crucified for man, that God has punished sin in Christ and that God is ready to forgive the sinner—the doctrine that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned—this makes men holy! They hate sin in the light of this! They love God in the light of the cross! They seek after virtue and holiness when they come to know the Savior, but they never come to any perfection until they first know Him. It seems to me, then, that the chief business of every Christian should be the telling out of the death of Christ, for this is the lamp that is needed!

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, when I think about the mischief that is being done in England by Popery, and by all sorts of darkness, I am inclined to say, "Let us give up preaching anything except the cross of Christ!" It does seem as if we might merge some other matters. We dare not neglect any truth of God, but it does sometimes seem a strong temptation to forget everything else and keep on teaching, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and to make it—

"All our business here below,
To cry 'Behold the Lamb.'"

The one thing that England needs is Christ preached and Christ believed in! The great thing that the whole earth wants is the crucified Savior. It would be in vain for Aaron to bring out the smoking incense when men are dying, being bitten of the serpent—the smoke of incense is of no use, then. It would be in vain for Moses to bring down the ten commands when men are dying, being bitten—the Ten Commandments cannot heal them. Oh, for the uplifting of the bronze serpent! That is the one thing that Israel's camp needs and that is the one need of London now—Christ on the cross uplifted before the sinner's gaze and the continual cry, "Look, look, look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!" If any Christian minister here present has been backward in preaching Christ. If he has been for the last few Sundays preaching mere doctrine, preaching only experience, preaching metaphysics, but not preaching Christ, let him repent of the sin and never commit it again! And if any one of us in our conversation shall have been all this week talking about politics, or matters of taste and so on, without talking about Christ, let us ask for mercy in this respect! Oh, come back to Jesus that you may kindle your torches! You may kindle your beams of light by your camp fires and hope to remove the darkness in your own poor way, but you will do nothing! But if you bring out a dying Savior, He will take away the midday—midnight of the world at once—and light shall come streaming even through the darkness! God grant us to live more to Christ, to think more of Christ, to speak more about Him and to breathe more of His Spirit.

I would ask brothers and sisters who are present to join with us in earnest prayer that there may be a thorough revival throughout England of the preaching of the doctrine of the cross, and that God would put power into the ministry in order to the conversion of many. I told you last Sunday [September 23, 1866] that some of us would meet on Tuesday for prayer all day long. We have never had such a day as that before! I have thought since that I shall never see such another day, when some hundred or more of us met together to fast and pray during the day. We continued in prayer from about ten till six o'clock, unwearied, unexhausted. If any soul ever went to the gates of heaven, I did last Tuesday! I feel now like a reed that is broken, the strength gone out of me through the excessive excitement, the sort of sacred delirium, of wrestling with God in prayer, in company with the brothers present, for the conversion of sinners. There were times during last Tuesday when we could not, any of us, pray, and strong men as we were, we were but just able to cry aloud as if our hearts would break because we could not let the Lord go till He had looked down on His poor church and returned again in mercy to visit His ministers! We feel as if we need a revival of religion now—not such revivals as there were a few years ago—some of us think but little of them. We believe there were many gathered in, but where are many of them now? Scattered, to a very great extent, to the winds of heaven! We need the true revival work of the Holy Spirit, without fanaticism and without excitement, but the genuine stirring of the soul of the people, the turning of them to God as on the day of Pentecost! And we shall have it, brothers! We shall have it, for we have sought it in believing prayer! We shall have it, for it must come through every Christian resolving that the cross of Christ, the blood of the Savior, shall be the theme of his life and the objective of his desires—telling of it wherever he goes and so taking the darkness from off the face of the land. And now, putting the two together—

III. THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT ARE EMBLEMATIC OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Christ had hours of darkness and then there came the light. The Church has her hours of darkness, too. She has struggled by her martyrs. She has even died in the persons of her confessors. Then comes her light. She has her "Dark Ages" and she has her "Reformation." She must struggle on through the darkness, expecting the light to come. Perhaps the light will come in a way in which we have not expected it. Perhaps the Master, Himself, will come before long—the Light of Lights, the Beginner of Days. May it be so! Meanwhile, we must, like He, struggle through the darkness.

Then, again, is not this *the experience of every Christian*? It is darkness, first, and the light of God afterwards—yes, hours of darkness, weeks of darkness, months of darkness—with some of us *years of darkness*. Well, feel your nothingness to be a preparation for laying hold of Christ! To be broken is the way to be bound up! To be killed is the way

to be made alive! And we must have this darkness to a greater or less extent. Child of God, if you happen to be in the dark just now, do not think that some strange thing has happened to you! Your Master went through the darkness. He fought upon the cross and triumphed, but remember that the Savior's triumph was *on the cross*, and yours will be there too! You will suffer, and your triumph will be in suffering. You must expect to earn the victory in death. It shall be when you bow the head and give up the ghost that you shall have your, "It is finished!" on your lips, and enter into glory won! Expect the darkness if you have it, wonder not at it, but cheerfully wait until the light of God shall come!

Now, are there some hearts in the Tabernacle, tonight, who want to find the light? I am glad to see so many of you come on week-nights to listen to the simple preaching of the gospel. Surely you must have some desires after Christ! Are there none of you in the dark who are unhappy and miserable? Do you want to get at the light? You will never get it by looking into your own hearts. You will never find it by any outward performance, by any outward rites and ceremonies. The only light for a poor miserable sinner is that which Christ struck on the cross. You must look to Him, trust Him, and then you shall have the light of God and shall turn your misery into joy, take away your sackcloth and gird you with scarlet and make you dance for joy of heart! Oh, seeking sinner, look nowhere but to the cross! Let not Satan deceive you by saying that you must *feel* such-and-such, or *do* such-and-such. Your feelings and doings are nothing! Only what Christ felt and what Christ did can save you! Look out of self to the Savior! Shake your hands clear of everything of your own and look to what Christ did when He hung upon the cross, and when in the gloom of His death He worked with the shuttle of His pangs and His sorrows a garment to cover poor naked souls with! Your light, poor weary sinner, is not the candle of Popish error, nor yet the candle of your own dark heart, but the sunlight of the cross! Look there, and you shall be of good comfort, for to him who looks to Christ, the light of God shall arise out of the darkness!

May the Master give every one of you a blessing through this plain but truly earnest attempt to lead you to Himself and so secure your eternal salvation! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55:1-4.

It is the language of infinite mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, and poor, and miserable through sin—but God, instead of driving us from His presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, 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. But, mark you, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for us, 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. Do you need 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. *Listen diligently unto Me, and eat 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 the 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 want 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 all in Jesus Christ that I can need for time and eternity, and this can all be mine for the asking and receiving. Shall we not ask and receive?

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

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

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A SOLEMN DEPRIVAL
NO. 3472

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THIS METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Without Christ."
Ephesians 2:12.

WE shall have two things to consider this evening—*the misery of our past estate, and the great deliverance which God has worked for us.* As for—

I. THE MISERY OF OUR PAST ESTATE, be it known unto you that in common with the rest of mankind, believers were once without Christ. No tongue can tell the depth of wretchedness that lies in those two words. There is no poverty like it, no need like it, and for those who die so, there is no ruin like that it will bring! Without Christ! If this is the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell—let this be enough to startle you that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ! Oh, what terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!

The man who is without Christ *is without any of those spiritual blessings which only Christ can bestow.* Christ is the life of the believer, but the man who is without Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. There he lies—let us stand and weep over his corpse! It is decent and clean, and well laid out, but life is absent and, life being absent, there is no knowledge, no feeling, no power! What can we do? Shall we take the Word of God and preach to this dead sinner? We are bid to do so and, therefore, we will attempt it. But as long as he is without Christ, no result will follow, any more than when Elisha's servant laid the staff upon the child—there was no noise, nor sound, nor hearing. As long as that sinner is without Christ, we may give him ordinances, if we dare. We may pray for him, we may keep him under the sound of the ministry, but everything will be in vain! Till You, O quickening Spirit, come to that sinner, he will still be dead in trespasses and sins. Till Jesus is revealed to him there can be no life!

So, too, Christ is the light of the world. *Light* is the gift of Christ. "In Him was light, and the light was the life of men." Men sit in darkness until Jesus appears. The gloom is thick and dense—not sun, nor moon, nor star appears, and there can be no light to illumine the understanding, the affections, the conscience. Man has no power to get light. He may strike the damp match of reason, but it will not yield him a clear flame. The candle of superstition, with its tiny glare, will but expose the darkness in which he is wrapped. Rise, morning star! Come, Jesus, come! You are the sun of righteousness, and healing is beneath Your wings. Without Christ there is no light of true spiritual knowledge, no

light of true spiritual enjoyment, no light in which the brightness of the truth of God can be seen, or the warmth of fellowship proved. The soul, like the men of Naphtali, sits in darkness and sees no light.

Without Christ there *is no peace*. See that poor soul hunted by the dogs of hell? It flies swift as the wind, but far faster do the hunters pursue. It seeks cover yonder in the pleasures of the world, but the baying of the hell-hounds frighten it in the festive haunts. It seeks to toil up the mountain of good works, but its legs are all too weak to bear it beyond the oppressor's rule. It doubles. It changes its tack. It goes from right to left but the hell-dogs are too swift of foot, and too strong of wind to lose their prey! And till Jesus Christ shall open His bosom for that poor hunted thing to hide itself within, it shall have no peace!

Without Christ *there is no rest*. The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, and only Jesus can say to that sea, "Peace, be still."

Without Christ *there is no safety*. The vessel must fly before the gale, for it has no anchor on board! It may dash upon the rocks, for it has no chart and no pilot. Come what may, it is given up to the mercy of wind and waves. Safety it cannot know without Christ! But let Christ come on board that soul, and it may laugh at all the storms of earth, and even the whirlwinds which the Prince of the Power of the air may raise, need not confound it—but without Christ there is no safety for it.

Without Christ again, *there is no hope*. Sitting wrecked upon this desert rock, the lone soul looks far away, but marks nothing that can give it joy. If, perchance, it fancies that a sail is in the distance, it is soon deceived. The poor soul is thirsty and around it flows only a sea of brine, soon to change to an ocean of fire! It looks upward and there is an angry God—downward, and there are yawning gulfs—on the right hand, and there are accusing sounds—on the left hand, and there are tempting fiends. It is all lost! Lost! Lost! Without Christ, utterly lost, and until Christ comes, not a single beam of hope can make glad that anxious soul.

Without Christ, beloved, remember that all the religious acts of men are vanity. What are they but mere airbags, having nothing in them whatever that God can accept? There is the semblance of worship—the altar, the victim, the wood laid in order, and the votaries bow the knee, or prostrate their bodies—but Christ alone can send the fire of heaven's acceptance! Without Christ, the offering, like that of Cain's, shall lie upon the stones, but it shall never rise in fragrant smoke, accepted by the God of heaven. Without Christ your church attendance is a form of slavery, your chapel meetings a bondage. Without Christ your prayers are but empty wind, your repentances are wasted tears, your almsgivings and your good deeds are but a coating of thin veneer to hide your base iniquities! Your professions are white-washed sepulchers, fair to look upon, but inwardly full of rottenness! Without Christ your religion is dead, corrupt, a stench, a nuisance before God—a thing of abhorrence—for where there is no Christ, there is no life in any devotion, nothing in it for God to see that can possibly please Him. And this, mark you, is a true description, not of some, but of all who are without Christ! You moral

people without Christ, you are lost as much as the immoral! You rich and respectable people, without Christ, you will be as surely damned as the prostitute that walks the streets at midnight. Without Christ, though you should heap up your charitable donations, endow your almshouses and hospitals, yes, though you should give your bodies to be burned, no merit would be imputed to you! All these things would profit you nothing! Without Christ, even if you might be raised on the wings of flaming zeal, or pursue your eager course with the enthusiasm of a martyr, you shall yet prove to be but the slave of your own passion and the victim of your own folly! Unsanctified and unblessed, you must, then, be shut out of heaven and banished from the presence of God! Without Christ, you are destitute of every benefit which He, and He alone, can bestow.

Without Christ, implies, of course, that you are without the benefit of *all those gracious offices of Christ which are so necessary to the sons of men*, you have no true p*rophet*. You may pin your faith to the sleeve of man and be deceived. You may be orthodox in your creed, but unless you have Christ in your heart, you have no hope of heaven. Without Christ, the truth of God, itself, will prove a terror to you! Like Balaam, your eyes may be open while your life is alienated. Without Christ that very *cross* which saves some will become to you as a *gallows* upon which your soul shall die! Without Christ you have no *priest* to atone or to intercede on your behalf. There is no fountain in which you can wash away your guilt. No passover blood which you can sprinkle on your lintel to turn aside the destroying angel. No smoking altar of incense for you. No smiling God sitting between the cherubim. Without Christ you are an alien from everything which the priesthood can procure for your welfare! Without Christ you have no shepherd to tend, no King to help you—you cannot call in the day of trouble upon one who is strong to deliver. The angels of God, who are the standing army of King Jesus, are your enemies and not your friends. Without Christ, Providence is working your ill—not your good. Without Christ you have no *advocate* to plead your cause in heaven. You have no representative to stand up yonder and represent you, and prepare a place for you! Without Christ you are as sheep without a shepherd. Without Christ you are a body without a head. Without Christ you are miserable orphans without a father, and your widowed soul is without a husband. Without Christ you are without a *Savior*—what will you do? What will become of you when you find out the value of salvation at the last pinch, the dreary point of despair? To sum up all, you are without anything that can make life blessed, or death happy! Without Christ, though you are rich as Croesus, famous as Alexander and wise as Socrates, yet are you naked, and poor, and miserable—for you lack Him by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, and who is Himself all in all!

Surely this might be enough to awaken the conscience of the most heedless! But ah, without any of the blessings which Christ brings, and to miss all the good offices which Christ fills—this is only to linger on the side issues! The imminent peril is to be *without Christ, Himself*. Do you

see, there, the Savior in human form—God made flesh, dwelling among us? He loves His people and came to earth to wipe out an iniquity which had stained them most vilely, and to work out a righteousness which should cover them most gloriously—but without Christ that living Savior is nothing to you! Do you see Him led away as a sheep to the slaughter, fastened to the cruel wood—bleeding, dying? Without Christ you are without the virtue of that great sacrifice! You are without the merit of that atoning blood! Do you see Him lying in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, asleep in death? That sleep is a burial of all the sins of His people, but without Christ your sins are not atoned for! Your transgressions are yet unburied—they walk the earth—they shall go before you to judgment! They shall clamor for your condemnation. They shall drag you down without hope. Without Christ, remember, you have no share in His resurrection. Bursting the bonds of death, you, too, shall rise, but not to newness of life, nor yet to glory, for shame and everlasting contempt shall be your portion if you are without Christ! See Him as He mounts on high! He rides in His triumphal car through the streets of heaven! He scatters gifts for men, but without Christ there are none of those gifts for you! There are no blessings for those who are without Christ! He sits on that exalted throne of God, and pleads, and reigns forever, but without Christ you have no part in His intercession and you shall have no share in His glory! He is coming. Listen! The trumpet rings. My prophetic ear seems to catch the strain! He comes, surrounded by majestic pomp, and all His saints shall reign with Him! But without Christ you can have neither part nor lot in that splendor. He goes back to His Father and surrenders His kingdom and His people are forever safe with Him. Without Christ there shall be none to wipe away the tears from your eyes; no one to lead you to the fountain of living waters; no hand to give you a palm branch; no smile to make your immortality blessed. Oh, my dear hearers, I cannot tell you what unutterable abysses of wretchedness and misery are comprised here within the fullness of the meaning of these dreadful words—*without Christ*.

At this present hour, if you are without Christ, you lack the very essence of good, by reason of which your choicest privileges are an empty boast instead of a substantial gift. Without Christ *all the ordinances and means of grace are worth nothing*. Even this precious Book that might be weighed with diamonds and he that was wise would choose the Book and leave the precious stones—even this sacred volume is of no benefit to you! You may have Bibles in your houses, as I trust you all have, but what is the Bible but a dead letter without Christ? Ah, I would you could all say what a poor woman once said. “I have Christ here,” as she put her hand on the Bible, “and I have Christ here,” as she put her hand on her heart, “and I have Christ there,” as she raised up her eyes towards heaven. But if you have not Christ in your heart, you will not find Christ in the Book, for He is discovered there in His sweetness, His blessedness and His excellence only by those who know Him and love Him in their hearts! Do not get the idea that a certain quantity of Bible reading,

particular times spent in repeating prayers, regular attendance at a place of worship and the systematic contribution of a guinea or so to the support of public worship and private charities will ensure the salvation of your souls! No, you must be born-again! And that you cannot be, for it is not possible that you could have been born-again if you are still living without Christ! To have Christ is the indispensable condition of entering heaven. If you have Him, though compassed about with a thousand infirmities, you shall yet see the brightness of the eternal glory! But if you have not Christ, alas, for all your toil and the wearisome slavery of your religion, you can but weave a righteousness of your own which shall disappoint your hope and incur the displeasure of God!

And without Christ, dear friends, there comes the solemn reflection that *before long you shall perish*. Of that I do not like to talk, but I would like you to think of it. Without Christ you may live, young man—though, mark, you shall miss the richest joys of life. Without Christ you may live, hale, strong man, in middle age—though, mark, without Him you shall miss the greatest support amidst your troubles! Without Christ you may live, old man, and lean upon your staff content with the earth into which you are so soon to drop, though mark you, you shall lose the sweetest consolation which your weakness could have found! But remember, man, you are soon to die! It matters not how strong you are—death is stronger than you and he will pull you down, even as the stag hound drags down his victim, and then "how will you do in the swellings of Jordan," without Christ? How will you do when the eyes begin to close, without Christ? How will you do, sinner, when the death rattle is in your throat, without Christ? When they prop you up with pillows, when they stand weeping round your expiring form, when the pulse grows faint and few, when you have to lift the veil and stand disembodied before the dreadful eyes of an angry God, how will you do without Christ? And when the judgment trumpet shall wake you from your slumber in the tomb, and body and soul shall stand together at that last and dread assize—in the midst of that tremendous crowd, sinner, how will you do without Christ? When the reapers come forth to gather in the harvest of God, and the sickles are red with blood, and the vintage is cast into the winepress of His wrath, and it is trodden until the blood runs forth up to the horse's bellies—how will you do, then, I ask you, without Christ? Oh, sinner, I pray you let these words sound in your ears till they ring into your heart! I would like you to think of them tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. Without Christ! I would like to make you think of dying, of being judged, of being condemned without Christ! May God in His mercy enable you to see your state and fly to Him who is able to save, even unto the uttermost, all them that come unto God by Him! Christ is to be had for the asking! Christ is to be had for the receiving! Stretch out your withered hand and take Him! Trust Him and He will be yours forevermore! And you shall be with Him, where He is, in an eternity of joy! Having thus reviewed the misery of our past estate, let us endeavor, with the little time we have left, to—

II. EXCITE THE THANKFULNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE FOR WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR THEM.

We are not without Christ, now, but let me ask you, you who are believers, where you would have been now without Christ? As for some of you, you might—indeed you would have been, tonight, in the alehouse or gin palace. You would have been with the boisterous crew that makes merriment on the Lord's Day. You know you would, for "such were some of you." You might have been even worse—you might have been in the harlot's house. You might have been violating the laws of man as well as the laws of God, "for even such" were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified. Where might you not have been without Christ? You might have been in hell! You might have been shut out forever from all mercy—condemned to eternal banishment from the presence of God!

I think the Indian's picture is a very fair one of where we would have been without Christ. When asked what Christ had done for him, he picked up a worm, put it on the ground, and made a ring of straw and wood round it, which he set alight. As the wood began to glow, the poor worm began to twist and wriggle in agony, whereupon the Indian stooped down, took it gently up with his finger, and said, "That is what Jesus did for me. I was surrounded, without power to help myself, by a ring of dreadful fire that would have been my ruin, but His pierced hand lifted me out of the burning." Think of that, Christians, and as your hearts melt, come to His table and praise Him that you are not now without Christ!

Then think what His blood has done for you. Take only one thing out of a thousand. It has put away your many, many sins. You were without Christ and your sins stood like yonder mountain, whose black and rugged cliffs threaten the very skies. There fell a drop of Jesus' blood upon it and it all vanished in a moment! The sins of all your days were gone in an instant by the application of the precious blood! Oh, bless Jehovah's name that you can now say—

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Savior's blood my full discharge!
Content at His dear feet I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Remember, too, now that you have Christ, *of the way in which He came and made you partaker of Himself*. Oh, how long He stood in the cold, knocking at the door of your heart! You would not have Him! You despised Him! You resisted Him! You kicked against Him—you did, as it were, spit in His face and put Him to open shame to be rid of Him! Yet He would have you, and so, overcoming all your objections, and overlooking all your unworthiness, at length He rescued you and acknowledged you to be His own!

Consider, beloved, *what might have been your case had He left you to your own free agency*. You might have had His blood on your head in aggravation of your guilt! Instead of that, you have got His blood applied to your heart in token of your pardon! You know right well what a difference that makes. Oh, that was a dreadful cry in the streets of Jerusalem, "His blood be on us and our children!" And Jerusalem's

streets flowing with gore witnessed how terrible a thing it is to have Christ's blood visited on His enemies! But, beloved, you have that precious blood for the cleansing of your conscience. It has sealed your acceptance and you can, therefore, rejoice in the ransom He has paid and the remission you have received with unspeakable joy and full of glory!

And I would not have you forget the vast *expense which it cost to procure this priceless gift*. Christ could not have been yours had He lived in heaven. He must come down to earth—but even then He could not be fully yours till He had bled and died. Oh, the dreadful portals through which Christ had to pass before He could find His way to you! He finds you now right easily, but before He could come to you He must, Himself, pass through the grave! Think of that and be astonished!

And why *are you not left to be without Christ?* I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrines of free will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I should be a partaker of divine grace. If I am not tonight without Christ, it is only because Jesus would have His will with me and that will was that I should be with Him where He is and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit!

Beloved, let us mention one thing more out of the thousand things which we must leave unsaid. *Remember what you have tonight now that you have Christ*. No, no, no, do not be telling me what you have not got! You have not got a certain income, you say! You have not got a competence! You have not got wealth. You have not got friends. You have not got a comfortable house. No, but you have your Savior—you have Christ! And what does that mean? "He that 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?" The man who has Christ has everything! There are all things in one in Christ Jesus, and if you once get Him, you are rich to all the intents of bliss! What? Have Jesus Christ and be discontented? Have Christ and murmur? Beloved, let me chide you, gently, and pray you to lay aside that evil habit! If you have Christ, then you have God the Father to be your protector, and God the Spirit to be your comforter! You have present things working together for your good and future things to unravel your happier portion! You have angels to be your servitors, both on earth and in heaven! You have all the wheels of Providence revolving for your benefit! You have the stones of the field in league with you! You have your daily trials sanctified to your benefit! You have your earthly joys hinged from their doors and hallowed with a blessing! Your gains and your losses are alike profitable to you! Your additions and your reductions shall, alike, swell the tide of your soul's satisfaction! You have more than any other creatures can boast as their portion! You have more

than the entire world beside could yield to regale your pure taste, and ravish your happy spirits! And now, will you not be glad? I would have you come to this feasting table this evening, saying within yourselves, "Since I am not without Christ, but Jesus Christ is mine, I do rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice!"

And oh, dear Christian friends, if you have lost your evidences, go to Christ to find them! Do not go striking your matches to light your candles, but go direct to the sun and get your light from His full orb. You who are doubting, desponding and cast down, do not get to foraging up the moldy bread of yesterday, but go and get the manna which falls fresh today at the foot of the cross! Now you who have been wandering and backsliding, do not stay away from Jesus because of your unworthiness, but let your very sins compel you to come to your Savior's feet. Come, you sinners! Come, you saints! Come, you who dare not say that you are His people! Come, you whose faith is but as a grain of mustard seed! Come, you who have not any faith at all! Come now to Jesus, who says, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

May God grant that some who feel that they are without Christ because they have no enjoyment, nor any sense of communion with Him, may now take hold of His name, His covenant, His promises, with a lively faith! No, more—may they find Him to the rapture of their souls and He shall have all the praise. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 50:14-23; Ezekiel 36:21-38.

PSALM 50:14-23.

In the first part of this Psalm God has solemnly expostulated with His people as to the utter worthlessness of sacrifice and ceremony apart from living faith in Him, and holy life as its fruit. And He sums it all up in the searching question of the 13th verse, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Have you such a groveling opinion of Me, your God, as to conceive that I am satisfied with these things?" See what contempt the Lord pours upon sacrifices—even those that were of His own ordaining—when men rested in them and made them their confidence and their end!

Verse 14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving.* This is what He wants—heart-work.

14. *And pay your vows unto the most High.* This is what He demands—obedience.

15. *And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.* Thus you see God has spoken to His professing people—to those who were moral, decent and observant of outward ritual. He now turns to some others—some others, perhaps, quite as outwardly religious, but their lives were immoral—their conduct was a breach of His law. At first He speaks of their neglect of the first table, which says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," and shows that it is not bullocks and rams which can make amends for forgetfulness of God.

Now He turns to the second table and shows that no amount of sacrifice can make up for breaches of the law of God as it touches our fellow men.

16. *But unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth?* Your unholiness, even though you were of the tribe of Levi, would disqualify you from declaring My statutes. Your mouth is full of slander, how could you dare to use it to speak of My covenant with it?

17. *Seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you.* As if they were worthless things to be thrown away; as if they were obnoxious things to be thrown behind your back where you could not see them. "Do you talk about worshiping Me, while you are neglecting My words?" Now it is a very solemn thing when a man boasts about the covenant, or about the doctrines of grace, or about outward ceremonies, and yet there are parts of God's Word that he neglects—there are portions of God's will that he dares not look in the face. If ever I meet a text that I am afraid of, I begin to be afraid of myself! And if I feel any tendency to take away from a text any of its swooping charges or its strong demands, I feel that surely I must have quarreled with this text because it has quarreled with me. How can we think we are offering to God acceptable sacrifice when any of His Words are cast behind our backs?

18. *When you saw a thief, then you consented with him, and have been partaker with adulterers.* "When you saw a thief you consented with him," and some professors do this. If they do not themselves, rob, there are some who will employ their clerks to tell lies in writing. They consent in the bad trade of others. They become accomplices, helping to make excuses for others. "And have been partaker with adulterers." Can a man profess to be religious and yet do this? Well, I have known such, and such will still creep into the Church of God—unclean, unchaste men, who nevertheless will come and sit as God's people sit, and sing as God's people sing! And, indeed, anyone who listens to lascivious talk, or who smiles at an unchaste jest, is himself a partaker with adulterers more or less.

19. *You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit.* How many do this, and yet think they are the children of God? They ruin other characters most remorselessly—they will spread false reports, if not actually invent them—and yet think themselves the people of God!

20. *You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.* When a tongue has once learned the habit of calumny, it will spare none. The nearest relative and the dearest will become victims to the habit—first of gossip and afterwards of actual detraction and lying! Oh, the misery, the pain that is caused in the world by this habit which is so rife! And can we imagine ourselves to be the people of God when we delight in repeating false stories about others? Have we forgotten the truth of that word, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone"? As surely as God is true and loves truth, if we love lies, where God is we can never come. It matters not how much

we may pretend to have reverence for God, and to have an experience of His truth—we are not of the truth of God, neither are we of God.

21. *These things have you done, and I kept silent.* God, in His long-suffering, bears with these sinners. "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself." These men came at last to say, "Pooh! The prophets make too much fuss about holiness! You can serve God, and yet, after all, live as we do. So long as we give God a tithe, it matters net how we get our property. If we offer Him the bulls, He will be quite content." Ah, to what do men degrade their God! Some made Him of old to be like a bull that has horns and hoofs, but many men nowadays think God to be like themselves—and that is worse!

21. *You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself: but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes.* "I will lay your sins out before you—parcel them out, 'Item this'—Item that.' I will classify them: I will set them like a dreadful army in array before you. I will let you see that though I had patience with you, I was neither blind nor deaf, but heard and saw all that you have done and noted it all." Oh, what a vista this opens up for unholy professors—for ungodly members of Christian churches!

22. *Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* What solemn words! What dreadful words! God never plays at threats and His ministers, when they speak of wrath to come, are not to speak with velvet mouths and soft words, for "Oh, the wrath to come," as George Whitefield used to say with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, "The wrath to come! The wrath to come—how dreadful will it be!" God Himself proves it. "Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." And then the Psalm finishes up with this kind word of gracious address which drops like raindrops out of the bosom of the tempest that went before—

23. *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.* More than he that offers bullocks.

23. *And to Him that orders his conversation aright*—The man that strives in the sight of God to walk a holy life—this is the man to whom—

23. *Will I show the salvation of God.* If he needs saving, let him order his conversation as he may, he will owe all to sovereign grace! He will have no merit of his own, "but where I by grace," says the Lord, "lead a man to order his conversation aright, there will I show more and more fully, and at last perfectly in him, the salvation of God."

EZEKIEL 36:21-38.

The prophet had been bringing many heavy charges against God's people. He had been thundering out the most tremendous threats against them. God was angry with them on account of sin. The chapter is full of dreadful utterances, enough to make one tremble as he reads them. But all of a sudden the note altogether changes and the prophet of thunder becomes the prophet of consolation! Free grace follows like a clear shining after the rain.

Verses 21-28. *But I had pity for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, where they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the LORD GOD—I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, where you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.* Here, indeed, is matchless divine grace, that these very people who for their sins were banished from their land, and who in their exile added to their sin by the way in which they blasphemed God—those very people are to be brought back and the mercy of God is so to be displayed in them that, in the very people who blasphemed God's name, God shall be had in honor!

25, 26. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* Now notice that all this was spoken to persons who had no desire for these blessings! If they had had a desire for them, their hearts could not be considered to be stony, but they were set against God—they were His enemies—and yet He makes this solemn declaration in the sovereignty of His grace that He will give them a new heart and a right spirit! There may be some in this house, tonight, and I pray there may, who are strangers to the God of Israel, who, if they know anything concerning His Son, only know enough to oppose Him. May God's eternal omnipotence work in them mightily that a new heart and a right spirit may be given them tonight according to that ancient word of God, "I am found of them that sought Me not." He can come and make them a people that were not a people. Oh, that His grace would do so now!

27. *And I will put My Spirit within you.* Not only a new spirit, but My Spirit. God Himself shall come and dwell in those hearts which once were a receptacle for the devil!

27, 28. *And cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.* He who talks in this sovereign way is God Himself! He first made the world as He pleased, and in the second new creation, He does as He will, having power over us as the potter has over his clay. This is promised to the Jewish people, but it is also fulfilled in multitudes of others where God, in the same sovereign way, works out the purposes of His love.

29. *I will also save you from all your uncleanness and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.* Temporal mercies shall follow where spiritual mercies are given.

30-36. *And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the*

heathen. Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord GOD, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built up and the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD built up the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Prayer will always go with the divine working. Where God means to save, He sets men praying. Those who are saved intercede for others, and others who as yet are unsaved feel the need of the blessing and begin to cry for it—and the blessing comes! As the black cloud forebodes the shower, so does the gathering spirit of prayer always foretoken the coming blessing! Heaven and earth may pass away, but the memorial of Jehovah always is "The God who hears prayer." He is the God whose arm is always moved by the prayer of man. Did not Moses stand between them and vengeance, so that God said, "Let Me alone," as if He had said, "I cannot destroy them while you pray"? Did not Elijah open and shut the windows of heaven by his prayer? Nothing is impossible to those who know how believingly to enquire of God.

37. *Thus says the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock.* Take up this promise, members of this Church, and urge it before God that He would give us not few additions, but many, very many! "I will increase them with men like a flock."

38. *As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.* When a great number of lambs would be brought up to Jerusalem for them to keep the Passover with, a great and countless company. Oh, that such additions may be given to the Church!

38. *So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

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HOUSEHOLD SIN AND SORROW
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"And he said, Your brother came with subtlety and has taken away your blessing."
Genesis 27:35.

THERE are some households where all are saved—how happy they should be—where every son and every daughter, father and mother are all believers—a church in the house, a church of which the whole of the house is comprised. It is such an unspeakable blessing that those who enjoy it ought never cease to praise God for it day and night. And there are very many other households that have a share of this blessing, but the blessing is not complete. Like Noah with his household in the ark—Shem, Japheth, and perhaps some of the rest, their wives, believers and saved, but Ham profane and wicked! And here was the family of Isaac, not a very large one—but two boys—and here were father and mother and one son, but there was also one unregenerate, one of the flesh, one carnal-minded and minding earthly things. And in this case this son, Esau, appears to have been a bold, manly, outspoken fellow who did not keep his irreligion to himself and made no sort of pretense about it. He despised the birthright. The great blessing which God had promised to the seed of Abraham he thought to be—well, a matter that did not concern him—for he received his pottage and enjoyed it. He was satisfied, for he could put on his goodly garments and disport himself as men of his time did—he was perfectly satisfied. He had not any particular concern about spiritual things—did not need them. And on one occasion he was so profane that he showed the little esteem he had for what his father, and mother, and brother valued beyond life, itself, by offering to sell this birthright that they thought so much of, for just a savory meal! He was a profane person, so the apostle tells us, and I suppose that action to have been one piece of his profanity. He did it out of profane bravado as well as out of a careless disregard for it. He would, to show his profanity, give it up for a mere basin of lentils! And he became a source of great grief to his father and mother by his marriages, for he married a race that had been cursed of God, namely, the Hittites. This, we are told in the chapter preceding the text, was a great grief of mind both to Rebekah and to Isaac. They desired to have no connection with the heathen nations among whom they dwelt, for they were not merely worshipers of idols, but these nations were the most polluted in character. They had committed crimes that are not mentionable!

You remember how it was that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The sins for which those cities were destroyed were common enough in the land, and Isaac did not wish, therefore, to cultivate any acquaintance with the people. He desired to keep his family altogether apart, but where there were two marriages you may readily imagine there was a good deal of connection. There was much sorrow caused to the people at home because there would be brought home to the tent, persons whose language would shock the piety of the household. There would be seen there, sometimes, reunions and gatherings that must have made Isaac's heart and Rebekah's heart very heavy, indeed. Here was a household with all that it needed of temporals, with the blessing of God upon it, but there was one son in it that caused a world of trial and trouble! I wish, sometimes, young men who are, as we say, sowing their wild oats, would remember something of the sorrow they caused to others, even if they did not think about the ultimate trials which they will be sure to bring upon themselves! If they knew how often the father's nights are sleepless and the mother's cheeks are wet with sorrow, they might at least, perhaps, not be quite so bold in sin and open in it as they now are. Now the worst of it was that the presence of this Esau in the house was the occasion of leading all the others into a piece of business most discreditable to them all—and not to be defended for a single moment. Even one person in a household may put all the rest into a wrong position. There may be but one who does not fear God, and yet that one may eat, as does a canker, into the very vitals of the peace of the family and the character of the entire house. Though they may be godly persons, they may be seriously deteriorated through having perpetually to come into contact with that one. And this was the case with that otherwise holy family—the presence of Esau became the occasion of much evil!

I shall briefly attempt at this time, first, to *show you the sin into which the godly members of that household fell*. I will show you *how they were recovered from it*. I will mark to you, also, *some of the afflictions which they had to suffer as the result of it*, and then just a word about *that ungodly son who had not the blessing*. Well then, first, there were—

I. THREE GODLY PERSONS WHO FELL INTO SIN.

They were God-fearing persons in the household—believers in the covenant, expecting the blessing, attaching value to spiritual things—as Esau did not. All these three fell into sin. Their sin consisted, first of all, *in a lack of confidence in one another*. It is a very bad thing in a family when there is no confidence between the husband and the wife, between the children and the parents. Now Isaac wished to give Esau a blessing. He did not tell his wife but he arranged very craftily that Esau should prepare a little banquet for him—and then on that occasion, when they were all alone, he would give him the blessing. The usual way, and the proper way, would have been for the parent, when he expected to die, to have in the whole family and pronounce the blessing before them all, just as Jacob did when he departed and blessed all his sons. But this was to be done in a covert, secret way. Isaac was afraid of the objections that might be raised by his wife, afraid of the very valid objection that she

would have raised that God had said the elder should serve the younger and, therefore, he thinks of this. Good, easy man as he is—he thinks of a simple way of getting out of the matter—so he will have Esau there, and give Esau the blessing. He had no confidence, you see, in his wife—did not tell her what he was going to do. And it is generally a bad thing that a man is going to do when he does not tell his wife of it.

Then, meanwhile, the wife has not confidence in her husband! She hears this little speech between her husband and her son—she was eavesdropping, I suppose, always fearful that something of that kind might be done. And so without saying to her husband, "You are, in this, about to do contrary to the will of God," as she might have done with much gentleness—and Isaac, who was of a gentle spirit, a holy spirit, would have been quite prepared to hear it. But she did not want to do that—she thought, "You plot, so I will plot—and I will try to mar your plot. You are about to see Esau alone—I will see if I cannot circumvent you." Then she goes to Jacob, and Jacob shows a lack of confidence in his father. He is willing to get the blessing out of his father by deceit, instead of going, as a manly son should, to his father and saying, "My Father, albeit I am not the first-born, yet you will remember God rules in this household and He has said, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' Evidently the blessing is mine and, besides that, I have bought of my brother (however hard the bargain), I have bought the birthright and you have no right to give it to him." He might have said something at any rate—much or little.

But instead of that, there is no representation made between them—they are all three, each one on his own account, plotting this and plotting that! Now I believe there is never that in a family but what there is sure to be mischief come of it. It is an excellent rule—though I may be comparatively a young person—I venture to say—a rule which all who try will find very advantageous to holiness as well as to their peace, to take care and keep everything clear and above board. And when any little difficulty comes, to try to remove it at once! And when another difficulty comes, to move that away, too—otherwise one difficulty will tell upon another. And little things kept back will go on multiplying and increasing till, perhaps, even Christian people will fall together by the ears, one with another! You must not tell me that it is a slight thing for a husband to fall out with his wife, or for a Christian household to be at sixes and sevens! I tell you it is a thing which makes angels weep, makes devils rejoice, makes the world say, "Is this Christianity?" We must have united happy Christian households—and that we cannot have if we conduct our affairs with a lack of confidence in the one and the other! "In preaching the gospel," says one, "you won't talk about this! Mind your business, my friend." It is just such talk as Christ would speak if He were here! He often spoke about such practical things as these. His teaching was, in fact, of the entire household and of the common everyday concerns—and so shall ours be if, perhaps, we may prevent some evil which otherwise may be a serious damage to the Church of God!

Now the next sin in their case was a *lack of confidence in God*—all three alike—for I can hardly distinguish between the one and the other. Here is Isaac—he knows God's purpose, but he does not see how God will fulfill it. There is Rebekah—she knows the purpose still better, but somehow or other she thinks God's purpose won't be fulfilled. She says, "Jacob, you are about to lose the blessing, yet God has said you shall have it. The decree will fail. You cannot believe that God will carry it out. Only tomorrow morning and Esau will get the blessing! I heard Isaac say he would give it to him." Now she is so afraid that God would not accomplish His own purpose that she steps in to help the Lord! And what can any man or any woman do to help the Lord? If the Omnipotent and Eternal God cannot fulfill His own purposes, I am sure Rebekah cannot! But she thinks she can. She does not have confidence in God. And there is Jacob—well, the blessing is for him and he prizes it above everything. It could not come to him by the rule of the flesh, but it is to come to him by the election of grace, but he cannot sit down and let the Lord work His own purposes! "Be still and see the salvation of God" is a text that neither of them could understand, or if they could understand it, they could not put it in practice. Isaac is anxious to give the blessing. Rebekah is anxious. Jacob is anxious to get it for himself. And so all round they did not lean on God at all! They desire to do His will, but they do not trust Him to fulfill His own purposes! And what a sad thing this is in a household, and what a sad thing it is in an individual household when we cannot trust the Lord! Unbelief is a very prolific sin. Once we doubt the Lord, I know not what we may do next, and next, and next! It is a sharp turning off of the right road, that turning to trust in ourselves rather than in the Most High! It won't do, my brothers and sisters. It won't do. We walk rightly when we walk trustfully, when we leave our concerns in the hands of the Lord. But when we will carry our own burdens, we shall soon be in mischief. He that carves for himself will soon cut his fingers. He that runs before the cloud of God's providence may have, before long, to come back again faster than he went forward!

There was another matter, and that was a *lack of confidences in doing right*. Isaac ought to have had confidence and to have given the blessing to Jacob. He knew it was for Jacob, but he was, in all probability, afraid of Esau, so he would not venture to bring upon himself Esau's wrath. He will give the blessing to him, contrary to God's purpose. Rebekah cannot leave the matter with God and be truthful—she must concoct a scheme. Jacob cannot trust in doing right—he must make lies and do wrong to make things go right. And on the whole, he thinks that because God's purpose runs that way, he may take some license to lie as he will! Oh, dear brothers and sisters, let us always have faith that, as a straight line is the nearest distance between two places, the most efficient way to prosper, after all, is *to do right*—and the shortcut and the right cut is integrity, uprightness and truthfulness! If we begin to tack about this way and that, we shall have to our sorrow to tack again—only the longer we run we shall have to sail a great deal further and scarcely reach our haven at all, if we once begin that process! Some have been foolish

enough to infer that their duty is to be judged of by divine purposes or providences. This shows, again, a lack of faith in doing right. If they believed in doing what was a right thing, they would know that God would see those purposes were fulfilled. There is much mischief done in believing that we are to follow the promises of Scripture apart from the law of God! There was a man who once had no wood in his house—and it came into his mind that his neighbor had a large stack of wood, and he thought, "All things are yours." Says he, "I'll go and take some wood. 'All things are yours'—why should not I have some wood off my neighbor's stack?" But just as he was going to take a log of wood, this came into his mind, "You shall not steal," and he very wisely preferred the latter to the former!

And there have been some who have said, "Such a text came into my mind." Never mind, you stick to God's law! It can never be right, text or no text, for a man to tell a lie! There are some things that cannot be altered and God never does alter. He bids you keep to His statutes. You keep to them. "But, perhaps, that might involve a great deal of suffering to myself." "He that cannot take up his cross and follow Christ is not worthy of Him." And this is a part of the cross—to be willing to suffer for well-doing. "But I may bring suffering upon other people, and might lose many opportunities of usefulness if I were to act exactly as my conscience should teach me." My dear friend, what have you to do with usefulness? After all, your serving God is your first business, whether you shall be useful or not! God will see to that. You are to seek usefulness, but never usefulness by sinning—for that is the old doctrine of, "Let us do evil that good may come," and the notion, the old Jesuitical notion, that the end justifies the means, which can never be right! Do right if heaven itself should grieve! If the skies should not be propped except by a lie, let them fall! Come what may, you never must in any degree or in any shape depart from the honest, the true, the right, the Christ-like, that which God commands, that which alone God will approve!

"Well," says one, "but suppose now Rebekah had not thus deceived Isaac and got the blessing for Jacob, what might have happened?" Ah, that is one of the things I don't know, and that is one of the things none of us can guess! But I can as readily suppose what might have happened to set it right, as you can, or will dare suppose what would have happened to set it wrong. I can suppose that long before Esau brought in the savory meat, there might have come to Isaac's mind the recollection of the divine word, and he might have felt he was about to do wrong, and might have said to Esau, "I cannot do it. I am convinced, after all, that I have been guided by the flesh, and not by the spirit. I must give the blessing to your brother, Jacob." I do not see why that could not have happened! I think it very probably might. Certain I am that the divine purpose would have been fulfilled somehow or other—somehow or other—and it was not Rebekah's business, nor yet Jacob's business to attend to God's purposes! Their duty was to do the right thing and let things take their course.

Now think a minute about the sin of each one of these persons. There was Isaac. Isaac, a true believer, a man who lived near to God, one of whom we know that he was given to meditation. He was often in the field at eventide to commune with God—a man of a quiet, gentle spirit. When the Philistines quarreled with him, he just went out of their way. If they took one way, he took another. If they took that, he took another, and so on—a man of a very gentle mold. This was a virtue, but it led him into a fault. He was like some persons who are too gentle to say, "No"; too gentle to encounter opposition. Perhaps this was why he resolved to give the blessing to Esau, lest he should have a quarrel and bring down the wrath of Esau upon his head—and he thought he would do it so slyly that nobody would know it, and so he would avoid all sort of tempest and trouble in the family. My brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as allowing your gentleness to lead you into wrong. Firmness is needed in every question, and firmness especially where God's will is concerned. Isaac was in a great haste to transmit the blessing. He expected to see his seed. Now Esau was married, but Jacob was not. The father, perhaps, for that reason thought that the seed must, after all, therefore run on in the line of Esau, and not in that of Jacob. So he could not wait the Lord's time—could not tarry for the Lord to give the blessing, but, he said, "My eyes are dim; I am getting old"—not remembering that he might have 50 or 60 more years to live—even in his advanced old age! So he hurried to do what would have been right to do if God made him, but wrong to do when his own will made him! Ah, good men, and experienced men, too—you may be in a great haste through unbelief, and you may have to rue the day in which you were in such a hurry!

Then Isaac sinned in that he was forgetful of the mind of God. If God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger," it was not for Isaac to judge of the rightness of that. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He quarreled a little with the doctrine of election—could not quite see it—wanted, after all, that it should be of the will of man, of the flesh, and not altogether of the will of God. He liked Esau—who would not? A fine fellow; a man given to athletic exercises. And men of gentle mold always admire the opposite in their sons. They like to see the manliness developed in them. So Esau became his favorite, while Jacob, quiet in spirit, and one who loved holy things, should have been—if there had been any difference—should have been, at any rate, more dear to him. And so, running counter to the mind of God, the old man thought of this cunning device of giving the blessing in secret; there was Isaac's sin.

Now look at Rebekah's sin. She was a true believer, too. Think not harshly of her, and yet excuse not her fault. She looked upon the blessing which went with the line of Abraham as being invaluable and precious. She desired that Jacob should have it. She knew, moreover, that Jacob would have it, for God had declared that it should be so. She was mindful of the divine words and deserved honor that she had that laid up in her heart. She was anxious, however, to prevent that word from being thwarted. There was her weak point! She could not leave God to fulfill His own decree, but so anxious was she about it that she

determined that her own son, her dear son, should get the blessing—and she was willing to sacrifice herself and all that she had for it! I like to see in a mother a willingness to lose anything if but her son should be saved, and something of that is in Rebekah, though put in a wrong place, when she said, "Upon me be your curse, my son." If he will but seek after the blessing, she bids him seek after it, and if there was any loss involved in it she is quite prepared to bear it. Her fault was that she came of a cunning family. We should call her a shrewd woman—a true mother of the Jews, as Jacob is the father. Their sin seems to have been stamped in them by their progenitors and she used that, as she thought, in order to prevent the purpose of God being frustrated, and her favorite son being deprived of the blessing!

Then, as for Jacob, he was a fine man in some respects, but he had too much shrewdness, too much business tact, I think they call it now-a-days. (Is not that what they call it now-a-days?) Or too much prudence?—that is another fine expression for a very spurious thing. He was anxious for the blessing. He valued spiritual things—he would not lose the spiritual blessing, whatever might happen, and he would do anything in order to obtain it, for he set a value upon it. Yet with all that, Jacob was too eager and became untrue in his eagerness to get spiritual things.

You see their faults, then. I have set them before you, and with nothing to extenuate them. Dear brothers and sisters let us learn a lesson from these failings and pray God that we may be preserved from them. Now you notice in the second place—

II. HOW THEY ARE RECOVERED FROM THIS SIN.

I will call it their repentance. Now look at Isaac. As soon us Isaac perceives that he has been wrong in wishing to bless Esau, he does not persist in it. He will give Esau such a blessing as he may, but he does not think for a moment of retracting what he has done—he feels that the hand of God was in it. What is more, he tells his son, "He is blessed, yes, and shall be blessed." And a second time he calls Jacob to himself and in a solemn manner pronounces over again the blessing giving to him outright what at first he had gotten by subtlety. Here you see Isaac rising somewhat to a hero. He was timid and subtle, but now he has become bold and, let what consequences will follow, he will carry out what he knows to be the mind of God! The good old man, though he makes no confession of the fault here, doubtless did confess it before his God—and stuck firmly to the right.

As to Rebekah, she saw the mischief that she had caused, and did the best thing she could. She gave up her son and sent him away. Little do we know how much she loved him; those Eastern mothers have a remarkable—a more than ordinary fondness for the favorite son. Yet she would give him up, she would make a sacrifice of him for the blessing's sake, that he may live and the blessing be continued in him.

As for Jacob, from that very day he begins to develop—he becomes a pilgrim and a stranger—he puts himself under the protection of God. And the manhood of Jacob seems from that day to have been awakened in

him, awakened, perhaps, by a sense of the fault he had committed. Altogether, the three persons, though the worse for their sin, were so led to repentance that they became afterwards better men and a better woman in future life. But now I have to remind you of—

III. THE AFFLICTIONS WHICH THEY BROUGHT UPON THEMSELVES.

There are families that have been very happy up to a point, but from that point something wrong was done and from that hour all happiness vanished. A whole family has been scattered, perhaps, or, if united, yet they are still subject to great adversity. Now in this case Isaac had wanted to see very soon the blessing continued. He did not see it. Jacob must be sent away—right away. He has the blessing, but he must go. Isaac lived to see him again in extreme old age—he lived to see his son come back, but there were some 40 years, perhaps, during which he was away. The son at home would be small comfort to him—and the son whom he had blessed must be taken away from him for a time. As to Rebekah, she never saw her son again. She bade him farewell with many a tear, and when he returned, Rebekah was gone to her rest. She did not know what she was doing for herself. As far as she was concerned, she was forever separating herself and her son in this world. As for Jacob, he for whose good the whole was done—from that moment he had such a chapter of sorrows as made him say when he had gone through it, "Few and evil are the days of your servant." All through his life that one transgression cast a gloom over it all! The right part of it, the desire to get the blessing adhered to him—he never lost it—but the wrong part of it came on, came on very soon. God generally pays His people back in their own coin. If we sin against Him, somebody very soon sins against us—in the same way, too. Observe, he cheats his brother—then Laban cheats him! From the moment he enters Laban's family, it is first one cheat and then another. Laban tries to outdo Jacob, and Jacob tries to outdo Laban—a long, long tale of shrewdness and sharpness. If you choose to go on your own tack, you may. If you elect to be your own manager, you shall manage and you shall see what comes of it. Jacob found what came of it through his having to go to Laban in that way. He became the husband of two wives and he brought into his family a perpetual element of discord and alienation. When they brought him that coat which had been dipped in blood, and said, "Do you know whether this is your son's coat or not?"—when his sons deceived him, do you not think he must have remembered that coat that he had put on to deceive his father? When he went down into Egypt, must there not have been some bitter thoughts? "Perhaps I had never been here if that turn in my life had not led me to the marriage of Laban's daughters, and thus brought quarrel into the house, causing Joseph's coming down here, and my coming down." We cannot tell, but certainly it seems from that moment to have been true, "Thorns, also, and thistles, shall your life bring forth to you."

You have often noticed his craftiness and said, "How wrong it was." Notice the chastisement that followed. If he had not been a man of God, the thing might have answered, perhaps, but as a man of God he must

be chastened for it. "You only have I known," said God, "of all people of the earth. I will punish you for your iniquities." There is no punishment for the believer in the world to come, but in this world there are chastisements that will surely follow upon every sin. "As many as I love will I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent." And especially in family sin—family troubles will come up with a terrible harvest if we once fall—perhaps it might be but once—into some family transgression. Fathers, people of God, take pains to rule your households in the fear of the Lord! Mothers, pray for grace that in your families you may never lead any of your sons or daughters in a wrong path! Sons, ask for grace that you may have the blessing! And if you are godly sons, deal wisely with your ungodly brothers, never letting them have to say that you were harsh, or overbearing, or unjust to them as Esau could truthfully say of his brother, Jacob. But rather be more tender to them, give up more to them, be more kind with them than you would have been if they had been Christians, if by any means you might yet win them over and they might be brought to know the Savior. Oh, for a family in which there is constant prayer—family in which every child may safely follow the father's example—a family in which the parent's life shall always encourage the child to follow their example! Oh, for God-fearing households! They are the strength of the Church! They are the glory of the nation! God loves the tents of Jacob well, and there will He command a blessing, even life forevermore, where brothers dwell together in holy unity. Now as for Esau (one final word about him)—

IV. THE UNGODLY SON WHO MISSED THE BLESSING.

He was a profane person in character, a derider of holy things altogether. Care about them? Not he! His blind father's God? He cared not a bit for Him nor any of those covenant blessing that were to come! Let him live by his sword and by his bow—let him be a fine gentleman among the Hittites and among the Philistines and that will quite satisfy him. Now there are many—many of that sort. But it will be asked, "How is it written that Esau would have inherited the blessing but that he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears?" So will you be—so will you be if you go to work on Esau's plan! Esau wanted to have this world and the next, too. He wanted to have the pottage and the birthright. He wanted to be a fine gentleman among the Hittites, and yet have the blessing. He wanted to have his wife of a fine noble Philistine family and be thought a famous fellow among them—and yet at the same time have the blessing that belonged to the separate people of God! And so with tears he sought to get that blessing, but he could not have it.

And so may you. You may say, "Oh, that I might be saved; oh, that I might have the privileges of a Christian!" You cannot have the privileges of a Christian unless you have the separated life of a Christian—unless you are willing to give up this world for the separated life of Christ—unless you will, with Isaac, feel that your possession is Canaan and walk by faith, and not by sight. If you do like Esau, you cannot have it hereafter. It is like John Bunyan's parable, *Passion* and *Patience*. Passion would have his best things first. Patience would have his best things last.

Passion had all his best things and laughed at Patience as Patience sat there, but after a while Passion had used up all his best things, and then he had nothing left. But Patience had his best things last, and then he came in for his turn and, as John Bunyan says, "There is nothing after the last, so the good things of Patience lasted forever and ever!" So the good things of Jacob, when he chose the good part and sought after it—and with all his sin he did do that—it lasted and his name is in the covenant, and he rejoices at this day before the throne of God!

But Esau did not care for the spiritual, at least not enough to let go of the carnal. He only looked to have that if he could have the other, too, and as he could not have that and the other, he preferred to let the spiritual blessing go. And though he cried about it and mourned about it, yet he could not go to the point of giving up the world for the sake of the world to come! And I know some people—I think I know some old people, too, who would like to be Christians, but they like their wine cups. They would like to be saved, but they like worldly amusements. They would like, in fact, to run with the hare and the hounds, too! They would like to serve the devil, or breakfast with the devil and sup with Christ! They would like to have in this world all the joys and the pleasures which belong to downright worldliness, and then they would like to have the pleasures of Christ as well at the last day! It cannot be. If they seek it carefully with tears, it cannot be. If you have chosen the world, have the world—if you choose Christ, you must count the riches of Egypt to be as nothing for the sake of His reproach!

May God bless these words and lead us all to faith in Jesus Christ, to a desire for the best things, and may He prevent our walking in the unbecoming way in which these three good people did. If we have so walked, may He lead us to repent, and help us to mend our manners, and save us, above all things, from being profane persons, as was Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 27:1-29.

Verses 1-4. *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, My son. And he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now therefore take, I pray you, your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison. And make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat: that my soul may bless you before I die.* A sad misfortune to lose the sight of your eyes! How greatly, how much more than we do, ought we to thank God for the prolongation of our sight, and it has been well remarked by one of our greatest men of science "that we seldom hear Christians thank God as they should for the use of spectacles in these modern times." A philosopher has written a long paper concerning the blessings which he found in old age from this invention, and we, still enabled to read the

Word of God when our sight decays, should be exceedingly grateful for it. After all, with all alleviations, it is a very great trial to be deprived of one's eyesight. While some of the greatest divines in modern history have poor eyesight, we have here one of the best of men—one of the patriarchs whose eyes were so dim that he could not see. He seems to have had some sort of mistiness of soul about this time which was far worse, and so he desired to give the blessing to Esau, whom God had determined should never have it!

5-11. *And Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spoke unto Jacob, her son, saying, Behold, I heard your father speak unto Esau, your brother, saying, Bring me version, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless you before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch me from there two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory meat for your father, such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, and that he may bless you before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah, his mother, Behold, Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.* He does not appear to have raised any objection to what she proposed on moral grounds, but only on the ground of the difficulty of it and the likelihood of being discovered! It only shows how low the moral sense may be in some who, nevertheless, have a desire towards God and have a faith in Him. In those darker days we can hardly expect to find so much of the excellences of the spirit as we ought to find, nowadays, in those who fully possess the Spirit of God.

12-15. *My father, perhaps, will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be your curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savory meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son, Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob, her younger son.* And Esau, altogether a man of the world, one very like the sons of other families around about, took care to adorn himself in goodly raiment. It seems always more becoming to the worldling than the Christian! Esau had a suit good enough for this occasion, but Jacob had not. I would that those who fear God were less careful about the adornments of their persons. There are far better ornaments than gold can buy—neat ornaments and comely raiment—may we all possess them.

16-19. *And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck. And she gave the savory meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hands of her son, Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here am I, who are you, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau, your firstborn.* Which, whatever may be said about it, was a plain lie, and is not to be excused upon any theory whatever! It was as much a sin in Jacob as it would be in us, except that perhaps he had less of the light of

God, and the general cunning of those who surrounded him may have made it easier with him and a less tax on conscience for him to do this than it would be in our case. "I am Esau," he said. Why is all this recorded in the Bible? It is not to the credit of these men. No, the Holy Spirit does not write for the credit of man—He writes for the glory of God's grace! He writes for the warning of believers, now, and these things are examples unto us that we may avoid the blots and flaws in good men and may, thereby, become more what we should be.

19-20. *I have done according as you told me: arise, I pray you, sit and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord your God brought it to me.* Here he draws God's name into this lie! And this is worse still.

21-29. *And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray you, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are my very son, Esau, or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac, his father, and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Are you my very son, Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless you. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed: therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you: be lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you: cursed be every one that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you.* So he tied his own hands—he could not revoke his blessing, or, had he done so, he would have brought the curse upon himself.

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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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BLESSINGS MANIFOLD AND MARVELOUS
NO. 3474

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He delivered me, because He delighted in me."
Psalm 18:19.

THE experience of believers has much in common. The language in which they are known to express it bears a close resemblance. You may often take the language out of one good man's mouth and put it into the mouth of another without committing any violence. The words of David will doubtless suit hundreds and thousands of you who fear the Lord; you will be able to lay hold of this sentence, full many of you, I hope, with the hands of appropriation and be enabled, by God the Holy Spirit, to say, as he said, "He delivered me because He delighted in me."

These words may suggest to us *a pleasant fact to sing about*—"He delivered me"—*a precious truth of God to think about*, "because He delighted in me." *And a proper course to set about*—since His delight in me has issued in my deliverance, let my delight in Him produce a response of gratitude! "He delivered me." Here is—

I. A FACT IN THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE SAINT which may well provoke the gratitude and inspire the song of him who has witnessed such amazing grace! We need not disentomb the tale of David's rescue from peril—let us take our own narrative. And how can I invoke the memory of this better than by referring to some points in John Bunyan's wonderful allegory? As pilgrims to the Celestial City, we have often had to sing, "He delivered me." You remember well, when you resided in the City of Destruction, you breathed the same atmosphere, followed the same fashions and indulged the same lusts of the flesh that others did. Prone to sin, and prompt to participate in other men's sins, you mingled with them in their unhallowed pursuits. You were enemies to God and yet you were on good terms with yourselves! You were at a distance from the great Sun of Righteousness and, instead of sighing for the light of God, you sought satisfaction in darkness. What you once were—an alien from God and a stranger to His house—you would now be, had He not delivered you! It was divine grace which made you restless and put it into your heart to be uneasy. You saw that the wrath of God must rest upon the ungodly. You heard a voice in your ears, "Escape; escape for your life! Look not behind you! Flee to the mountains lest you be consumed." If you have forsaken the drunkard's haunts, if you have broken off the swearer's profane tongue, if the pleasures of sin have ceased their fascination, you must ascribe it to your Redeemer and say, "He delivered me," for it is grace that has rescued you from the destroyers!

Do you remember the time when you first set out as a pilgrim for the better country? You ran as best you could. Bright hopes and cheery prospects enlivened you as you thought of entering into the Celestial City. But all of a sudden you were bewildered with doubts and fears. You had fallen into the Slough of Despond! In that miserable plight some of you remained for months. It was my misfortune to be there for nearly five years—and I found it a terrible place! Fears of dying haunted us, and equal fears of living. A dread of hell came over us and a dreary apprehension that we would soon be swallowed up as those that went down alive into the pit! With what cold shudders, or with what hot tears some of you must recall that unhappy season when you cried with Job, "O, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even unto His seat!" You had become the companion of dragons and of owls, and your soul chose strangling rather than life. It is not so with you now. Your face shines—the oil of joy is upon it! Your throat is no longer hoarse with groaning. You can sing a song to your well-beloved touching your beloved. Who made the change? Why, dear heart, I am sure you can say, "He delivered me! It was His kind hand that snatched me from the mire, lifted me up out of the horrible pit, and set my feet upon a rock."

You have not forgotten, dear friends—in fact, the felicities of heaven can never be erased from your memory! O, the weight of that burden which pressed you down when your sins laid heavy on your soul. You walked despondingly enough along the road. Christian worship had no charms to enliven you. Did you come where God's people were singing? You said, "I would, but cannot sing." Or if they prayed, you likewise excused yourself, "I would, but cannot pray." Your sins were so harassing that they haunted your mind, vexed your brain and terrified your imagination. What schemes to get rid of them, or to ease your heart of conscious guilt, you resorted to! And yet you got worse, rather than better. You tried to condone your past bad works by doing some fresh good works, but their defects were so palpable that they only aggravated your sore. You resorted to ordinances and ceremonies and you discovered that they were mere quackery, a vile empiricism void of healing virtue, but full of deadly opiates! You seemed as if you would be bent double with your sins! You cried, "O God, my sins, my sins, my sins! How can I be delivered from them?"

And now let me wake up your tender recollections. Do you remember how Christ was evidently set forth crucified before your eyes—how you saw One hanging upon a tree in agonies and blood—and how, as you looked to Him, you felt the cords that bound you begin to crack, and the burden that oppressed you presently roll away? Do you remember how you turned round to seek for it, but it was gone? You sought for it, but it could not be found! You saw, as it were, an open sepulcher, the very sepulcher where once the Savior lay—into that your sins had rolled—there had they been buried forever! Oh, you can sing as you think of this, "He delivered me! He delivered me!" 'Twas the mighty hand of the Savior that lifted that intolerable load from off you and set you free, so that you

could exultingly say, "I am forgiven! Through the Savior's precious blood I am forgiven! His death my ransom price has paid!"

Since that time your song has swollen and become more sweet and loud. You have added many fresh stanzas to it, but the refrain is still the same, "He delivered me! He delivered me!" A grievous distress befell you when, after you lost your burden, you met with one called, "Adam the first," or, "Old Adam." Do you recollect his inviting you to his house? With pleasant, winsome speech, he told you that the road you were going was very rough—that heavy toil and hard fare must be looked for through the whole course of the pilgrimage—and that he would recommend you to indulge yourself with the bounties of nature, rather than deny yourselves with the austerities of faith. He invited you to go home with him and he would let you marry one of his three daughters and then he would make you his heir! Did you not accept his invitation and go home with him and see his three daughters? The wonder is that you did not marry one of them. Their names you know. The Lust of the Flesh—she was the eldest, and very agreeable in her manners. The Lust of the Eyes—she was the second, and the more you gazed at her, the more she fascinated you! The youngest born, but by far the most imposing in stature and deportment, was The Pride of Life. You went home to the old man's house and when you saw those three daughters, your heart began to beat, and your thoughts were fixed on their dowries. Then he said, in his patronizing manner, "All these things will I give you, and you can still be a pilgrim. You can be a Christian without observing any strict vows of sanctity! Little blemishes and trivial inconsistencies will pass unnoticed if you clothe yourself with the mantle of a comely profession. Scruples of conscience may be easily quieted. If you are as good as your neighbors, they cannot upbraid you." But you were given divine grace to run away! You shut your ears against the enticing words—you escaped! How was it, then, that you did not fall a victim to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eyes, or to the pride of life? What reason can you assign but this—"He delivered me!" How marvelous your deliverance! Your steps had well-near gone—your feet had almost slipped—but in the moment when you would have perished, he interposed! Therefore, let His name be praised!

Since that, do you recollect going through the Valley of Humiliation, and fighting with Apollyon? We have not merely to contend with a trinity of sensual lusts, but we have to wage war with Satan, himself! Some of the younger disciples here do not know what this means, but the veterans in the army understand Bunyan's description. Well do some of us remember when we stood foot to foot with the great adversary, hour after hour, and how at last we fell—and his foot was upon us and he said, "Now will I destroy your soul." At that very moment, when the dragon's foot seemed to crush all life out of you, you were enabled to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." How was it that you escaped out of such a terrible conflict? Must you not

sing very sweetly and very loudly, "He delivered me! He delivered me! Blessed be His name!"

Amidst all your travels, have you never passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Have you not experienced the gloom of darkness where your spirit was so desponding that you did not know what to do? Though you had been a Christian for many years, you could not discern the hope of your calling! Though you had come to the full assurance of understanding, you could not take hold of one covenant promise with the slightest confidence! Though you had been known aforetime to sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am His," He hid His face from you! You sought Him, but you found Him not. In sermons you found no refreshment; in prayer no communion. You were reduced to such a low state of mind that you seemed as though you were counted with them that go down into the pit. You were so haunted with gloomy doubts and fears that you cried out, "Your wrath lies hard upon me and You have afflicted me with all Your waves." Through that perilous and gloomy valley you walked! Out of that valley, at last, you came into the bright clear sunshine! And when you sat down and looked back upon the place of dragons and the land of terrors, you could sing, "He delivered me." Yes, Lord, You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling! Unto Your name be all the praise!

Since then, my dear fellow traveler on the road to Canaan, you have had many remarkable deliverances; cover up your face and be ashamed! I feel that I may well blush, as I confess to wandering in Bye-Path Meadow. Do you remember going over the stile because the road was rough? You thought if you went just on the other side of the hedge, it would be so much more pleasant. Do you remember being lost at night? Do you remember, above all, the Giant Despair, who locked you up in his dungeon? Do you remember with sorrow, how wandering from the right way soon brought on sickness of heart and despair? You, Mr. Much-Afraid, have good reason to sing, "He delivered me," when you remember how you were fetched out of the dungeon! And you, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, you, too, lay shut up there, but He delivered you! He who slays despair and puts doubts to flight, He came to your rescue, even though your own sins had brought you into that sad plight. Laud His name as you recollect what wonders He has done for you—and what loving kindness He has shown towards you!

And now, it may be, some of us are going through the enchanted ground. I sometimes think that such is the condition of a great majority of pilgrims, now-a-days. The enchanted ground was a place where men felt drowsy and had a tendency to slumber and sink into a long and eternal sleep. Is that your temptation, friend? I know it is mine. I have a sluggish, drowsy soul. I wish I could keep awake and vigorous in my Master's service, but the tendency of my drowsy spirit is to get cold and inert. And I suppose it is the same with most of you. How is it, then, that you have not gone to sleep, that you have not given up all diligence and lost all heart for God's ways? Surely you must say, "He delivered me!"

I would not detain you longer, however, on this retrospect, except that I have two more scenes to bring before you. Did you ever stand and look at that hole in the hill, of which Bunyan speaks, and which he says was the backdoor to hell? He says that, although Ignorance appeared to have gone almost all the way to heaven, he was bound and taken back. Some of us have seen, in fact, that which he so touchingly describes in metaphor. We have known members of Christian churches who have held an honorable position in the eyes of their fellow men, for 10 or 20 years, prove themselves to be detestable hypocrites, prone to manifold vices and to reprobate every good work! They have not taken, like drunkards and swearers, the broad road down to the pit, but they have committed their transgressions in secret—worn the masks of profession, kept company with saints—and gone by the back door to meet the doom of sinners! I shudder as the procession passes before my mind's eye, of ministers, deacons, elders and influential professors, who have gone through that backdoor. What to say, I know not. My soul is bowed down. "O God, I had gone there myself, had You not delivered me!" I think you must all feel the same if you know anything of the corruptions of your own heart. Even you, my venerable brothers and sisters, who have been preserved so many years in the wilderness, if it were not for the grace of God, you, too, concerning faith, had made shipwreck—and so have perished, even in the harbor's mouth!

We shall soon reach the last struggle. Jordan is only a narrow stream which parts us from the land of spirits and we shall soon pass through it. But its floods are cold and it is not easy for flesh and blood to anticipate dying with complacency. "But be of good courage, beloved," we have said up to this time, "He has delivered me." He who has been our helper will not forsake us. Be assured we shall sing that at the last, and should the angels who meet us on the other side ask how we endured the struggle of the death pang, we will, each of us, bear the same testimony—"He delivered me!"

I said this was a hope to cultivate, that you might sing for joy in the article of death when heart and flesh fail. I hope that you will. Let me encourage you, Christian people, to sing a great deal more than you do. Of old London, in the Puritan time, it was said that you might have heard songs and prayers in well-near every house as you walked at the breakfast hour from St. Paul's to Eastcheap. Family worship was then the prevailing custom! It would not be so now in any town in England—the more the pity. I hear the wagoner in the country, and the costermonger in the city, humming a tune or singing a song. Why should not you, my friends, enliven your listless intervals with a hymn? The world has its popular music—why should not we stir up some soul-inspiring melodies? Soldiers go to battle with martial airs—let us go to our battle with the songs of Zion! When the sailors are tugging and pulling at the rope and weighing the anchor, they send up a cheery shout and they work better for it, too. Christian friends, while you work, lighten

the toil with sacred song! Serve God with gladness! I have often been charmed at eventide on the canals at Venice to hear the gondoliers sing in chorus some glorious old chant. So, Christians, as you steer your vessels to heaven, and tug at the oar, sing as you row, sing as you work! Sing, for you have much to sing about! Be glad, and praise the Lord who has delivered you! And now we have—

II. A PRECIOUS TRUTH TO THINK ABOUT.

"He delighted in me." "He delivered me because He delighted in me." Deliverance from sin, deliverance from evil propensities, and deliverance from spiritual enemies—all such deliverances bear evidence of God's love to us. Temporal mercies betoken the freeness of the divine bounty, but they are never bestowed as the earnest of God's special love. Such inferior gifts He often lavishes in abundance upon those who are not His people. Spiritual blessings He reserves for His own redeemed, regenerate family! Their value is enhanced by their significance, because they are proofs of His eternal love towards us. While they grant us safe conduct through the wilderness, they guarantee to us eternal life when these pilgrimage days are over and done. If you have experienced the kinds of deliverance I have been describing, you have many tokens of His good will and the tenderness with which He delights in you.

I shall not talk much about this, but I hope you will think much about it. How much He delights in you it is not possible to say. *The Father delights in you* and looks upon you with doting love—like as a father takes pleasure in his child, so does He rejoice over you. And Jesus delights in you. He saw in you the recompense of His agonies, the purchase of His blood, and the partakers of His glory. And the Holy Spirit delights in you. He has formed your heart anew and made you a temple for Him to dwell in and, therefore, He watches you with jealous care. Does it not seem well-near incredible that God should ever take delight in His creatures? He is so eternally happy in Himself, so infinitely blessed, so supremely glorious. Surely His delights cannot be enhanced or diminished by the welfare or the adversity of such worms as we are! Yet He certainly delighted in David and He most surely does delight in every one of those who put their trust in Him! Nor does He merely say that He delights in us, now, but He assures us that He did delight in His people long before the world was made! He wrote their names in His book. He ordained them. In His decrees He had them before His mind's eye. He delighted in them before ever He laid the foundation of the earth, or stretched the canopy of the skies! Why was this? Some suppose that it was because He foresaw they would be good and deserving of His esteem. I cannot see anything that is attractive in rebellious men, in sinful mortals! I dare say you can all join with me in echoing the sentiment of our hymn—

"What was there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father, I always must sing,
Because it seemed good in Your sight."

The reason for God's delight we cannot tell. It is hid in God's eternal breast. This only we know, that He delights in us because we are the objects of His choice. From among the dense masses of mankind He chose us. In infinite sovereignty He said, "They shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." He ordained us to be vessels of honor fitted for the Master's use and He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover, He delights in us because, in addition to having chosen us, He has *bought* us. Christ has paid too dearly for His people not to love them. When He looks into the face of the penitent sinner, He sees the reflection of His own tears and languish, yes, and of His bloody sweat! He sees His own wounds and recollects the price they cost—and the purchase He paid.

They are precious to Him because of the power He has exerted upon them in making them His workmanship. We prize a thing sometimes that has not any intrinsic value, for the sake of the skill and workmanship bestowed upon it. The Holy Spirit has put out the force of His omnipotence to construct a Christian. It takes as much divine energy to make a saint as to create a world and, therefore, God rejoices in every one of His elect as being the work of His hands—the very choice design of His heart.

Yet more, He delights in us because *there is a relationship established* whereby we are made partakers of a divine nature. This is a truth of God to be spoken of very reverently. The angels are not related to God—they are His creatures—but MAN is next-of-kin to the Deity! He whom the heavens adore as God over all blessed forever, has taken our nature and is a man like ourselves! The Lord Jesus Christ, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and identified Himself with our circumstances! The Son of Man is the Son of the Highest! In Christ there is a relationship, a kindred, an affinity between man and God—the Creator and the creature whom He created in His own image! Hence the delight He takes in us.

But to go farther, there is an alliance yet closer predicted in Scripture, wherein Christ, being married to His Church, shall develop the great mystery, whereby, as husband and wife are one flesh, so there shall be an eternal indissoluble union between Christ and His Church. Oh, mysterious union! Blessed cause of delight! Like the head delights in the members, after such manner the Lord Jesus delights in every saved sinner who is vitally united to Himself!

The day, beloved, comes on apace when Christ will prove His delight in all His people, by calling their bodies from the grave and reuniting their souls with their risen frames! They shall be clothed upon with His glorious majesty and made to sit upon His throne with Himself. Then the world will know that, though they were "despised and rejected of men," as He was, they were the delight of God—and He will forever delight in them! "Because He delighted in me, therefore He delivered me."

I cannot convey to you the full sense of these manifold and marvelous blessings. I can only talk about them. But I pray God the Holy Spirit to make the reflections as sweet to you as they have been to me. My heart seems to leap at the thought that the Most High should take any delight in me. I know He has delivered me, all honor to His name! I know I am no longer what I once was, glory be to His dear love! He has saved me from my sins and I draw an inference, the correctness of which I cannot doubt, that He would not have delivered me if He had not delighted in me! Do draw that inference, each one of you, for yourselves. If God has delivered you, He delights in you! But there are some of you who never were delivered. You are still in bondage, still the slaves of sin. Yet, remember, the gospel is still preached to you. "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Trust Christ, poor soul, and you shall be delivered, and that deliverance shall be to you the evidence that you were the objects of God's electing love, and that you shall be written on His heart forever! A word to the wise. One word to the wise is enough, though twenty words to the foolish would be of no use. Here is—

III. A RESOLUTION TO BE ACTED UPON.

You sang it just now. I want you to act it out in your lives—

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

It is the least you can do if He delights in you, to delight in Him. Brothers and sisters, I am afraid there are many of us who do not take a delight in our religion. Then I should advise you to challenge the quality of your profession, for though genuine religion does not always yield delight that is only because of the infirmity of the creature. True grace in the heart, a conscience void of offense—in a word, the life of a consecrated man should be a perennial fountain of joy! Some people go to their place of worship because they think they ought. Their legality holds them in constant bondage. "You shall not. You shall not," is the burden of their creed. They never rejoice. Their eyes never sparkle—they never think of going up to the house of God with the festive joy of those that welcome the holiday. Ah, my dear friend, I advise you to see whether you have a sound conversion, for those who truly love God, exalt in His name. What if they have their troubles, still their faith and their fellowship are the blessings, not the bane, of their mortal existence. What if they have their cares and anxieties, still the cheer and palliatives are never wanting while they can cast their care upon Him who cares for them! His service is their solace. Their sorrow is that they cannot serve Him more! Christian, delight yourself in the Lord, and you shall have the desire of your heart!

But then your resolution will not only be to delight in God, but to show it. He delighted in you and, therefore, He delivered you. You delight in Him and, therefore, you serve Him. What can you do to express your gratitude? You are saved—how can you extol His great salvation?

Perhaps you are doing a little, but can you not do more? Is there not some fresh thing that you can do for Jesus? Can you not get new crowns for His head, beloved? Let us give Him fresh praise and if there is any fresh branch of usefulness, any new mode of serving Him which we have not yet tried, let us ask for grace to try it now! And as for the good old works in which we have been engaged, oh, for fresh fire that we may do them better! I would that we served God with more vigor. It is not more preaching we need, but more *fiery preaching*! It is not merely to multiply the number of our prayers, but the need of more earnest pleadings, more fervent intercessions. The service that we render is too languid and heartless—we need to summon our whole heart, and soul, and strength in untiring efforts to do His will, and speed the triumph of His glorious gospel by the vision of the thorn-crowned head; by the five wounds of Him who died in agony! By the mangled, murdered body of your blessed Lord suffering unto death for you, I do implore you, the servants of God, to lay yourselves as living sacrifices upon the altar of Jesus Christ! You do, some of you, profess to love Him, but you never speak of Him! You say you serve Him, but what do you do? You profess to "love your God with zeal so great that you could give Him all," and what, after all, do you give Him? Oh, how much outward religion is nothing but inward hypocrisy! How much of our talk about religion is mere gossip! God save us from vain talk and impart to us a living energy, so that our deeds may proclaim our faith! Oh, may we spend and be spent in the Master's service till we shall—

"Our body with our charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

As for those who know not God, they have no capacity to serve Him. My prayer to God for you is that He may bring you to see Christ crucified. When you put your trust in Him, you shall be delivered. Then you shall sing, "He delivered me because He delighted in me." And after that it shall be your welcome mission to go and tell what great things He has done for you. May this be the joyous occupation of all of us! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 2.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* These were your grave clothes. You were wrapped up in them. No, this was your tomb! You were shut up in it, as in a great stone coffin—"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.* You were once no better than the workshop of the devil. He is the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, as the blacksmith works in his forge. When you hear foul language, when you see bad actions, these are the sparks coming out of the chimney that let you know who is at work within, down below. What

a dreadful thing it is—a man dead to all that is good, but alive through the indwelling of the devil that is within him! "The spirit that now 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.* Not children of God, even as some profanely assert when they talk about the universal fatherhood of God. You were children of wrath, even as others. And the best of men were no better than others by nature. They were as dead, as much under the influence of Satan, as much under the influence of the lusts of the flesh as others are who are left where they are. It is only sovereign grace that makes us to differ. "Were by nature," not by error—by nature! Not by a mistake, not by a few actions, but by nature, the children of wrath, even as others! See what you used to be? Let this make you humble. See what you would have been? Let this make you grateful. "*You* has He quickened." He has put life into you. He has made you quit your graves. He has made you come from under the dominion of Satan and the devices of your own heart. Will you not bless His name tonight?

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.* Wonder! The life that quickens. Christ quickens all the members of His mystical body, and this has come to us through the riches of God's mercy. Whatever God has, He has in abundance, but of His mercy we read that He has riches of it—and truly all those riches of mercy He has shown in our case. We cannot but have riches of gratitude for such riches of mercy!

5. *By grace you are saved.* See, Paul puts that in a parenthesis. It was not necessary to the sense, but he knew that there would come a time when men would not like this doctrine, so he puts it in, "By grace are you saved." They cannot bear it and, therefore, they shall have it. They shall have it when the sense does not seem to demand it. To make it quite clear, he will insert it. "By grace you are saved."

6. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* We are not only raised from the dead with Christ, but we are spiritually raised into the heavenly places with Him. It is a great thing when a man learns to look up from earth to heaven. It is a greater thing when he learns to look down from heaven upon earth—to have you sitting at the right hand of God, and then to look down on all the things of this present life as far below you!

7. *That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* Brothers and sisters, we are to be a show, an exhibition, in which God will exhibit the riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Angels will count it a high joy to study the life of a regenerate man, to see him rise from death in sin to the glory of God in Christ Jesus! What is so precious in God's esteem ought to continually excite our praise.

8. *For by grace are you saved.* There it is again! Paul rings that silver bell in the deaf ears of men. "By grace are you saved."

8, 9. *Through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.* We would be sure to boast if we could. We are a boasting people! Man is a poor mass of flesh, and he is largely given to the corruption of pride. He will boast if he can.

10. *For we are His workmanship.* If there is any good thing in us, He put it there. It is not for us to boast. It is for Him to boast if He pleases.

10, 11. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember*—Oh, that is a good word for us, "Remember." We are so apt to forget. *"Remember"*—

11, 12. *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 that time you were without Christ.* Had you to do with Christ? The Jews call you uncircumcised dogs! What had you to do with the Messiah? Was not the Messiah for God's Israel? You did not belong to Israel.

12. *Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.* The covenant was in Isaac. You are not the children of Isaac. You are not descended from Abraham. You were strangers from the covenants of promise.

12. *Having no hope.* Either here or hereafter.

12, 13. *And without God in the world. But now*— Oh, what a contrast—

13. *In Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ.* You are brought near to Israel! You are brought still nearer to Israel's God! Now you are not aliens. Yon are not strangers from the covenant You have a hope, you have a God!

14, 15. *For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us. 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.* There is no circumcision and uncircumcision now, for that is done away with. There is now no Israel according to the flesh, and Gentiles who are not of God, for there is a *spiritual* Israel, to which we belong, as well as those of Abraham's race. He has swept out of the way all the ordinances which divided us, and we are now one in Him!

16, 17. *And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near.* To the Gentile and to the Jew, to the atrociously wicked, and to those who were religious after a fashion—He has brought them both in by the cross.

18. *For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.* Here you have the Trinity in a single line of Scripture, and it needs the Trinity to make an acceptable prayer! Through Him, (that is, Christ), we

have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and now, today, the Church of God is one in prayer, whether Jew or Gentile. We come to God by the same Mediator, helped by the same Spirit. We have answers of peace from the same Father!

19. *Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God*—There are many here whom we do not know. We have not seen their faces before, but if they are in Christ and we are in Christ, we are very near of kin! There is an old saying that blood is thicker than water, and depend upon it that when there is the blood of Christ sprinkled upon us, it makes very near kinship! When we are bought with the same price, quickened by the same life, and are on the way to the same heaven, we are very near of kin! We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and all the household of God! They make a great fuss when they give a man the key of the City of London. There is a fine gold box to put it in. You have got the key of the New Jerusalem and your faith, like a golden box, holds the deeds of your citizenship. Take care of them and rejoice in them!

20, 21. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief cornerstone: In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord.* The church is a framed house. It has an architect. Some seem to think that it is a load of bricks. They have no church officers. There are none set apart to this work, and none to the other. It seems to be just a heap of stones thrown down any way. But a true Church is, by the Spirit of God, a building fitly framed together. One is a door, another is a window. One lies low and hidden in the foundation. Another may have a more prominent position in the wall. And it should be so with us—that we should each have a place that God has appointed him, and keep to that place. Lord, build up Your Church upon earth at this time!

22. *In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* We are not built to stand like a carcass. It is a ghastly sight to see houses in London nearly finished, but never occupied—but it is the glory of the Church of God that it is inhabited! It is a habitation of God through the Spirit. Holy Spirit, dwell more evidently in Your Church! Keep open house for all poor sinners who come to Christ and glorify God!

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"For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Romans 7:8, 9.

I REMEMBER once reading a chapter of a book which commenced with this heading, "The Inside of the World." The book, of course, was occupied very much with geology and to speculations about the interior of the globe. Tonight I want you to consider not the inside of the world, but the little world within us, that microcosm, the human heart, and some strange things that happen therein—and especially one singular and mysterious work which goes on in the minds of those who become the children of God. They are brought from one state into another by a very remarkable process; a process which, while they are undergoing it, they do not understand. And for need of knowing what it is and what God is driving at, some of them are often driven to very great despondency—some even to despair. Whereas if they would see in the text what I shall try to hold up and expound—a kind of mirror in which they might see a reflection of their hearts and their own experience—they might, perhaps, come into light and liberty all the sooner. May it be so, even now!

We shall first speak of the words of the Apostle in this way. Here is *life without the law of God.* Here is, secondly, *sin coming to the light of God.* And here is, thirdly, *the man himself—death brought by the law to him.* And, first, let me speak of—

I. LIFE WITHOUT THE LAW OF GOD.

The Apostle says that sin was at one time dead in him and he was alive without the law of God. Now, when he says, "without the law," he does not mean that he never heard the law of God read, for it was read in the synagogue every Sabbath. He does not mean that he did not know it, for he was probably acquainted with every letter of it. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel and he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees according to his own profession—and they were a sect much addicted to the study not only of the law of God, but of the jots and tittles of it—they held, in fact, constant discussions and disputes with one another about the minute particulars of that law.

He knew the law in the letter of it, and understood it so far as it could be understood from his point of view, but yet he says he was alive

without the law, by which he means this—*the law had never come home to his heart and to his conscience*. It was because of this, therefore, that he was living in a state of false security. He thought he had kept it. He believed that if anyone in the world had kept the commandments from his youth up, he, Saul of Tarsus, was that man! He did not dread dying, or standing before the judgment-seat of God—he felt himself perfectly ready for that. Wrapped up in his own law-keeping, he felt himself perfectly secure. He was at ease and peace. Nothing disturbed him. He did not lie sleepless on his bed at night, thinking of his iniquity—on the contrary, he lulled himself to sleep with some such a prayer as this—"God, I thank You I am not as other men are—an adulterer or extortioner, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week. I pay tithes of all I possess." He thought he was perfectly safe! He thought that he was doing all he ought to do, leaving nothing undone that he ought to have done! He thought that he was, in fact, in excellent repute in heaven, and he was certainly on the very best possible terms with himself! The consequence of this was that he was alive without the law of God.

In another sense *his security brought him pride*—he looked down upon all others. If by chance a Publican met him in the street, he gave him all the room he could. If he ever passed by a woman that was a sinner, he took care to look quite another way, or to let her see how scornfully he thought of her. If, perchance, he mentioned a Gentile, he called him a dog—for this great one, Saul of Tarsus, had so kept the law of God, and felt so quiet and peaceful within, that he could afford to stand on the very pinnacle of eminence and look down with derision on those poorer mortals who were not so good as he was!

The next step that Paul, who was a thorough-going one, took—*he indulged in persecution*—for as soon as you think yourself better than others, you become the judge of others! And the next step is to carry out your own sentence upon others. And inasmuch as this Saul of Tarsus heard that there were some who did not believe that they were as good as he, who did not profess to be saved, as he expected to be by his own works, but who talked of one Jesus, who was the Son of God, who had died for their sins and who had risen from the dead and given them pardon—when he heard that they were trusting to the merits of this glorious One, whom, they said, had ascended to the right hand of God, he was exceedingly angry with them! Why, they were opposed to his theory of his own excellence! They were practically protesting against his very comfortable state of mind! They were, in fact, setting up altogether an opposition doctrine which laid the axe to the root of the tree of his belief and might fell the goodly tree beneath which he found such shelter! So he began at once to haul them to prison, to compel them to blaspheme in the name of Christ, if he could, and when he had harried them through Jerusalem, and punished them with all his might in his own country! Then he must seek letters from the high priest that he might go to Damascus to carry out the same measures there! Paul was

indeed alive! He was not only as good as he ought to be, but he was rather better—and he now set out to make other people better. If he could not make men better by his talking to them, he would make them better by scourging and killing them! Great "I," how lofty it stood! How it held up its head! "I was alive," he said. But alas, Paul, you did not understand the law of God that soon would have cut you down and killed you, and killed your, "I," and brained you and left you dead on the spot!

Now in what respect was Paul alive without the law? To answer this we will not speak so much of Paul as of many others who are in the same state. Some are alive without the law of God because *they have never seen the spirituality of it*. Their notion was that, "you shall not commit adultery" meant simply an act of uncleanness. Therefore they felt perfectly innocent. But if they had known that it meant a great deal more—that the law of God condemned them if there had been even an unclean *thought*, and that uncleanness of *heart* was as obnoxious to God as uncleanness of life, then their life would soon have come to an end—their life of pride and security—for they would have found that the law would not give them the shelter, though they thought it did. "You shall not kill." Why, there is no man here, I suppose, but what would say, "I am clear there. I have never killed anybody." But, my dear friend, I can understand your being alive without the law of God, if you do not know as you ought to know that that commandment means that even *anger is murder*—and he who is angry with his brother, has killed him in his heart! What if you have never struck him? Have you ever wanted to? What if it never came to actually knocking him to the ground? Yet if you have spoken bitter words—these show what you would have done and this is set down in God's Book as being a sin—a sin for which He will require you to give an account at the last great day!

Now Paul had never seen this, but once upon a time, and that was through the little window of that commandment, "You shall not covet," Paul saw the light of God and he said to himself, "What? Does this law condemn me for having a covetous *desire*?" "Ah, then," he said, "I am not as secure as I thought I was! I cannot afford to be proud. I cannot afford to judge others. I must judge myself." He lived in that proud, haughty life because he did not understand the law of God.

There are many others who are living in the same self-righteous way—good self-righteous people, wrapping themselves up in the garment of their goodness because they have really been very careless about what the law is. They have not looked into it. Whether there is a law of God or not, has really never been thoroughly and deeply considered by them. They know it as a matter of religious teaching, but nothing more. O sir, how easily ought your conscience to convict you, for when a subject does not even care to know whether a king has a law or not, what a traitor he is! When he says, "It is no business of mine to know the king's will. I do not care what the king's will is"—why, if he has committed no overt

offense, that of itself is an offense! He stands out as one convicted of being a traitor and guilty of sedition and treason against his king!

There are others who say in their heart, if they won't put it into words, for most fools, according to David, are not such fools as to speak out loud—"The fool has said *in his heart*," says David—they say *in their heart*, "How does God know, and is there knowledge with the Most High? What if we do break His law—does He care about it?" And then they cap it all by saying, "Is He not very merciful? He won't be severe with us poor creatures. What if we have offended? We will whisper a prayer or two when we are dying—and all will be blotted out." You think that God is such an one as yourself! Because you can trifle with sin, you imagine Jehovah can do so! Oh, if you did but know His law, did but understand how inflexible it is and how true is His declaration that He will by no means spare the guilty, which means He will by no means spare *you*, you would soon lay aside this easy-going life of yours and no longer could you live as you now live! You would be slain by the word of the Lord!

In addition to these, I have no doubt that there are many professors of religion who are living without the law of God. I mean that they are living reputable, respectable Christian lives and they, themselves, believe they are converted, but they are alive without the law. That is, there is mingled with their faith in Christ some sort of trust in themselves. They have never seen that the law puts an end to all human power, strength and merit as any assistance to Christ in the matter of salvation. I have sometimes wished that some of our younger brothers and sisters who do not seem to have felt very deeply in their hearts the work of Christ, might for once feel what it is for the commandment to come into their souls and lay them prostrate, for if it ever did, then their new life which they would receive from Christ would be of a deeper and, I trust, of a more effective power on their hearts and lives, and upon their general walk towards Christ and His Church.

You see then, dear friends, there is such a thing as being alive without the law of God. A man may be in such a state as to think it is all right because he does not know the law—and let me say there is no more foolish and dangerous condition in the world than this! A man who has never cared about the law of God and does not know it and, therefore, concludes that he is righteous, is like a person who thinks he is rich, or tries to think he is—and keeps up a large house and his carriage with a large expenditure. Can he afford it? How about his books? Well, he has had some few difficulties but he met one debt by a loan, and when that loan comes due he will meet that with another. He says he is all right—he believes he is all right—he thinks he is all right! Does he ever look at his books? Oh, no! He says they are very dry reading. He does not need any stock taking—he does not want anybody to look into his affairs. Now without any kind of guesswork, every business man knows how that will end! He knows that it means bankruptcy—ruin. So it does! With a man who says, "All right, I do not care to enquire about my soul-affairs. I dare

say it is as I hope it is—I think it is, and I am not going to concern myself about it." It will end in everlasting bankruptcy, my dear hearer—sure to, sure to—it cannot be anything else! You are like a ship at sea that ought to have been long ago given up to the ship breaker. There she is out at sea. The captain does not care to enquire whether the timbers are sound, or whether they are well caulked, or whether the pumps will work well or not. She has seemed to go very well in fair weather and he does not care to know anything else. There is none of us who would like to go to sea in a vessel like that! We would want to know whether the vessel would stand the strain of a storm, whether she was seaworthy and, if she were not so, we would rather stay on shore! Many of you are in rotten vessels tonight—ships that are worm-eaten through and through, and you will find them go to pieces when once a storm comes up! God have mercy upon you and deliver you from these false hopes, and this living without His law! And may the law of God come on board your vessel even now, and begin to test the timbers, and if you should stand by and discover that the thing is only fit to be broken up, why, then I trust you will get on board a better vessel, a vessel that shall stand all storms, of whom Christ is the Captain—a vessel which, indeed, is Christ, Himself. Now we must pass on to the second point.

II. THE REVIVAL OF SIN.

Paul says, "The commandment came, and sin revived." It seemed to him before as if it were quite dead. He did not believe he had any great sin in him. Other people might have, but Saul of Tarsus was so good there could not be much sin in him. "But when the commandment came, sin revived." What does it mean by the commandment coming? It means this, that he understood its meaning. He never saw it before—that it had respect to his thoughts, his wishes and desires. Now that he saw this, sin revived in him! It means, next, that he saw that the law was not a thing to be trifled with, that the law of God was not meant to be written and there to lie like a dead letter, but that God had sworn by Himself that He would carry out that law and would not spare those who dared to break it! That He would execute judgment upon all those who defy Him to His face and break His commandments. When Saul saw that, the commandment had come, and sin revived. But best of all, this Saul of Tarsus felt, as I know many of you have, the power of the law working on the soul. There is no sharper instrument with which to lance the soul than the broken law of God! There is no harrow that can tear the soul like that harrow of the ten commandments. There is no arrow that can go forth and slay the soul's self-satisfaction as God's commandments do when we see that they are holy, just, good—and that we have broken every one of them—broken them a thousand times, and that every breach of the law is calling out for vengeance against us! It is a dreadful thing, but a necessary thing, that we should all of us have the Commandments thus coming home to us. Paul thought they were

buried. But as soon as the commandments came, sin revived. He means by that that he now saw that sins that had laid buried without monuments suddenly burst their cerements and rose up like the dead on the day of resurrection. "There they are," he seemed to say—"the commandments have come, and my sins, like a great cloud, have revived—they live, and every one points at and accuses me as the law of God condemns me."

Then sin revived in another sense, for Paul said to himself, "How could God have given me such a law? How can He be so stern and strict? I do not love this law—neither do I love God." He thought he did until then. When he understood the law, he found that he did not either love God or the law—and the rebellion which had always been in his spirit now began to show itself—and He began to feel in his heart a hatred against the law of God that condemned him, and against the God whom he had offended. Sin revived! The very display of the law produced it and yet though it was thus manifested, it had always been there! Saul did not know it, but sin had always been there—all that the law did was to come with a candle and just show him what he never thought was there! A person goes down into a cellar that has been shut up for a long time and there are lots of foul creatures on the floor and spiders on the walls. He goes down without a candle, and he does not see them. But another time he takes the candle—and how soon he wishes to get out of the place! Now the candle shows him the spiders and the other loathsome things, but it does not make them, it only shows what existed before. The law of God does that. Perhaps those loathsome creatures were all quiet while there was darkness, but when the candle came, there they scurried to and fro to escape its light! All the things which otherwise had slept. And when the law comes, it just does that—it lets out all the loathsomeness of our sinful nature which had been dammed up before—it lets it go forth and we find out that it was there, already, and always there, and then, like the writer of this memorable Epistle, we say, "Sin revived and I died."

"A strange experience!" you will tell me, but I assure you it is only the usual experience of the children of God! It is the way in which we have been brought to Christ! The law of God has come to us, and sin has revived in us, and we have died. Now the third point is to show what Paul means by saying he "died."

III. THE MEANING OF DEATH THROUGH THE LAW.

What died in Paul was that which ought never to have lived. It was that great, "I," in Paul—"sin revived, and I died"—that, "I," that used to say, "I thank You that I am not as other men"—that, "I," that folded its arms in satisfied security—that, "I" that bent its knee in prayer, but never bowed down the heart in penitence—that, "I," died! The law of God killed it. It could not live in such light as that. It was a creature only fit for darkness—and when the law came, this great, "I," died!

And I think it means this. First, he died in this respect—*he saw he was condemned to die*. He heard pronounced upon himself the sentence

of condemnation! He had just thought so—he would have felt insulted if anybody had told him so, but now he seemed to see the great Judge of all summoning him before Him and accusing him of having broken His commands and saying, "Depart you cursed one, for you have broken My law." He died, then, in the sense that he felt condemnation pronounced upon him. A dreadful feeling, that!

Then next, *all his hopes from his past life died*. He used to look back with great comfort upon his fasting, his alms-giving and temple attendance—but now he felt, "What an awful hypocrite I have been all along, for I have only been there with my body—my *heart* never went there—I was keeping God's laws, I thought, but I never loved that law at all. I find now I hated it. Or, if I had understood what it was, I would have hated it. I only loved the shell of it. I did not know its kernel. I merely loved its outward breath because I hoped to gain by it, but the law, itself, I did not love, nor did I love God, either." So all the past withered up, and the Paul—the Saul—the, "I," that had been so great as to his past, died.

And then again, *all his hopes as to the future died*. Before, when he had fallen into any outward sin, he had always said to himself, "Never mind, we will do better next time. We shall mend this matter yet—we will keep the law in future—we will make the phylacteries wider and the garments broader. But now he saw that—

"Could his tears forever flow,
Could his zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone."

He had broken the law of God and all attempts to keep it in the future could not mend the past breaches and transgressions! And he knew that as he had broken it in the past, he would be sure to break it in the future—and in that respect he died.

And then again, all his powers seemed to die. Formerly he had said, "I can keep the law," but now, when he saw the blaze of this mysterious holiness, when he perceived that every thought, word and wish would condemn him, he sat at the foot of Sinai and trembled and entreated that those words might not be spoken to him anymore. He felt the law was too great, too terrible for him to ever hope to keep it! And he fell at the feet of the law as one that was dead. So died all his hopes. Now he felt that he was condemned forever. The last ray of hope was gone. And mark, there is no despair that is more deep than the despair of one who was once quite secure, and even boastful! Many have I seen who were once self-righteous—and I have pitied them from my heart. When God has turned His blazing light of truth on all their life, righteousness has gone! Oh, they have not known what to do—they have wished they had never been born! Like John Bunyan, they have wished they had been frogs or toads sooner than be men! They had felt they could have cursed the day of their birth, now that all hope was gone once and for all. And when they have told me of this, all I could do was to smile in their faces and say,

"Thank God! I am very glad of it," and then they have thought me cruel, but I have said, "It must be so, for now you will be saved." God must clear away all your rubbish before He can give you His grace!

So with this I shall conclude. If there are any of you tonight passing through what I have described—if you are as one dead tonight because your former hopes have been killed by the law of God, I am so glad of it! But let me tell you, do not think your case an unusual one. Do not go home and say, "I have been killed." Thousands of God's servants have been the same. Ah, when I had made the discovery that I had broken God's law so often, and that I must perish and be cast into hell on account of my sins, I remember what sin worked in me and what loathing of myself I felt—and that by the space of months and years together—because I did not hear the gospel fully preached, for, had I, I would have had peace much sooner! Now you, dear friends, will be helped tonight when I tell you it is nothing unusual. It is a valley of the shadow of death, but most pilgrims go through it, and all go through it more or less—and again, I say I am glad of it! When the Countess of Huntingdon said to Whitfield, "What makes you look so sad, Mr. Whitfield?" he replied, "Oh, I may well look sad, for I am lost." "Oh," she said, "Mr. Whitfield, I am so glad, for Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost." I could preach all night if I had a congregation that felt themselves quite lost—because then they would be sure to be saved! It would be no use preaching otherwise. When the law once preaches, it makes you weep and feel you are lost. And then, when you are like the soil that is well plowed ready for the seed to be scattered in the furrows, the precious seed of God will be scattered, and, perhaps, before long, up springs the harvest—you are blessed and God is glorified!

Let me say to any who have been killed by the law, "It was necessary that you should be. You may now understand where salvation lies. You have no merits of your own—you do not need any. Christ has all the merits that you need to take you to heaven." But can you get Christ's merit? Yes, get it tonight! If you will, with your heart, believe on the Lord Jesus, and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved. If you will trust Him to save you, He will save you and His merit shall be yours! As long as you have any good in yourself, I know you will have nothing from Christ. But when all your hope from your own merit is laid at the foot of the law, then what an opportunity there is for the gospel to come in! It comes, and it says this, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It points you to Jesus crucified, who carried your sins, who was punished instead of you—shows you how God's justice has been satisfied in Christ. Believe and live! Take the mercy God freely offers you. Take it without money and without price. Take it without fitness or preparation. Take it now! Simply take it as God presents it to you. Just as you are without having any plea but the one plea that Jesus died—*just as you are*—take Jesus, and put yourself on Him. What can you do otherwise, you dead one? What can you do

otherwise, you filthy one? You are condemned, you are guilty—God has pronounced your sentence! Touch the silver scepter freely held out to you now. You cannot be saved by works. Let others try it if they will—you cannot, you know you cannot! Oh, then, be saved by grace! God freely offers it by His dear Son in the preached gospel. He will not deny it to any one of you, however filthy you may have been, or however vile you may feel yourself to be! You have but to come, but to trust, but to believe in Jesus, but to rely upon Him—to throw yourself upon Him, to lean on Him, to hang on Him, to depend on Him—and you will be saved!

Oh, that the Lord may grant you grace to do so! And I know He will! If you have been slain by the law, He will make you alive by the gospel—for have you never read the words, "I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal"? Oh, the mercy of that, "I heal"! He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds! He will have regard to the prayer of the destitute. He will not despise their prayers. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks about me"—is not that you again? "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Ah, soul, what good news for you, that if the law has killed you, you did not need the law—you have got Christ, who is better! You can still have salvation, though you forfeited it by your own works. You can have that from mercy which you cannot have from justice! You may have that from Jesus which you might never have from Moses. I want to preach but a short sermon. Sometimes they are all the better remembered. God bless you, and write His truth on your hearts! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 110; ROMANS 2:25-29; 3.

PSALM 110.

Verses 1, 2. *The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion: rule You in the midst of Your enemies.* You do not need a comment upon this Psalm when you remember how our Lord applied it to Himself. It is David speaking concerning the Son of David, who is also David's Lord and our King, who at this hour is sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, the Lord of all, waiting until His monarchy shall be extended visibly over all creation!

3. *Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth.* Christ, like the rising sun, shall not come alone in His brightness, but, as with the sun we see an innumerable company of sparkling dewdrops, so shall the forces of Christ be as numerous as the drops of the morning dew which spring from the womb of the morning! God's infinite grace shall lead forth willing troops when Christ shall come!

4. *The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.* That is, a priestly king, a kingly priest—priest and king united in one person!

5. *The Lord at Your right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.* No power shall stand against our coming Lord! When He once comes to the battle, the victory shall be sure!

6, 7. *He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head.* Like a stern warrior that seeks not luxury, like Gideon's men that lapped, He shall drink of the brook as He marches on to the conflict. And because He scorns self-indulgence and human luxury, therefore shall He be exalted King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

ROMANS 2:25-29.

Verse 25. *For circumcision verily profits, if you keep the law: but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision.* Paul is dealing with the Jew, who was apt to think that he must have a preference beyond the Gentiles on account of his circumcision.

26-29. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keeps the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfills the law, judge you, who by the letter and circumcision transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter: whose praise is not of men, but of God.* If this principle were fully recognized everywhere, it would certainly put an end to all that notion of sacramentarianism which some men hold! It is not the outward, not the external, not the form and ceremony—it is the inward work of the Holy Spirit—it is holiness and change of heart. Let none of us ever fall into the gross error of those who imagine that there is attached to certain ceremonies a certain degree of divine grace. It is not so. He is not a Christian who is one outwardly—he is a Christian who is one inwardly.

ROMANS 3.

Verses 1, 2. *What advantage then has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* The Jews of old had a great advantage, for they had the truth of God when other men had not. The voice of God spoke to them clearly, when only here and there, to a few chosen ones beside, was the voice of God delivered at all.

3. *For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* It was a privilege to belong to the Jewish people, even though some, and many through their unbelief, did not avail themselves of the privilege.

4-7. *God forbid! Yes, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in Your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged. But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance? (I speak as a man). God forbid! For then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto His glory: why am I yet also judged as a sinner?* Here is another objection—if it is so that, somehow or other, the sin of man is overruled to magnify the grace of God, why am I, then, blameworthy? But the Apostle stamps this out as an evil suggestion and a very moral disease.

8-11. *And not rather (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say). Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just. What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.* The whole human race has sinned against the Most High and has become alienated in mind from the great and good Creator!

12. *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that does good, no not one.* What can be more expressive? What can be more plain than this? The whole human race estranged from God and given up to sin!

13-18. *Their throat is an open sepulcher. With their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.* Here is a description of all men. If some say, "Well, my feet were never swift to shed blood," you probably have not been put into circumstances which would evoke that cruel passion! So we thought till lately—we thought we were all so civilized that we were to have no more war. Believe me, let the trumpet be sounded and cannon be heard, and there is a devil in our humanity which would not soon be awakened, and we, too, might become as fierce as any other nation! It is still true of men.

19, 20. *Now we know that whatever things the Law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* It is like a mirror that shows us our blots, but it does not wash them away. The law of God is the standard which shows us how short we are of God's glory, but it does not make up our shortcomings. It is a killing, not a saving thing! By the law, no man ever was, or ever will be saved! By the law, we guilty ones are condemned!

21, 22. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the*

righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference—No difference, first of all, in the sin. We are all guilty and all condemned! And no difference in the way of salvation—whoever believes in Jesus is justified by faith in Jesus—there is no difference.

23-26. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.* "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." It is shut out. If men are saved not at all by works, but altogether by the free grace of God through the merits of Christ, then boasting has the gate shut in its face! But by what law is boasting shut out?

27. *Where is boasting then?* "By works?" No, but by the law of faith.

27. *It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.* If we were to say God justified man on the ground of the law of God without their perfectly keeping it, we would make void the law of God! But when we teach that God justifies men by His free grace and mercy on account of Christ's having kept the law and having fulfilled all its demands, we do not make void the law—we establish it!

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HOLY SONG FROM HAPPY SAINTS
NO. 3476

A SERMON
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"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved."
Isaiah 5:1.

IT was a prophet who wrote this, a prophet inspired of God. An ordinary believer might suffice to sing, but he counts it no stoop for a prophet, and no waste of his important time, to occupy himself with song. There is no engagement under heaven that is more exalting than praising God—and however great may be the work which is committed to the charge of any of us, we shall always do well if we pause awhile to spend a time in sacred praise. I would not wish to prefer one spiritual exercise before another, else I think I would endorse the saying of an old divine who said that a line of praise was better than even a leaf of prayer—that praise was the highest, noblest, best, most satisfying and most healthful occupation in which a Christian could be found! If these may be regarded as the words of the Church, the Church of old did well to turn all her thoughts in the direction of praising her God. Though the winning of souls is a great thing, though the edifying of believers is an important matter, though the reclamation of backsliders calls for earnest attention, yet never, never, never may we cease from praising and magnifying the name of the well-beloved! This is to be our occupation in heaven—let us begin the music here and make a heaven of the Church! The words of the text are, "Now will I sing," and that seems to give us a starting word.

I. THE STRAINS OF THE SOUL'S SONG.

"*Now* will I sing." Does not that imply that there were times when he who spoke these words could not sing? "*Now*," he said, "will I sing to my well-beloved." There were times, then, when his voice, his heart and his circumstances were not in such order that he could praise God. My brothers and sisters, a little while ago we could not sing to our well-beloved, for we did not love Him—we did not know Him—we were dead in trespasses and sins! Perhaps we joined in sacred song, but we mocked the Lord. We stood up with His people and we uttered the same sounds as they did, but our hearts were far from Him. Let us blush for those mock Psalms! Let us shed many a tear of repentance that we could so insincerely have come before the Lord Most High! After that, we were led

to feel our state by nature and our guilt lay heavy upon us. We could not sing to our well-beloved then. Our music was set to the deep bass and in the minor key. We could only bring forth sighs and groans. Well do I remember when my nights were spent in grief and my days in bitterness. It was a perpetual prayer, a confession of sin and a bemoaning of myself which occupied all my time. I could not sing, then, and if any of you are in that condition, tonight, I know you cannot sing just now. What a mercy you can pray! Bring forth the fruit which is seasonable and in your case the most seasonable fruit will be a humble acknowledgment of your sin and an earnest seeking for mercy through Christ Jesus. Attend to that, and by-and-by, you, too, shall sing to your well-beloved a song!

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, it is now some years ago since we believed in Christ, but since then there have been times when we could not sing. Alas, for us there was a time when we watched not our steps, but went astray—when the flatterer led us from the strait road that leads to heaven and brought us into sin! And then the chastisements of God came upon us—our heart was broken until we cried out in anguish, as David did in the 51st Psalm. Then if we did sing, we could only bring out penitential odes, but no songs. We laid aside all parts of the book of Psalms that had to do with Hallelujah, and we could only groan forth the notes of repentance. There were no songs for us, then, till at last Emmanuel smiled upon us once more and we were reconciled again, brought back from our wanderings and restored to a sense of the divine favor! Besides that, we have had—occasionally had to sorrow through the loss of the light of God's countenance. It is not always summer weather with the best of us. Though for the most part—

"We can read our title clear
To mansions in the skies,"

yet we have our fasting time when the bridegroom is not with us. Then do we fast. He does not intend that this world should be so much like heaven that we should be willing to stay in it—He, therefore, sometimes passes a cloud before the sun, that we in darkness may cry out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come, even to His seat." Even the means of grace at such times will bring us no comfort. We may go to the throne of mercy in private prayer, but we shall perceive but little light even there! If the Lord withdraws Himself, there is no merry-making in the soul, but sadness, darkness and gloom that covers all. Then we hang our harps upon the willows and if any require of us a song, we tell them we are in a strange land, and the king has gone—how can we sing? Our heart is heavy and our sorrows are multiplied!

Once more, we cannot very well sing the praises of our well-beloved when the Church of God is under a cloud. I trust we are such true patriots, such real citizens of the New Jerusalem, that when Christ's kingdom does not advance, our hearts are full of anguish. My brothers and sisters, if you happen to be members of a church divided against

itself, where the ministry appears to be without power, where there are no additions, no conversions, no spiritual life—then, indeed, will you feel that whatever the state of your own heart, you must sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church of God. "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning." This is the view of every true citizen of Zion—and however our own hearts may flourish, and our souls be like a well-watered garden—yet if we see the place of worship neglected, the Lord's house dishonored, the Church diminished and brought low, the gospel held in contempt, infidelity rampant, superstition stalking through the land, the old doctrines denied and the cross of Christ made to be of none effect—then, again, we feel we cannot sing—our hearts are not in tune, our fingers forget the accustomed strings, and we cannot, then, sing a song to our well-beloved!

With these exceptions, however, I turn to a very different strain, and say that *the whole life of the Christian ought to be describable by the text*, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." From the first moment in which sin is pardoned, to the last moment in which we are here on earth, it should always be our delight to sing to our well-beloved a song. "How can we do that?" you ask. Well, we can do it in three or four ways. There is such a thing as *thanks-feeling—feeling thankful*—and this ought to be the general, universal spirit of the Christian. Suppose, my dear brother, you are not rich—be thankful that you have enough to eat and to drink, and wherewithal you may be clothed. Suppose, even, that you had not a hope of heaven, I might say to a man, "Be thankful that you are not in hell." But to you, Christian, I would add, "Be thankful that you never will be there and that, if just now your present joys do not overflow, yet there remains a rest for the people of God"—let that console you! Is there ever a day in the year, or ever a moment in the day, in which the Christian ought not to be grateful? Our answer is not slow to give—there is never such a day, there is never such a moment! Always receiving blessings untold and incalculably precious, let us always be magnifying the hand that gives them. Always, beloved; as we have been before the foundations of the world with our names engraved on the Savior's hands, always redeemed by the precious blood, always preserved by the power of God which dwells in the Mediator, always secure of the heritage which is given to us in covenant by oath, by the blood of Christ—let us always be grateful and, if not always singing with our lips, let us always be singing with our hearts!

Then, brothers and sisters, we ought to always be *thanks-living*. I think that is a better thing than thanksgiving—thanks-living. How is this to be done? By a general cheerfulness of manner, by an obedience to the command of Him by whose mercy we live, by a perpetual, constant, delighting ourselves in the Lord and submission of our desires to His mind. Oh, I wish that our whole life might be a Psalm—that every day

might be a stanza of a mighty poem! That so from the day of our spiritual birth until we enter heaven we might be pouring forth sacred minstrelsy in every thought, word and action of our lives. Let us give Him thankfulness and thanks-living.

But then let us add *thanks-speaking* with the tongue. We don't sing enough, my brothers and sisters! How often do I stir you up about the matter of prayer, but perhaps I might be just as earnest about the matter of praise! Do we sing as much as the birds do? Yet what have birds to sing about, compared with us? Do you think we sing as much as the angels do? Yet they were never redeemed by the blood of Christ! Birds of the air, shall you excel me? Angels of heaven, shall you exceed me? You have done so, but I intend to emulate you henceforth and, day by day, and night by night, pour forth my soul in sacred song!

We may sometimes thank God not only by feeling thankfulness and living thankfulness, and speaking our thanks, but by that silent blessing of Him which consists in patient suffering and accepting the evil as well as the good from Jehovah's hand. That is often better thanksgiving than the noblest Psalm that the tongue could utter. To bow down before Him and say, "Not my will, but Yours be done" is to render Him a homage equal to the hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. To feel not only resigned, but acquiescent—willing to be anything or nothing according as the Lord would have it—this is in truth to sing to our well-beloved a song!

Now having put this before you, that there are some times when we cannot sing, but that, as a rule, our life should be praise, let me come again to the text by saying that sometimes, on choice occasions appointed by providence and grace, our soul will be compelled to say, "*Now, now* if never before, *now* beyond all other occasions, I will sing to my well-beloved a song." I only hope that some—that all Christians here—will feel that tonight is one of those occasions! And as you sit here in the presence of this table, upon which will soon appear the emblems of your Savior's passion, I trust you will be saying, "*Now tonight* I feel I must sing to my well-beloved a song, for if ever I loved Him, I love Him tonight." Let us ponder now—

II. SOME OF THE OCCASIONS IN WHICH WE MUST SING TO HIS NAME.

The first is when *our soul first perceives the infinite love of Jesus to us,* when we receive the pardon of sin, when we enter into the marriage relationship with Christ as our bridegroom and our Lord. The song becomes the wedding feast. How could it be a marriage without joyfulness? Oh, do you remember, even years ago, do you not remember now that day when you first looked to Him and were lightened, and when your soul clasped His hands, and you and He were one? Other days I have forgotten, but that day I can never forget! Other days have mingled

with their fellows, and, like coins which have been in circulation, the image and superscription have departed from them. That day when first I saw the Savior is as fresh and distinct in all its outlines as though it were but yesterday coined in the mint of time! How can I forget it—that first moment when Jesus told me I was His and my beloved was mine? Were any of you saved last week? Did any of you find Jesus Christ at any of the meetings last week? Have you found Him this morning? Did a blessing come to you this afternoon? Then hallow the occasion, pour out your soul before the Most High! Now, if never before, let your well-beloved have your choicest music! "Awake, my glory! Awake, psaltery and harp! I myself will awake right early. I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is taken away and You comfort me." Other occasions, however, come after our first day, for with Christ it is not all joy the first few weeks. No, blessed be His name! Sometimes, however, we have our high days and holidays, when the King entertains us at a feast. It is often so with my soul *at this table*. Coming to the Communion supper every Lord's day, I don't find it grows stale and flat with me. On the contrary, I think every time I come, I love better than I did before, to commemorate my Lord's sufferings in the breaking of bread! And usually when we do come round the table, we, who know what it means, feel, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." 'Twas well that after supper they sang a hymn. We want some such expression for the sacred joy that rises in our soul at this feast. But not only when the emblems are before us, but when you hear a sermon that feeds your soul—when you read a chapter and the promises are very precious—when you are in private prayer, and are able to get very near to Jesus, I know your hearts then say, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song. He has visited me and I will praise Him. He has made my soul like the chariots of Amminadib, and where shall my strength and rapture be spent but at His dear feet, adoring and magnifying His ever blessed name?" Oh, I wish we often had broken through order and decorum, even, to give to our Lord a song! He well deserves it. Let not cold ingratitude freeze our praises on our lips.

We ought to praise our Lord Jesus Christ and sing to our well-beloved a song, particularly when we have had a *remarkable deliverance*. "You shall compass me about," says David, "with songs of deliverance." Were you raised from a bed of sickness? Have you passed through a great pecuniary difficulty? Through God's help, has your character been cleared from slander? Have you been helped in some enterprise and prospered in the world? Have you seen a child restored from sickness, or a beloved wife once more given back to you from the gates of the grave? Have you just experienced the light of Christ's countenance in your own soul? Has a snare been broken? Has a temptation been removed? Are you in a joyous frame of mind? "Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms." Oh, give your well-beloved a song, now that the sun shines and the flowers

bloom! When the year begins to turn and fair weather comes, the birds seem to feel it and they renew their music. Do so, oh, believer! When the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone, fill the earth with your songs of gratitude. But remember, O believer, that you should sing your well-beloved a song chiefly when it is not so with you, *when sorrows befall*. He gives songs *in the night*. Perhaps there is no music so sweet as that which comes from the lips and heart of a tried believer. Then it is real. When Job blessed God on the dunghill, even the devil, himself, could not insinuate that Job was a hypocrite! When Job prospered, then the devil said, "Does Job serve God for naught?" But when he lost his all and yet said, "Blessed is the name of the Lord," then the good man shone like a star when the clouds are gone! Oh, let us be sure to praise God when things go ill with us! Make certain that you sing then! A holy man, walking one night with a companion, listened to the nightingale and he said, "Brother, that bird in the darkness is praising her Maker. Sing, I pray you, and let your Lord have a song in the night." But the other replied, "My voice is hoarse and little used to sing." "Then," said the other, "I will sing." And he sang, and the bird seemed to hear him and to sing louder, still, and he sang on, and other birds joined, and the night seemed sweet with song. But by-and-by the good man said, "My voice fails me, but this bird's throat holds out longer than mine. Would God," said he, "I could even fly away where I could sing on forever and forever."

Oh, it is blessed when we can praise God when the sun is gone down, when darkness lowers and trials multiply. Then let us say, "I will sing to my well-beloved a song." I will tell you exactly what I mean by that. One of you has just passed through a very terrible trouble and you are almost brokenhearted—you are inclined to say, "I will ask the prayers of the Church that I may be sustained." It is quite right, my dear brother, to do that, but suppose you could be a little stronger and say, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song"? Oh, it would be grand work! It would glorify God! It would strengthen you! "Yes, the dear child is dead—I cannot bring him back, again, but the Lord has done it and He must do right. I will give Him a song, even now." "Yes, the property has gone and I shall be brought from wealth to poverty, but now, instead of fretfulness, I will give to my well-beloved extra music from my heart. He shall be praised by me now. Though He slay me, yet will I praise Him." This is the part of a Christian—God help us to always act it!

Beloved friends, we may well sing to our beloved a song when it shall be near *the time of our departure*. It draws near, and as it draws near we must not dread it, but rather thank God for it. The swan is said to sing her dying song—a myth, I doubt not, but the Christian is God's swan, and he sings sweetest at the last. Like old Simeon, he becomes a poet at the last and pours out his soul before God! And I would we each desired, if we are spared to old age, to let our last days be perfumed with

thanksgiving, and to bless and magnify the Lord, while yet we linger where mortal ears may hear the strain! Break, O fetters, and divide, you clouds! Be rolled up, O veil that hides the place of mystery from the world. Let our spirits pass into eternity singing! What a song to our well-beloved will we pour out from amidst ten thousand times ten thousand choristers! We will take our part—every note for Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood! Each note undefiled with sin. Each note undistracted and undivided by worldly thoughts. Each note full of perfection and acceptable to Him to whom it shall be presented! O long-expected day, begin! Our hearts are ready to cry out, "Open, you two-leaved gates, and let my spirit pass through, that I may give to my well-beloved a song."

Now I just linger here a minute to put it all round to every Christian here. Brother, haven't you a song for the well-beloved? Sister, haven't you a song for the well-beloved? Aged friend, will you not give Him a note? Young brother full of vigor, haven't you a verse full of praise for Him? Oh, if we might all come to the Communion table in the spirit of praise! Perhaps some can dance before the ark like David. Others, perhaps, are like Ready-to-halt, on their crutches, but even he laid them down, according to John Bunyan, once upon a time when he heard the sweet music of praise! Let us bless the name of the Lord! The day has passed and been full of mercy, and eventide has come, and as the sun goes down let us magnify Him whose mercy lasts to us through the night and will come again upon us in the morning, and will be with us till nights and days shall no more change the scene. Lift up your hearts, my brothers and sisters! Let every one of you lift up your hands unto the name of the Most High and magnify Him that lives forever! "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness—for His wonderful works to the children of men!" Now I have just a few observations to make about—

III. THE QUALITY OF THE SONG.

I will suppose that every Christian here singing has found that he has got one of the Lord's songs to sing. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord's music has one thing about it—that it is *always new*. How very frequently we find in the New Testament that saints and angels sing "a *new* song." Very different from the songs we used to sing—very different from the songs the world still delights in—ours is heart-music, soul-music. Ours is real joy—no fiction—no mere crackling of thorns under a pot. Solid joys and lasting pleasures make up the new song of the Christian! New mercies make the song always new. There is a freshness in it of which we never weary. Some of you have heard the gospel now for 50 years—has it gotten flat to you? The name of Jesus Christ was known to you as the most precious of all sounds 50 or 60 years ago—has it become stale now? Those of us who have known and loved Him 20 years can only say, "The more we

know Him, the more sweet He is. And the more we enjoy His gospel, the more resolved we are to keep to the old-fashioned gospel as long as we live." We could, indeed, sing a new song, though we have sung the same praises these 20 years. All the saints' praises have this about them—that they are all harmonious. I do not say that their *voices* are. Here and there, there is a brother who sings very earnestly through his nose and very often puts out the rest that are round about him! But it does not matter about the sound of the voice to the ear of man—it is the sound of the *heart* to the ear of God! If you were in a forest and there were 50 sorts of birds, and they were all singing at once, you would not notice any discord. The little songsters seem to pitch their songs in keys very different from each other, but yet, somehow or other, all are in harmony. Now the saints, when they pray—it is very strange—they all pray in harmony. So when they praise God. I have frequently attended prayer-meetings where there were brothers and sisters of all sorts of Christian denominations—and I would have defied the angel Gabriel to have told what they were when they were on their knees! So is it with praise. I may say, "The saints in praise appear as one"—

"In word, and deed, and mind,
While with the Father and the Son,
Sweet fellowship they find."

Though our words are broken and our notes fall short of melody, yet if our hearts are right, our words are acceptable and our music is harmony in the ears of the Most High. Beloved, be it noticed about *the saints' music that it always seems very poor to them*. They feel that they must break out. There are some of David's Psalms in which in the Hebrew the words are very much disconnected and broken, as though the poet had strained himself beyond the power of language. And how constantly do you find him calling upon others to help him praise God—not only to other saints, but as if he felt there were not enough saints—he calls on all creatures that have breath to praise God! How frequently do you find holy men invoking the dwellers above the skies, and earth, and air, and sea to help them lift high the praise of God and, as if they were not content with all animated beings, you will hear them bidding the trees of the forests break out and clap their hands, while they invite the sea to roar and the fullness thereof to magnify the Most High! Devout minds feel as though the whole creation were like a great organ with ten thousand times ten thousand pipes, and we little men, who have God within us, come and put our little hands to the keys and make the whole universe echo with thunders of praise to the Most High, for man is the world's priest—and the man that is blood-washed makes the whole earth his tabernacle and his temple—and in that temple does everyone speak of God's glory! He lights up the stars like lamps to burn before the throne of the Most High and bids all creatures here below become servants in the temple of the infinite majesty. Oh, brothers and sisters, may God give

us to feel this state of mind, tonight! And though we should think our praises are like to break down, and feel how mean they are compared with the majesty of Jehovah and His boundless love, yet shall we have praised Him acceptably!

I would be very earnest in the next minute or two to stir up my brothers and sisters here to sing to their well-beloved a song, because I am quite sure *the exercise will be most fitting and most beneficial*. I will speak only for myself, but I will say this—if I did not praise and bless Christ, my Lord, I would deserve to have my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth, and I will add—if I did not bless and magnify His name, I would deserve that every stone I tread on in the streets should rise up to curse my ingratitude, for I am a drowned debtor to the mercy of God—overhead and ears—to infinite love and boundless compassion I am a debtor! Are you not the same? Then I charge you by the love of Christ—awake, awake your hearts, now, to magnify His glorious name! It will do you much good, my brothers and sisters. There is, perhaps, no exercise that, on the whole, strengthens us so much as praising God. Sometimes, even when prayer fails, praise will do it. It seems to gird up the loins. It pours a holy anointing oil upon the head and upon the spirit. It gives us a joy of the Lord which is always our strength. Sometimes, if you begin to sing in a dull frame, you can sing yourself up the ladder. Singing will often make the heart rise. The song, though at first it is a drag, will, by-and-by, come to be wings with which to lift the spirit. Oh, sing more, my brothers and sisters, and you will sing still more, for the more you sing, the more you will be able to sing the praises of God! It will glorify God! It will comfort you! It will also prove an attraction to those who are lingering around the churches. The melancholy of some Christians tends to repel seekers, but the holy joy of others tends to attract them! More flies will always be caught with honey than with vinegar—and more souls will be brought to Christ by your cheerfulness than by your moroseness—more by your consecrated joy than by your selfish dolor! God grant us to sing the praises of God with heart and life until we sing them in heaven! And I doubt not that, as a church, we should thus become more useful and more would be led to cast in their lot with us, for they would perceive that God blessed us. If God should make you feel that you must praise Him tonight, the purpose that I desire to fulfill will have been accomplished!

Oh, I wish I could bid you all say, "I will sing to my beloved a song!" But there are some of you who don't love Him, and cannot, therefore, sing to Him. In Exeter Hall, some years ago, at one of our services, I gave out the hymn—

"Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to Your bosom fly."

There was one present who was a total stranger to the gospel, but that touching expression, "Jesus, lover of my soul," touched his heart and he said, "Is Jesus the lover of *my* soul? Then I will love Him, too," and he gave his heart to Jesus and cast in his lot with His people. I would that some here would say the same! Then shall they also sing to their beloved a song. But now their fittest duty will be prayer and penitent trust. God help them to seek and find the Savior—even Jesus Christ the Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116:1-11.

It begins well.

Verse 1. *I love the Lord.* Can you say that? "Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You." "I love the Lord." Love is said to be blind, but not love to God! Love to God can see and it can give a reason for its own existence—and a good substantial reason, too. "I love the Lord."

1. *Because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* A good reason for love will be found in the closet where prayer is answered. If you have ever been in trouble and that divine friend has listened to your feeble cries, you do love Him, and you cannot help loving Him!. You wonder why others do not love Him too.

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* "Because." He harps on that string. It is so sweet a note that he touches it again, "Because He has inclined His ear unto me." He stooped out of heaven. He has laid His ear down to my lips. He has caught my wandering utterances. He has inclined His ear. My sin had pushed His ear away, but He has brought His head back, again, and inclined His ear unto me. "Therefore." You see this was given as a reason, but the Psalmist is so full that what was a reason for love now becomes a reason for something else! The flowers in the garden of believers bloom double! Here is a second flower on this stalk. I love Him because He has inclined His ear unto me. "Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." I speed so well in prayer that I will keep on in that blessed business! God heard me once. He will hear me again—

"Long as we live should Christians pray,
For only while we pray we live."

And as long as we live we shall find out the best way of living—to live from hand to mouth—from God's hand to our mouth—by continual prayer! Now the Psalmist tells about this wonderful instance in which God heard his cry.

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* They were all round me. They made a circle. I could not find a break. They compassed me. Sorrows, deadly sorrows, the very sorrows of death!

3. *And the pains of hell had hold upon me.* They came inside the circle and they gripped me. I was like one that did lie under the lion. He seemed to bite and tear me. "The pains of hell had hold upon me." Did you ever know that? I did. Oh, I can never forget, for the scars are in my mind to this day when the pains of hell had hold upon me! They say that there is no hell. He will never say that who has ever felt the pains of a guilty conscience—the pangs of unforgiven sin to a soul that is made alive by the Spirit of God! "The pains of hell had hold upon me."

3. *I found trouble and sorrow.* An unexpected find. They were hidden away—these double enemies—hidden away beneath my pleasures, beneath my sins, beneath my self-righteousness. "I found trouble and sorrow."

4. *Then I called upon the name of the LORD.* The best hour for prayer is the time of our greatest distress. When you can do nothing else but pray, then is the very best time to pray! When you seem shut up to prayer, what a blessed shutting up it is! "Then I called upon the name of the Lord." And what was his prayer? Very short. Very full—a sort of soldier's prayer.

4. *O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* There, dear hearer, if you need to begin to pray to God, there is a good beginning for you. "Oh, Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul."

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous.* A curious mixture. You will never understand it until you stand at the foot of the cross.

5. *Yes, our God is merciful.* That is the practical outcome of the holy conjunction of grace and righteousness in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. "Our God is merciful." Sometimes when people cannot read well, they spell the words and one, I remember, spelled God in this way—"Yes, our God is merci-ful." That will do—full of mercy—merci-ful.

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* You clever men take heed of this. "The Lord preserves the simple"—the plain, hearty, honest, sincere, sometimes ridiculed for their lack of cunning. God takes care of them.

6. *I was brought low, and He helped me.* What a sweet thing it is when you have studied a general doctrine to be able to give yourself as a particular instance of it. "The Lord preserves the simple." That is a grand truth of God. "But I was brought low, and He helped me." That is an emphatic proof! That is the enjoyable illustration of the grand truth! Can you say that, dear friends? Can you put that in your diary? "I was brought low, and He helped me."

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* Come back. He is a good God. Why wander? Return unto your first husband, for it was better with you than now. He has been bountiful. My soul again lives on His bounty.

8. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* As I read these words, they seem as if they were

written for me. Do they seem, dear hearer, as if they were written for you? Have you undergone this trinity of salvation—your soul from death, your eyes from tears, your feet from falling? If so, then make this resolve tonight.

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living* That is to say, as He has dealt so well with me, I will always deal well with Him. I will not care to look to men—to their hope, to their help, to their judgment, to their censure—but I will set the Lord always before me. He shall be everything to me. Beloved, it is one of the best day's work a man ever does when he turns clean away from everything but God! Oh, when you have given up all reliance upon the creature and throw yourself upon the bare arm of the Creator, now you have got at it! Now you have come to real life. All the rest is mere play-acting, but this is reality, for God alone is, And all else is but a dream!

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.* And uncommonly near the truth he came, even though he was in a hurry in saying it, for if you trust in any men, they must be liars to you. They will fail you either from lack of faithfulness, or else from lack of power. There are pinches where the kindest hand cannot succor. There are times of sorrow when she who is the partner of your bosom cannot find you comfort. Then you will have to go to God, and God alone, and you will never find Him fail you! The brooks of the earth are dry in summer, and frozen in winter. All my fresh springs are in You, my God, and there neither frost nor drought can come. Happy man who has got right away from everything to his God!

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ARAUNAH'S THRESHING FLOOR
NO. 3477

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel."
1 Chronicles 22:1.

IT will be fresh in your recollection that David had committed a great sin against the Lord. In truth, all the people of Israel had, for some years, gone astray from God—and when He determined to punish them, He made the sin of their ruler an occasion for visiting their iniquities upon their head. David had determined to number the people. He carried out his purpose in the teeth of precept, precedent and protest. It would seem that thereby he trespassed on the prerogative of the priests and violated the Levitical law. Thereupon Gad, the prophet, came to him with the choice of three punishments. He selected, as the lesser evil, and preferable to famine or the sword of the foe, the pestilence, saying, "It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man." Jerusalem was, therefore, for three days, ravaged by a terrible plague. The strong men fell down in the streets and the women died at the mill. The little children perished from the breast and the aged were smitten down with a stroke. For three days the fatal disease had proceeded with its ravages, when suddenly the angel of the Lord, who had caused this slaughter, appeared before David. He beheld the messenger of judgment standing in bodily form on the threshing floor of a man galled Araunah. David was summoned by God to attend upon this angel—and when he approached, he saw him with the sword drawn in his hand—as though he were about to smite even till the going down of the sun! David, moved by the Spirit of God, slays a bullock, piles up an altar, kindles a fire and, as the smoke of the bullock ascends to heaven, the angel who was visible before their eyes, to the joy of every one of them, thrust back the sword into its scabbard, saying, "It is enough."

Now, David seemed to have been moved by an inward impulse to consider that this spot, though nothing but a piece of ground beaten hard for the threshing of corn by the feet of bulls, must be, henceforth, a sacred place—and he said, "This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel." I scarcely need remind you of a coincidence which may probably have been known to David, that on this very spot Abraham had, many generations before, drawn the knife to

slay his son, Isaac. The mountain was thus doubly typical of that sacrifice of Christ which marks the place where God founds His temple and where all sacrifice rendered by the saints of God to their God must be offered. At first the Lord only showed the fact that He would give His Son. Yon hoary patriarch, with his only-begotten, dearly-beloved child of promise all bound and lying on the wood, unsheathing the knife to slay him, was a graphic picture of the Eternal Father who spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. Abraham taught the fact of the sacrifice, while to David the reason of that sacrifice of Christ was explained. He was sacrificed to stop the plague—the plague of sin, the punishment of our iniquities! Just as the bullock at Araunah's threshing floor, when hewn in pieces and laid smoking upon the altar, stopped the pestilence, so Christ, bleeding upon Calvary, the Lamb of God's Passover, the sacred First-Born of Jehovah's choice and dedication, makes atonement, and the plague is stopped. David then selected this spot as henceforward the place of the Temple, and the spot where the one altar should stand. To me this looks very significant. I hope, in a few words, to make you think it interesting and instructive. First, I shall try to explain *the occurrence, itself, spiritually*, and then to explain *the consecration of the floor mystically*.

I. THE OCCURRENCE, ITSELF, AND THE VARIED SYMBOLS IT UNFOLDS.

David sins and an angel smites—David offers sacrifice and the angel stops! Four lessons are suggested. First, *there is such a thing as sin*. Men fight hard to try and prove that there is not. In vain they strive, for as long as the inspired book is extant, and so long as there is one man on the face of the earth with a clear conscience, healthy and undrugged, to bear witness with that book, sin will be discovered to be exceeding sinful! A breach of the divine law, though it is committed by a man after God's heart, is not overlooked or counted venial. Sin cannot be winked at by the Most High! Though it receives the sanction of the very best of men, it has as much virus as when committed by the most debased. The sin of ignorance is as disastrous as the sin of willfulness. The wrong act performed with a right motive would still be deadly. Sin is exceedingly sinful. When I see David and the elders of Israel with sackcloth on their loins and ashes on their heads, bowing before this angel, I discern that there is a something in sin which ought to make us hide our heads and weep, and wail, and humble ourselves before the Most High! Let us wake up to a sense of the dire reality of transgression—it is a frightful fact, not a foolish fancy. In the presence of the angel, this admits of no doubt.

That *sin must be punished* is taught here with equal distinctness. This looks like a platitude, but it is so often disputed, that we are constrained to assert it and to reassert it. Yes, we sound it forth as with a trumpet, that wherever there is an iniquity, there must be a penalty, for sin must

be punished! The good order of the universe requires it! The justice of God demands it! The Book of God threatens it! The hand of God continually executes it! The supposition that because God is merciful, He will, therefore, overlook sin, is as delusive as it is dangerous! It is one of Satan's lies. In like manner, the theory that God is a Universal Father, and that the punishments He awards are not judicial, but corrective—the mild chastening of a gentle discipline, import only with a view of winning back His erring children, and not the terrible, denunciation of an angry Sovereign, or the inevitable comes of a violated law—that theory, palatable though it may be to the fallen creature, is but a poisonous drink wherewith Satan would drug the souls of men who are bent on indulging their lusts till they are drowned in hell! Ah, no, though God is merciful, He is just! Though He can pardon the sinner, sin must be punished! The two facts are made consistent in the cross of Christ, where the sin was expiated, where the sinner was represented. But be assured, O sinner, that if you build your hope on any theory which denies that debt must be paid, that crime must be avenged, that sin must be punished—you are misjudging the law of God by which you must be judged! You are arguing on premises which have no basis but dreams! You are dallying with disappointment and death!

I remember a poor man interrogating me thus. "Sir," he said, "I want to know how my sin can be forgiven." "By the blood of Christ," was my answer. "Yes," he said, "but I do not understand that. What I need to know is this"—and he put it plainly—"if God does not punish me for what I have done, all I have to say is, He ought." I explained to him how he could punish Christ instead of us, and so be just, and, by finding a substitute, provide a pardon. He understood the plan of grace and rejoiced in the gospel! That way of putting it—which I am sure the conscience of every man must make him feel to be true—struck me as forcible. The Judge of all the earth, the Author of the law of God, must vindicate His own prerogative. In order to do this, every transgression must receive its recompense—as the sin, so the penalty! It is not meet and fit that I should enjoy the sweets of sin without partaking of its bitters. As I gaze on yonder angel, with flaming sword, I hear God say to me—addressing my eyes rather than my ears—"Sin must be punished!" As he smites right and left, as dead corpses lie in his awful pathway, as he passes on and his breath is pestilence and before him burn hot coals of fire, I see in that dreadful vision the tremendous fact that vengeance pursues crime, that vindictive punishment follows vicious practices! God will by no means spare the guilty! Cursed is everyone that has broken the law of God!

Yet, were this all, we could only see in this vision an increase of our miseries! But, blessed be God, we discern in the vision which David beheld a *sacrifice for sin*. The sword will not return to the scabbard

through the force of prayer. Not the pleadings of David combined with the humiliation of the elders of Israel, though sackcloth and ashes are on their loins, can prevail to avert the vengeance or appease the wrath! Sin had unsheathed the sword and, without a sin-offering there was no sheathing it again! Had David and those senators wept until their eyes were dry, had they lacerated their flesh till the wounds began to mortify, it had availed nothing! Or had they brought forth all the priests with smoking incense and paraded the ark with solemn pomp, yet had not the angel stirred! Nothing sufficed until the guileless victim appears on the scene, the warrant of death is carried into execution, and the life-blood is shed on the threshing floor. Not till the bullock, cut in pieces, was laid high on the altar, and the wood was heaped on the offering, and the fire coming straight from heaven in a mass of flame arose before the Most High, were the signals reversed and the message announced, "It is enough. Sheathe your sword." Call this type, parable, or illustration, but know, O sinner, that *nothing* can ever prevent God from punishing your sins! Your reformation, your prayers, your tears will not do it! Though your penitence be ever so humiliating. Though your resolutions for the future be ever so determined. Though your zeal for an universal reformation be ever so glowing, the outlook is hopeless!

Could you give rivers of oil or ten thousand of the fattest of fatted beasts, your property or your profits would be of no account. Should you give your children for your transgression—the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul—still does the inexorable decree stand fast. Sin must have punishment! There is only one method whereby the sword can be sheathed—by Christ's suffering in your place! The Son of the Virgin, who was also the Son of God, must go to Calvary! You nails, you must pierce Him! Wood, you must uplift Him! Soldiers, you must bruise Him! Death, it is necessary that you should kill Him. There, sinner! there! There is that which can make the angel sheath his sword! In Gethsemane and on Calvary rest your eyes—there God is teaching you—look! He must punish sin. How dreadfully He punishes it in Christ! Listen to the groans that come from His heart! Hear His death-shriek and His awful cry, "*Lama Sabacthani*?" God is just, for He is punishing Christ! Believe in Christ. Trust Him! Then shall you know that God has punished your Savior instead of you—by His chastisement you are made free! He cannot punish two for one offense. He will not first smite your Surety, and then smite you!

Rejoice in this, that if Jesus died for you, He released you from condemnation, and He secured for you eternal redemption!

Christ has paid the whole penalty! Your utmost liability He has discharged. The wrath of God, retribution in full, or its equivalent, has Christ endured for you, absolved you from sin and delivered you from the curse of the law by His vicarious sacrifice. He has robed you in His

righteousness and washed you in His blood! Such grace have you received who have believed in His name and taken shelter beneath His cross. Such truth was David taught concerning sin, punishment and substitution.

And mark it, beloved, as soon as the bullock smoked and the angel put back his sword, the plague was stopped—not one more died in Jerusalem—no, not one! They might be sick, but the fever left them. Some might be on their beds given up by the physician, but the sheathing of the sword restored them to health! It was not the physician's healing art, it was the mystic virtue of the sacrifice that saved their life. Consider this, O guilty, terror-stricken sinner. When Jesus died, from that day forward no sinner that believed in Him ever perished, or ever could! The redeemed are distinguished by their faith in the Redeemer. Disciples may be recognized by their allegiance to the Lord. Christians are identified by their conformity to Christ. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him! Hell does not hold a soul that ever trusted Christ. You might as well expect to find a rebellious apostate in heaven, as a penitent believer in hell. It cannot be! The moment you trust Christ, at that moment the sword is sheathed for you. Cast yourself on Jesus—it is a simple, but a saving act! As soon as you have come to rest on Him alone, without other prop or pillar, you are surely saved! Were you already on the plains of glory, with the white robe about you, and the golden harp in your hand, your salvation would not be more certain! Cheer up, beloved! Let gladness fire your heart and rapture flame your tongue. Be of good courage, you timid, downcast seeker. If Jesus died for you, you have no cause for fear. Believe in Him—you have the witness in yourself. Your faith is the key of your fellowship. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. No angel can kill you—you are exempt from the commission of the destroyer—you are saved! Such, I think, was the teaching which God communicated to David. Now grant us a moment's pause, and we turn to—

II. THE REASON OF DAVID'S CONSECRATING THE SPOT TO BE THE SITE OF THE TEMPLE.

The temple, be it remembered, was the designed meeting place between God and man. It is highly suggestive, therefore, that David consecrated *the floor of sacrifice*, for there the sword was sheathed, the anger appeased and the grace made conspicuous. There, therefore, should the sanctuary be reared. Is there a spot of ground, or is there a ground of reconciliation where you or I can safely meet with God, except where the atonement of Christ has prevailed to avert the penalty of our transgressions? We often meet with people who neglect our solemn assemblies, accounting church or chapel, alike, objectionable, while they profess to find in their private gardens, or on the open heath, a nobler temple. They prefer the songs of the birds to the psalms of the saints—

and the murmur of the river to the melody of worship. Their love of nature is so absorbing, that the spiritual has no charms for them. They tread the clods and gaze on the clouds with a gratification akin to the beasts that perish! On their Sabbath they are like a horse turned out into the meadow—they cease from labor and enjoy the interval of repose. Do they tell you that they worship the God of nature? Their self-deception is too transparent! You are not stupid enough to believe them! Did you follow them, I expect you would find that their idol was Bacchus, and the god they honored on these days was their own belly. So far from really seeking quiet retirement to worship the Almighty, they spend the Lord's day in wanton pleasure and sensual riot! We don't believe in such worship as these professed votaries of nature affect to offer. We hear of the piety, but we have never seen anything but the profanity. Besides, could we give a man credit for his sincerity in worship, we would be disposed to ask what sort of a divinity it is they accredit, admire and adore! The God of nature, they tell us, is all benevolence without alloy, and they flatter themselves that He does not punish sin, avenge guilt, or condemn the evildoer! Pardon me, but by your leave, I would correct your misapprehensions! What law of nature do you think you can violate with impunity? When of old our forefathers sinned against sanitary laws, did not God punish them? What do you think of the plague of London—and the multitudes dying in every house, till Aldgate pit was crammed and there was scarcely place to bury the bodies? The God of nature did that, be it remembered! Men violated His laws and straightway He smote them. Can you trespass against what are called natural laws without fear? I cannot! Have you forgotten the terrible experiences of America when she denied to the black population its natural rights and sinned against the slaves? How did God smite that vast continent? Do you remember not the Northern and Southern States in deadly conflict, and the battlefields red with blood? What though a brother's hand was lifted against his brother, it was no less God's punishment of sin! Among your own selves, when a man defiles himself with vice, does not the penalty he incurs make you shudder to think of it? Yes, and will not it be visited upon his children? Shall they not feel it to the third and fourth generation? Surely it is the God of nature who thus openly punishes sin! "The God of nature," as Byron puts it, "mirrors Himself in tempests as well as in green fields, and is as much to be seen riding the whirlwind and making the clouds His chariot amidst the storm, as He is in the fair flowers and the sweetly singing birds." If you will make your appeals to the God of nature, look what sort of God He is. I aver that the God of nature is the God of judgment, nor is there a meeting place between a conscious, reasonable, awakened rebellious man and the God that rules the universe, except through a sacrifice—that sacrifice the cross! Assuredly I know that my soul could never realize a possibility of

communion with my Creator except at the foot of the cross, where justice was honored and mercy manifested—

"Till God in human flesh I see
My thoughts no comfort find."

Young men, members of this Church, I want you to be thoroughly initiated into this doctrine of redemption. Understand it clearly, and then contend for it manfully, I pray you. If once you give up this fortress, you will be exposed to the most dismal skepticism—no, you will be open to stark atheism! Should you discredit the atonement of Christ, young man, you will have pulled up your anchors and you must drift before the wind. You cannot draw near to God without the cross! Only an Araunah's threshing floor can furnish the site of a temple. If you forsake the altar and the sacrifice, you will be forsaken of God and, before long, you will relinquish the truth of God and His righteousness! From holiness and happiness you will then be estranged! In any pulpit where the doctrine of the atonement is kept back, the tide of teaching drifts to Socinianism—and there is small margin left, but a narrow line to separate the Unitarian from the infidel! The temple is not only the meeting place for man with his God—no less is it the meeting place for man with his fellow man. There is never such unity as that which comes through the cross. The baptismal pool is not the rallying place for all believers, as full many are there baptized into the waters of controversy! Oh, my soul, come not into their secret! Certainly no doctrinal confession or orthodox creed supplies a *locus standi* where all see eye to eye, for good people hold very different views—yet the children of God are of one family, notwithstanding their diversity of opinions. Whenever we come to talk about the cross, we sheath our swords. There is no fighting there. John Wesley sings—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly."

And Toplady sings—

"Rock of ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Wesley denounces Toplady in the pulpit! Toplady calls John Wesley, "the old fox, tarred and feathered." But when they come here to Christ Jesus, their bitterness is all laid aside! They meet, as you clearly see, in harmony, and their sentiments are the same. Lift high the cross, then, preacher! Lift high the cross, Sunday school teacher! Here, and here only, righteousness meets with peace, embraces man and man embraces his brothers and sisters—and we become one with each other and then one in Christ Jesus!

We shall now turn to a second reason for his dedication. *The Temple was the manifesting place*. The Jew never dreamed of seeing God anywhere but in the temple. He went up to its sacred courts that in the various services of God's house he might behold the beauty of the Lord.

The High Priest, on the day of atonement, saw God in the mysterious light which glistened between the wings of the Cherubim—the light called the Shekinah, the only manifest indwelling of deity, the only light of God which human eye could clearly behold. The temple, I say, was God's unrobing place. To every High Priest, a favor akin to that accorded to Moses, was given. Moses was put into the clefts of the rock that He might see the skirts of Jehovah's robe—so every High Priest of the Jews, and every Jew in his High Priest, saw in the temple as much of God as could be seen under that dispensation. See then, friends, it is fitting that the place where Christ makes the sacrifice should be the place of manifesting God to man! We declare, without fear of controversy, that there is more divinity in the wounded body of Christ than in all the round world besides! If any man would see God unto perfection, let him behold yon bleeding man! If he would see God's love, let him behold the Son of God, incarnate, suffering in the sinner's place! If he would see God's justice, let him behold the Only-Begotten of the Father, pierced with every arrow out of heaven's quiver, wounded in every part and particle of His spirit and His body, that He may bear the curse for guilty men! If he would see God's omnipotence, let Him behold it in Christ, bearing the sin of the world, and yet with unbroken bones. If he would see the wisdom of God, let him discover it in the ignominious cross where the Savior expiates the sin of man! There is no attribute of God which is not clearly seen in the cross! It is not one solitary star, but it is like the Pleiades—a constellation of the brightest stars—all in Christ! I see not the stars, but the sun in Christ! I see not the robes of deity, but deity itself! Here I see not heaven's pearly gates, but heaven unfolded to each eye. Here I see not merely God's works, but verily God's heart—not so much the attributes of the Almighty, as Almighty God, Himself! Turning aside from the burning bush of Calvary, where Jesus burns with fire and is not consumed, I say, "We have seen God! We have seen Him face to face!" I must repeat it—that nowhere else is God to be so clearly seen as on the cross. Those who refuse to see God in Christ, presently become callous to the evidence of the eternal power and Godhead anywhere!

"Charity" is the cry I hear. "Charity" is lauded everywhere! Yes, more charitable than Christ, I suppose, some would have us to be in our toleration of heresy! But what says the Scripture? It says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." What does it say? "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." Do you remember the emphatic saying of the Apostle Paul? "If any man preaches any other gospel than that you have received, let him be anathema maranatha." This new charity, I know nothing of, nor did our fathers before us! The Puritans and the Covenanters could bleed and die, but they could not yield the blood-red flag of the cross of Christ! Our blessed ancestors, the Albigenses and Waldenses, from

whom, in a direct line, we sprang, could dare the snows of the mountains and stain them crimson with their bloody feet, but they could not surrender the truth of God! Those early confessors of the faith, from whom we have sprung, could suffer at the harlot's hand—the harlot of Rome—and shed their blood like water for the Lord God of Hosts! This was the rallying cry, from which they could never depart. "We can see in Christ the only way of salvation." Without controversy God was manifested in the flesh. He has worked out an atonement for His people. By that blood-besprinkled path we enter into heaven. Yes, dear friends, the doctrine of the atonement, or rather the atonement, itself, is God's only meeting place with man! And it is God's only place of revelation to man, if man would see Him rightly and distinctly!

Now thirdly, *the Temple was the home of joy*. Oh, what song, what sacred harmony went up to heaven from Mount Zion! I have sometimes been in this house when my willing soul desired to stay and sing herself away to the celestial plains. When I have heard the songs of the thousands of God's saints here, I have thought no rapture could exceed it! But our songs, I reckon, were poor compared with the multitudes of Israel coming from the North, South, East and West—from Dan, from Beersheba and from beyond Jordan—they came up like rivers of harmony, and when they got a sight of the golden roof of the temple, their hearts beat high and their voices grew jubilant! With golden trumpets and silver trumpets they sounded forth volumes of melody! And then, with divers instruments and vocal notes, sent up their joyful sound of grateful praises to the Most High. Priest and elders led the tune, and ten thousand times ten thousand of all the tribes cried, "Hosanna!" or chanted some of the glorious strains of David! Oh, how good and pleasant a thing it must have been in those days to go up to the temple of the Lord! And oh, how marvelous that just that threshing floor, where first an atonement was made for Jerusalem, should be the spot where all this song should gather! The music abounds where the blood freely flowed—where wrath stopped, there sacred mirth begins! Beloved, the richest joy that earth and heaven could know springs from the crystal fount of Jesus' side! Heaven was never so glad as when He ascended up on high. Then they tuned their harps anew—

"They brought the chariot from on high
To bear Him to His throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
'The glorious work is done.'"

You and I are never so happy as when we see our pardon, our full redemption there! Then I think we can sing—

"Oh, for such love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak."

If you want to be very happy, sit down under the shadow of the cross. Would you be supremely blest? Remember the threshing floor of Araunah! There the pestilence raged, the angel stood, the bullock smoked and the plague was stopped! That is the place where song finds its focus—abide there and be glad all your days!

Yet a fourth thought may be worthy of your remembrance. *The temple was a type of the Church* and, therefore, the temple must be built where the sacrifice stopped the plague. The foundation stone of the Church is the person of Christ. The doctrine of atonement is the interpretation of His work on the earth. If any man believes in the atonement of Christ and trusts himself to its fact and its issues, he is a Christian. He that believes not in our Redeemer's wondrous passion, and His complete satisfaction to the justice of God, may call himself what he likes, and assert his profession by what name he pleases—he is *not* a Christian! Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is a church. But the richest corporation, with the highest dignities that a nation can confer, will never make a church unless the doctrine of the atonement is strongly maintained and clearly taught! I would not judge harshly or speak rashly, but most solemnly I do believe there are hundreds of pulpits in London that never speak a sound about the atonement of Christ. That Christ did something on the cross they admit—what He did, they cannot determine! Popular books published by learned divines tell us we ought not to enquire, nor need we wish to know. A certain mythical reconciliation was effected, but as to His really suffering vicariously for sinners, the just for the unjust, this is left to such weak intellects as popular evangelists may possess!

As for these refined gentry, so learned that nobody can understand them, and so attractive that they have more spiders than hearers in their places of worship, they are far too philosophical to preach an atonement! Oh, no, it only suits the common mind, they say! Do you know, sirs, I have heard that at a college where young men are being trained to preach, after a discussion held upon the question, "Has the modern revival of Puritan doctrine done more good than harm?" the affirmative was carried by a majority at *one*—barely of one! Well now, as Puritan doctrine is neither more nor less than a consistent exposition of the gospel, with a corresponding demand for simplicity and sincerity of life, we are prone to ask what is to be expected of the instructors of the rising generation? Are these the gentlemen in training to teach the sons of toil? What kind of spiritual food will they dispense to those who wait on their ministry? Will these gentlemen preach Christ crucified, or will they strain and dilute the gospel till their sermons echo nothing but the sentiments of the age and the utilitarian morals that pass current in their times? Rather may this house be utterly consumed with fire, and not so much as one stone be left upon another that shall not be cast dawn, than the

day should come when here there should be given an uncertain sound about the Atonement! This is not merely a doctrine of the Church, it is *the* doctrine of the Church! Leave this out and you have no truth—you have no Savior, no Church! As Luther said of the doctrine of justification by faith, that it was the article of a standing or falling Church, so we affirm of the atonement—the complete efficacious atonement—the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for the sins of men! Cling to it you that would build up the saints on their most holy faith. For life, or for death, cling to it! Be this your cornerstone! Be this your vermilion cement with which you bind your members to one another! Be this your trowel! Be this your hammer and be this your sword! Be this your one essential—account it your indispensable implement—if you would honor God and if you would build up His Church!

And finally, as this was to be the place for the foundation of sacred fellowship, *so it must be the altar on which all the offerings were to be made to Jehovah*. Brethren, it was meet that the place where Christ died—the place, I mean, where the sacrifice stopped the devastating sword of judgment—that this Mount Zion should be the spot where the people of God offered their sacrifices and peace offerings. Mere exhortations to propriety are of no avail. You may preach ever so eloquently on sobriety without rescuing a single drunk! You may eulogize chastity to the admiration of the lascivious. You may extol honesty in the midst of knaves and thieves who will praise your fair speech. Precept has no regenerative power! People do not get good by having goodness preached at them! Pure Christianity is not propagated by the law. And in the community of saints, legality is of no avail. Whips are for the backs of fools. Saints need more sacred stimulus. Threats may keep simpletons in check, but for Christians, promises are of more account. If I want to stir you to action, and to promote among you some good work, I must preach up Christ, feed your souls with the bread of heaven and then, after that, divine grace will work in you effectually and the goodness will flow out of you instantaneously! Behold the place where Jesus shed His blood! Here, then, bring your offerings! Dedicate yourselves as whole burnt-offerings unto God—your time, your talents, your substance! No man brings his offering to Sinai, but thousands bring their sacrifices to Calvary! No man goes for a missionary, I hope, from stress of duty, except it is the man who found Zulu Kaffirs too much for him. We go as missionaries not from a sense of duty, but from a sense of love to Christ! Love will make a man do and dare. He will carry his life in his hands! He will go to savages, among them to endure privations, or to die. Not from duty's imperious call. That is a spur that Christians do not always feel. But love—love to Jesus, love to men, gratitude to God for what He has done for them—zeal for man and desire to benefit his race will prompt devout and heroic action. Preach the cross, minister, and you never need doubt

that your sermons will be practical! The atonement is the most practical of all doctrines. Those who preach up works, play with projects and produce no profits—while those who preach up Christ cultivate holiness and reap fruits of righteousness unto life eternal!

Ask yourself, good friend, have you ever found Christ to be a place for you to meet with God? If you have not, if you would meet God, go straightway to Christ, trust Him, and so shall you find God. "He that has seen Me has seen the Father," is His own declaration! Go to the cross, O you who feel your burden of sin! There, all is done for you! The site of the cross is the place where the temple of joy is reared. Do you want to be at peace with your neighbor? Go you both to the altar where Jesus died—there your peace shall be cemented. Do you want to build up a church in your neighborhood, any of you? Go to Christ and lean on His promise! He is the Rock on which you shall be made strong. None but Jesus—none but Jesus! Strive not to make yourselves better. Seek not to get to heaven by merit—give up your foolish reasons and resolves. You may work at the treadmill, but you will get no higher—not an inch nearer to the stars will you be with all your efforts. Flat before the cross, cast yourself, sinner—rags and all, hard heart and all—

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid myself of one foul blot!
To Him whose blood can cleanse each spot,
Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come."

And coming thus to Christ you have come to happiness, to safety, to heaven! So may your heart incline you. So may the Spirit lead you. So may Jesus save you! So may God, even the Father, accept you! And to the triune Jehovah shall be the praise forever! Amen.

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A SERMON
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"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly country." Hebrews 11:15, 16.

ABRAHAM left his country at God's command and he never went back. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which runs well for a while, but it is soon ended and it does not obey the truth of God. The Apostle tells us, however, that the people of God were not forced to continue because they could not return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to return. Frequent opportunities came in their way. There was communication kept up between them and the old family house at Padanaram. They had news concerning the family house. More than that, there were messages exchanged—servants were sometimes sent. There was also a natural relationship kept up. Did not Rebekah come from there? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land, but he could not stay there. He was always uneasy, until at last he stole away from Laban and came back to the proper life, the life that he had chosen—the life that God had commanded him to live—of a pilgrim and stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled down comfortably and tilled the ground which their fathers did before them—but they continued to follow the uncomfortable life of wanderers with weary feet, dwelling in tents, who own no plot of land. They were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise!

Now our position is a very similar one. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus have been called out. The very meaning of a church is called out—by Christ we have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone outside the camp bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth in this world we have no home, no true abiding home for our spirits. Our home is beyond the flood. We are looking for it among the unseen things. We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were—dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance. I shall this evening first speak to you upon—

I. THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH WE HAVE HAD, AND STILL HAVE, TO RETURN to the old house if we were mindful of it. Indeed, in the text it seems to me as if the word, "opportunities," were not, in our case,

nearly strong enough. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world and to our own sin. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints would persevere, but when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world at a single hour. It is nothing short of Godhead's utmost stretch of might that preserves a Christian from going back to his old unregenerate condition! We have had opportunities to have returned. My brothers and sisters, we have *such opportunities in our daily calling*. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men. You have opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excess, into their forgetfulness of God, or even into their blasphemies! Oh, have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are or if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brothers and sisters, there is one who is pretty sure to keep us company and to seek our mischief—the destroyer, the tempter! And how frequently will even solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring? There are snares in company, but there are snares in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlor—in conversation, perhaps—in the kitchen about the day's work or in the field, or at the market, on land and on sea. Where can we go to escape from these opportunities to return? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find "a lodge in some vast wilderness" where we could be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No! Each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptations than his fellows, but it is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all. And all of us might say that we find in our avocations from hour to hour many opportunities to return.

But, dear brothers and sisters, it is not merely in our business and in our calling—the mischief lies in our bones and in our flesh! *Opportunities to return in our own nature*. Ah, who that knows himself does not find strong incentives to return? Ah, how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colors—and though we loathe the sin and ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say—"Had it not been for divine grace, my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped." How strong is the evil in the best man, how stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail! You may be diligent in secret prayer and, perhaps, the devil may have been asleep till you began to pray, but when you are most fervent, then will he also become most rampant! When you get nearest to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return as long as you are in this body will be with you to the very edge of Jordan! You will meet with temptations when you sit gasping on the banks of the last river, waiting for the summons to cross—it may be that your fiercest temptation may come even then! Oh, this flesh, this body of this death—wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? While it continues with me I shall find opportunities to return.

And, dear brothers and sisters, these opportunities to return are prepared for us *in any condition of life and any change* through which we may pass. For instance, how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return? I sigh to think that many that appeared very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread have become very dull and cold now that they have become rich. How often does it happen that the poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of God at all meetings and felt proud to be there, but when he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, he could not go with God's people any longer? He must seek out the world's fashionable church and join in it to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always gather there—and he has turned aside from the faith—if not altogether in his heart, at least in the defense of it in his life. Beware of the high places—they are very slippery! There is not all the enjoyment that you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease, but, on the contrary, luxury often puffs up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity! If any of you are prospered in this world, oh, watch, lest you be mindful to return to the place from where you came out.

But it is just the same with adversity. Alas, I have had to mourn over some Christians—at least I thought they were—who have grown very poor. And when they have grown poor, they hardly felt they could associate with those whom they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I would be ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in providence. Yet there is that feeling in the human heart—and though there may be no unkind treatment—yet often the spirit is apt to imagine it and I have known some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God. It is smoothing the way to return to your old places. And, indeed, I have not wondered when I have seen some professors grow cold when I have thought how they were compelled to live! Perhaps they lived in a comfortable home, before, but now they have to take a room where there is no comfort and where sounds of blasphemy meet them. Or in some cases, perhaps, they have to go to the workhouse and are far away from all Christian communion or anything that could comfort them. It is only grace that can keep grace alive under such circumstances.

You see, then, whether you grow rich, or whether you become poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by lack of opportunities! It will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful, indeed! Opportunities to return—let me say just this much more about them—*are often furnished by the example of others*—

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas, what numbers do!
I think I hear my Savior say,
Will you forsake Me too?"

Departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We cannot think that religion can be true if such a man is a hypocrite. It staggers us—we cannot understand it. Opportunities to return you have now, but ah, may grace be given you so that if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition!

And oh, my brothers and sisters, if some of us wished to return, we would have this opportunity to return in a certain sense. We would find that *none of our old friends would refuse to receive us*. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world receive him with open arms. He was the favorite of the ballroom once. He was the wit that set the table on a roar! He was the man who, above all, was courted when he moved in the circle of the vain and frivolous—glad enough would they be to see him come back! What shouts of triumph would they raise and how they would welcome him! Oh, may the day never come to you, you young people, especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ and professed His name, when you shall be welcomed by the world—but may you forever forget your own kindred and your father's house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord, and you worship Him! Separation from the world shall endear you to the Savior and bring you conscious enjoyment of His presence—but opportunities to return I have now shown you, are plentiful enough.

Perhaps you will say, "Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could He not have kept us from temptations?" There is no doubt He could, but it never was the Master's intention that we should all be hothouse plants! He taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but at the same time He leads us there and intends to do it—and this is for the proving of our faith to see whether it is true faith or not. Only He also bids us pray, "Deliver us from evil." Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not faith! It must, sooner or later, be tested. God does not create useless things. He intends that the faith which He gives should have its test and should glorify His name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith and they are sent to you to prove that you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you so that you could not leave your Lord—if it had become a physical impossibility for you to forsake your Savior—there would be no credit in your abiding faithful to Him! He that does not run away because his legs are weak, does not prove himself a hero, but he that *could* run, but *won't* run—who could desert his Lord, but won't desert Him—has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be—the highest, strongest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Savior! By this you shall know whether you are Christ's or not—when you have opportunity to return—if you don't return, that shall prove you are His. Two men are going along a road and they have a dog behind them. I do not know to whom that dog belongs, but I'll tell you directly. They are coming to a cross road. One goes to the right, the other goes to the left. Now which

man does the dog follow? That is his master! Now when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which a man is following—but when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest, your pleasure seems to go the other way—if you can part with the world and stay with Christ, then you are one of His. So that these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose by trying our faith and helping us to see whether we are, indeed, the Lord's or not. But we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text tonight) to notice the second point.

II. WE CANNOT TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO BACK BECAUSE WE DESIRE SOMETHING BETTER than we could get by going back. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace, which urges us to—

"Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press our way."

Notice how the text puts it, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Brothers and sisters, *we desire something better than this world*! Do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart, but ever since you have known something of better things, have you ever been content with the world? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with worldly things. God has prospered you, and you have said, "Oh, this is well!" Your children have been about you. You have had many household joys and you have said, "I could stay here forever." Did you not find, very soon, there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever get a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Have you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"? I am sure it has been so with you. All God's saints will confess that if the Lord were to say to them, "You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion," they would be brokenhearted! "No, my Lord," they would say, "don't put me off so. Don't give me these husks, though You give mountains of them. You are more glorious than all the mountains of praise. Give me Yourself, and take these all away if so it pleases You, but don't, my Lord, don't think I can fill myself with these things." We desire something better!

Notice, next, that there is this about a Christian, that *even when he does not enjoy something better, he desires it.* How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, "Now they desire a better"—the word, "country," has been inserted by our translators—they desire something better. I know I do. I do not always enjoy something better. Dark is my path. I cannot see my Lord, I cannot enjoy His presence, and though it may be a little thing to desire, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew! Grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. They desire a better country. And because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which once gratified us!

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled for a while, he is uneasy in it. Abraham's slips—for he made one or two—were made when he had left the land and gone down among the Philistines. But he

was not easy there—he must come back. And Jacob, he had found a wife, no, two, in Laban's land, but he was not content. No, no child of God can be. Whatever we may find in this world, we shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through and say, "This looks like a little paradise," but there is no paradise this side of the skies—for a child of God at any rate! There is enough out there in the farmyard for the hogs, but there is not for the children! There is enough in the world for sinners, but there is not for saints! They have stronger, sharper and more vehement desires, for they have a nobler life within them and they desire a better country. And even if they get entangled, for a while, in this country, and in a certain measure become citizens of it, they are still uneasy—their citizenship is in heaven—and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess tonight, and rejoice in the confession, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight. Our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have, that we value, are ours today by faith! We don't enjoy them, yet, but when our heirship shall be fully manifested and we shall come to the full ripe age, oh, then we shall come into our wealth—to the mansions and to the glory and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord!

So, then, you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back, though he has many opportunities, lies in this, that through divine grace he has had produced in his heart desires for something better. And even when he does not as yet enjoy that something better, the desires, themselves, become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to what he was. Dear brothers and sisters, cultivate these desires more and more. If they have such a separating effect upon our character in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it! He has locked it up tonight and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep downstairs, and he goes to see. He looks to that iron safe to be quite sure that it is well secured—he cannot forget his dear gold! Let us think of heaven, of Christ, of all the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake. The more they draw us to heaven, the more we shall be separated from earth. But I must close with the sweetest part of the text.

III. WE HAVE FOR THIS REASON GREAT BLESSEDNESS.

"Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city." Because they are strangers and because they will not go back to their old abode, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God! He might be. What poor people God's people are—many of them poor in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things? I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has, we would ever have patience with them. We cannot even have, when we judge ourselves rightly, patience with ourselves! But how is it that God bears with the ill manners of such a forward, weak, foolish, forgetful people as His people are? He might well be ashamed to be called their God if you look upon them as they are! Acknowledge them—how can He acknowledge them? Does He not, Himself, sometimes

say of them, "How can I put you among the children?" And yet He does. Viewed as they are, they are such a rabble in many respects that it is marvelous He is not ashamed of them—and yet He never is—and to prove that He is not ashamed of them we have this fact—that He calls Himself their God! "I will be your God," and He oftentimes seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to His own heart. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and while He calls Himself their God, he never forbids *them* to call Him their God! And in the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God anywhere. He is not ashamed that it should be so.

We have sometimes heard of a man who has become great and rich in the world, and he has had some poor brother or some distant relative, and when he has seen him in the street, he has been obliged to speak to him and acknowledge him, but I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if some rich acquaintance happened to be with him who should say, "Why, Smith, who was that wretched seedy-looking fellow that you spoke to?" He does not like to say, "That is my relative," or, "That is my brother." But we find that Jesus Christ, however low His people may sink, and however poor they may be, is not ashamed to call them brethren, nor to let them look up to Him in all the depths of their degradation and call Him, "brother born for adversity." He is not ashamed to call them brethren! And one reason seems to me to be because *He does not judge them by what they are, but by what He has prepared for them.* Notice the text, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them—He has prepared for *them* a city." They are poor, now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints! All you can see in the poor child of God is a hard-working, laboring man, who is mocked at and despised, but what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory second only to Himself! He has put all things under the foot of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honor in the person of Christ—and the angels, themselves, are ministering servants to such a one as that! You see his clothes—you see not him! You see but his earthly tabernacle, but the Spirit, twice born immortal and divine, you see not that! God does. Or if you spiritually perceive that part, you see it as it is, but God sees it as *it will be when it shall be like unto Christ*, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest child of God as he will be in that day when he shall be like Christ, for he shall see Him as He is. It seems in the text that *God looks to what He has prepared for these poor people*—"He has prepared for them a city." And I think that by what He has prepared for them, He esteems them and loves them—esteeming them by what He means them to be rather than by what they appear to be!

Now let us look at this preparation just a minute. "He has prepared for them"—*them.* I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven, but we must never forget the specialty—"He has prepared for *them* a city." That is, for such as are strangers and

foreigners, for such as have faith and, therefore, have left the world and gone out to follow Christ! He has prepared for them, not for all of you, but only for such as He has prepared for the city, has He prepared the city. But note what it is. It is a *city*, which indicates, first, *an abiding happiness*. They dwelt in tents—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but He has prepared for them *a city*. Here we are tent-dwellers, but the tent is soon to be taken down. "We know that this earthly house of our tent shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "He has prepared for them a *city*." A city is *a place of social joy*. In a lonely hamlet one has little company, but in a city much. There all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood—the true Communism, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in the highest possible degree! There shall be delightful communion. "He has prepared for them a city." It is a city, too, *for dignity*. To be a citizen of the City of London is thought to be a great honor, and is it sometimes conferred upon princes—but we shall have the highest honor that can be given when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared!

But I must not dwell on this, delightful theme as it is, for I must close by noticing you, who are the children of God. Don't wonder, don't wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers. Don't expect the men of this world to treat you as one of themselves—if they do, be afraid! Dogs don't bark when a man goes by who they know—they bark at *strangers*. When people stop slandering and persecuting you, be afraid! If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Don't expect to find comforts in this world that your flesh would long for. This is our inn, not our home! We tarry here a night—we are away in the morning. We may bear the discomforts of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break soon. Remember that your greatest joy, while you are a pilgrim, is your God. So the text says, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Do you need a greater source of consolation than you have got? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the creature streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and you will find it always springing up! Your God is your true joy—make your joy to be in your God.

Now what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigner? Oh, you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose, but I have heavy tidings for you! This land in which you dwell and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is the City of Destruction! And as is its name, such shall be its ends The king will send His armies against that wicked city and destroy it—and if you are citizens of it, you will lose all you have—you will lose your souls, you will lose yourselves! "Wither away?" asks one. "Where can I find comfort, then, and security?" You must do as Lot did when the angels pressed him and said, "Hasten to the mountain, lest you are consumed." The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live! There is death everywhere else, but there is life in His death. Oh, fly to Him! "But how?" asks one. Trust Him! God gave His Son, equal with Himself, to bear the burdens of

human sin—and He died a substitute for sinners, a real substitute, an efficient substitute for all who trust in Him. If you will trust your soul with Jesus, you are saved! Your sin was laid on Him—it is forgiven you! It was blotted out when He nailed the handwriting of ordinances to His cross. Trust Him, now, and you are saved! That is, you shall henceforth become a stranger and a pilgrim, and in the better land you shall find the rest which you never shall find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted! Let us stay away from it. The curse has fallen. Let us get away to the uncursed and ever blessed, where Jesus Christ dwells forever! God add His blessing on these words for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 11:1-26.

VERSES 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.* The names of those who lived in old time are handed down with commendation because of their faith. If they had had no faith, we would have had no report of them.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* The world was not made out of the world. There was nothing to make it out of. It was created simply by the word of God, and our faith knows that. I question whether we should ever get in the matter of the creation beyond what is revealed to our faith. Reason is all very well, but faith mounts upon the shoulders of reason and sees much farther than reason, with her best telescope, will ever be able to see. It is enough for us who have faith that God has told us how He made the world, and we believe it.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it, he being dead, yet speaks.* He spoke by faith when he lived. Faith makes him speak now that he is dead. What wonders faith can work! The first saint who entered heaven entered there, it is certain, by faith! It was faith that enabled him to present an acceptable sacrifice, and it was faith that presented him to heaven. If the first who entered heaven entered there by faith, rest assured that will be true to the last—and none will enter there but those who believe.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* Beloved, if we cannot get a translation as Enoch did, let us not be content without getting God's good pleasure as he did! Oh that it may be said of us that we pleased God! Then we shall, one way or another, conquer death, for if we do, we shall triumph over the grave, and if Christ shall come before we die, we shall triumph in the coming of Christ. Anyhow, faith shall be more than a match for the last enemy.

6. *But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* Do we not sometimes fail in this matter? We try to come to God without believing that He is. We seem to pray to nothing, or to nobody, to a specter, to a phantom. But that prayer which is accepted is prayer to a real God, of whom we are assured that He is. Do we not also fail in our belief as to the success of prayer? We do not fully recognize that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. He that prays, believing that God will be found by him, shall not pray in vain. Tonight we may well say, "Lord, increase our faith."

7. *By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear*—For there is a fear which comes of faith—a fear which is the strength of faith's arms, by which it moves us into action. It is not slavish fear. It is a fit and proper, and reasonable fear, such as any man must have that believes God's threats. "Moved with fear."

7. *Prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Every act of faith condemns the world. Men who did not believe in God were, some of them, made to feel condemned, and others were condemned, even if they did not feel it, when they saw this holy man building a great ship upon dry land—a ship which he never would launch, but to which God would bring the sea, so that he would float over the deep waters, absolutely secure, while others perished. If you want to judge the wickedness of men, you need not set yourself to do it in the first place. Live a holy life, and you will judge the ungodly. I have heard it said that if there is a crooked stick and you want to show how crooked it is, you need not waste words in description—place a straight one by the side of it, and the thing is done immediately! Noah condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.* Very easy to read about that, but not so easy to do it—to tear yourself from home and friends—to go into a totally unknown country, swarming with enemies, solely on the promise that one day that country would belong to his seed! It might be hundreds of years afterwards, but God had called him and Abraham raised no question, but away he went!

9. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.* Not building a house there—not becoming a citizen of it, but always dwelling there in gypsy fashion.

9. *Dwelling in tabernacles.* That is, in tents.

9, 10. *With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* He did not build a city. He did not try to do so, "for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

11. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.* And that was good judgment, was it not?

There is no mistake about that. Whatever difficulties may lie in the way, we may always know that He is faithful who has promised. You are not past age, my brother. God will bless you in seeking to do good. You are not past age, my sister. Have but faith in God, and then in your old age you may bring many to the Savior's feet. He is faithful who has promised.

12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead.* For he was ordered to be sacrificed. There sprung from one, and him as good as dead.

12. *So many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.* Or if this text means Abraham, then his body was dead and yet there sprang of him a seed "so many as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable."

13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises.* By which is meant, not that they did not receive the promises, but they did not receive the things promised.

13, 14. *But having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* They have not come to it yet, nor will they as long as they are here below. They are still seeking a country.

15. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* Abraham, if he wanted to settle down, might have crossed once more the river and gone back to Ur of Chaldee. But he did not look for a city upon earth. He was evidently looking for one somewhere else. The country that he sought was not beyond the Euphrates, but beyond the narrow stream of death!

16. *But now they desire a better country.* Do you feel those desires within your heart? If not, surely you have no faith, for they that have faith in the better country desire it.

16. *That is, an heavenly: therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.* He might be ashamed to be called their God if He had unsettled them, and made them long for another city, and yet had never prepared one for them. The longings of the saints are but prophecies of the benediction of God! That which He makes us hunger for, is prepared. The bread of life shall be given us, and that country which He makes us seek, exists, and will be found by us! Therefore keep your face that way, and let every longing and pining for the home country reassure you that this is not any dreamland, but that there is such a place!

17-19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed by called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead: from where also he received him in a figure.* Faith does not always account. She is satisfied with God's word. But when she does account, then she is great at accounts, for here is a man who had not heard of the resurrection from the dead, yet

believed in it! Christ had not risen from the dead. There had been no such chapter for Abraham to read as that wonderful one, the 15th chapter of the first Epistle to Corinthians—and yet his faith seemed to have a revelation within itself! God must keep His promise. Therefore, if I, in obedience to Him, put the promised seed to death, God can raise him up, for He must keep His promise. He cannot lie.

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.* Blind as he was, he could see more than many that have good eyes, for he had the eyes of faith. There is no end to the blessing that faith can bestow upon others. A believing man can bless his children. I believe in the blessings of good men. Why should I not? If they are believers, they have power with God. Their wishes are prayers. Their prayers are heard. Their blessings, then, are realities.

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* That wonderful staff on which he leaned when he came out of Jabbok—that wonderful staff with which he crossed this Jordan in his poverty, but after which he became two bands.

22. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.* Faith touches all sense of things—even a funeral and bones, too—for faith is good at everything. She can sweep the house and seek diligently. She can enter heaven. She can go to the gates of death. Oh, for more of it!

23. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.* Their faith made them hide him, for that faith laid hold of God, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24-26. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*

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ALL OF GRACE
NO. 3479

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."
Ephesians 2:8.

OF the things which I have spoken unto you these many years, this is the sum. Within the circle of these words my theology is contained, so far as it refers to the salvation of men. I also rejoice to remember that these of my family who were ministers of Christ before me preached this doctrine and none other. My father, who is still able to bear his personal testimony for his Lord, knows no other doctrine, neither did his father before him.

I am led to remember this by the fact that a somewhat singular circumstance, recorded in my memory, connects this text with myself and my grandfather. It is now many years ago. I was announced to preach in a certain country town in the Eastern Counties. It does not often happen to me to be behind time, for I feel that punctuality is one of those little virtues which may prevent great sins. But we have no control over railway delays and breakdowns—and so it happened that I reached the appointed place considerably behind time. Like sensible people, they had begun their worship and had proceeded as far as the sermon. As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching—and who should the preacher be but my dear and venerable grandfather! He saw me as I came in at the front door and made my way up the aisle. And he at once said, "Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel, can you, Charles?" As I made my way through the throng, I answered, "You can preach better than I can. Pray go on." But he would not agree to *that*. I must take the sermon, and so I did, going on with the subject then and there, just where he left off. "There," he said, "I was preaching on 'For by grace are you saved.' I have been setting forth the source and fountainhead of salvation. And I am now showing them the channel of it, through faith. Now you take it up, and go on."

I am so much at home with these glorious truths of God that I could not feel any difficulty in taking from my grandfather the thread of his discourse and joining my thread to it, so as to continue without a break. Our agreement in the things of God made it easy for us to be joint-preachers of the same discourse! I went on with, "through faith," and then I proceeded to the next point, "and that not of yourselves." Upon this I was explaining the weakness and inability of human nature and the certainty that salvation could not be of ourselves, when I had my coattail pulled, and my well-beloved grandfather took his turn again. "When I spoke of our depraved human nature," the good old man said, "I know most about that, dear friends." And so he took up the parable, and for the next five minutes set forth a solemn and humbling description of our lost estate, the depravity of our nature and the spiritual death under which we were found. When he had said his say in a very gracious manner, his grandson was allowed to go on again, to the dear old man's great delight, for now and then he would say, in a gentle tone, "Good! Good!" Once he said, "Tell them that again, Charles." And, of course, I did tell them that again! It was a happy exercise for me to take my share in bearing witness to truths of God of such vital importance, which are so deeply impressed upon my heart. While announcing this text I seem to hear that dear voice, which has been so long lost to earth, saying to me, "TELL THEM THAT AGAIN."

I am not contradicting the testimony of forefathers who are now with God. If my grandfather could return to earth, he would find me where he left me—steadfast in the faith and true to that form of doctrine which was once delivered to the saints. I shall handle the text briefly, by way of making a few statements. The first statement is clearly contained in the text—

I. THERE IS PRESENT SALVATION.

The apostle says, "*You are saved*." Not, "you shall be," or, "you may be," but, "you are saved." He says not, "You are partly saved," nor, "on the way to being saved," nor, "hopeful of salvation," but, "by grace are you saved." Let us be as clear on this point as he was and let us never rest till we know that we are saved! At this moment we are either saved or unsaved. That is clear. To which class do we belong? I hope that, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, we may be so assured of our safety as to sing, "The Lord is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation." Upon this I will not linger, but pass on to note the next point.

II. A PRESENT SALVATION MUST BE THROUGH GRACE.

If we can say of any man, or of any set of people, "You are saved," we shall have to preface it with the words, "by grace." There is no other

present salvation except that which begins and ends with grace. As far as I know, I do not think that anyone in the whole world pretends to preach or to possess a present salvation, except those who believe salvation to be all of grace. No one in the Church of Rome claims to be now saved—completely and eternally saved. Such a profession would be heretical! Some few Catholics may hope to enter heaven when they die, but the most of them have the miserable prospect of "purgatory" before their eyes. We see constant requests for prayers for departed souls and this would not be if those souls were saved and glorified with their Savior! "Masses" for the repose of the soul indicate the incompleteness of the salvation which Rome has to offer. Well may it be so, since Papal salvation is by works—and even if salvation by good works were possible, no man can ever be sure that he has performed enough of them to secure his salvation!

Among those who dwell around us, we find many who are altogether strangers to the doctrine of grace—and they never dream of present salvation. Possibly they trust that they may be saved when they die. They half hope that after years of watchful holiness they may, perhaps, be saved at last, but to be saved now, and to know that they are saved is quite beyond them—and they think it presumption!

There can be no present salvation unless it is upon this footing—"By grace are you saved." It is a very singular thing that no one has risen up to preach a present salvation by works. I suppose it would be too absurd. The works being unfinished, the salvation would be incomplete or, the salvation being complete, the main motive of the legalist would be gone!

Salvation must be by grace. If man is lost by sin, how can he be saved except through the grace of God!? If he has sinned, he is condemned—how can he, of himself, reverse that condemnation? Suppose that he should keep the law of God all the rest of his life? He will then only have done what he was always bound to have done—he will still be an unprofitable servant. What is to become of the past? How can old sins be blotted out? How can the old ruin be retrieved? According to Scripture and according to commonsense, salvation can only be through the free favor of God!

Salvation in the present tense must be by the free favor of God. Persons may contend for salvation by works, but you will not hear anyone support his own argument by saying, "I am, myself, saved by what I have done." That would be a superfluity of naughtiness to which few men would go! Pride could hardly compass itself about with such extravagant boasting. No, if we are saved, it must be by the free favor of God. No one professes to be an example of the opposite view.

Salvation to be complete must be by free favor. The saints, when they come to die, never conclude their lives by hoping in their good works. Those who have lived the most holy and useful lives invariably look to free grace in their final moments. I never stood by the bedside of a godly man who reposed any confidence whatever in his own prayers, or repentance, or religiousness. I have heard eminently holy men quoting in death the words, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." In fact, the nearer men come to heaven and the more prepared they are for it, the more simple is their trust in the merit of the Lord Jesus—and the more intensely do they abhor all trust in themselves! If this is the case in our last moments, when the conflict is almost over, much more ought we to feel it to be so while we are in the thick of the fight! If a man is completely saved in this present time of warfare, how can it be except by grace? While he has to mourn over sin that dwells in him, while he has to confess innumerable shortcomings and transgressions, while sin is mixed with all he does, how can he believe that he is completely saved except it be by the free favor of God?

Paul speaks of this salvation as belonging to the Ephesians, "By grace are you saved." The Ephesians had been given to curious arts and works of divination. They had thus made a covenant with the powers of darkness. Now if such as these were saved, it must be by grace alone! So is it with us, also—our original condition and character render it certain that if saved at all, we must owe it to the free favor of God! I know it is so in my own case and I believe the same rule holds good in the rest of believers. This is clear enough and so I advance to the next observation—

III. PRESENT SALVATION BY GRACE MUST BE THROUGH FAITH.

A present salvation must be through grace and salvation by grace must be through faith. You cannot get a hold of salvation by grace by any other means than by faith. This live coal from off the altar needs the golden tongs of faith with which to carry it. I suppose that it might have been possible, if God had so willed it, that salvation might have been through works and yet by grace, for if Adam had perfectly obeyed the law of God, he still would only have done what he was bound to do—and so if God should have rewarded him, the reward, itself, must have been according to grace—since the Creator owes nothing to the creature! This would have been a very difficult system to work, while the object of it was perfect, but in our case it would not work at all. Salvation in our case means deliverance from guilt and ruin. And this could not have been laid hold of by any measure of good works since we are not in a condition to perform any. Suppose I had to preach that you, as sinners, must do certain works and then you would be saved? And suppose that you could

perform them? Such a salvation would not, then, have been seen to be altogether of grace—it would have soon appeared to be of *debt*. Apprehended in such a fashion, it would have come to you in some measure as the reward of work done and its whole aspect would have been changed. Salvation by grace can only be gripped by the hands of faith! The attempt to lay hold upon it by the doing of certain acts of law would cause the grace to evaporate! "Therefore, it is of faith that it might be by grace." "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Some try to lay hold upon salvation by grace through the use of ceremonies—it will not do. You are christened, confirmed and caused to receive "the holy sacrament" from priestly hands. Or you are baptized, join the church, sit at the Lord's Table. Does this bring you salvation? I ask you, "Have you salvation?" You dare not say, "Yes"! If you did claim salvation of a sort, yet I am sure it would not be in your minds, salvation by grace.

Again, you cannot lay hold upon salvation by grace through your feelings. The hand of faith is constructed for the grasping of a present salvation by grace, but feeling is not adapted for that end. If you go about to say, "I must feel that I am saved; I must feel so much sorrow and so much joy, or else I will not admit that I am saved," you will find that this method will not answer. As well might you hope to see with your ears, or taste with your eyes, or hear with your nose as to believe by feeling—it is the wrong organ! After you have believed, you can enjoy salvation by feeling its heavenly influences! But to dream of getting a grasp of it by your own feelings is as foolish as to attempt to bear away the sunlight in the palm of your hand, or the breath of heaven between the lashes of your eyes! There is an essential absurdity in the whole affair.

Moreover, the evidence yielded by feeling is singularly fickle. When your feelings are peaceful and delightful, they are soon broken in upon and become restless and melancholy. The most fickle of elements, the feeblest of creatures, the most contemptible of circumstances may sink or raise our spirits! Experienced men come to think less and less of their present emotions as they reflect upon the little reliance which can be safely placed upon them. Faith receives the statement of God concerning His way of gracious pardon and thus it brings salvation to the man believing! But feeling, warming under passionate appeals, yielding itself deliriously to a hope which it dares not examine, whirling round and round in a sort of frenzied dance of excitement which has become necessary for its own sustaining, is all on a stir, like the troubled sea

which cannot rest. From its toiling and raging, feeling is apt to drop to lukewarmness, despondency, despair and all the kindred evils! Feelings are a set of cloudy, windy phenomena which cannot be trusted in reference to the eternal truths of God. We now go a step further—

IV. SALVATION BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH, IS NOT OF OURSELVES.

The salvation, the faith and the whole gracious work together are not of ourselves!

First, they are *not of our former merits*—they are not the reward of former good endeavors. No unregenerate person has lived so well that God is bound to give him further divine grace and to bestow on him eternal life! Otherwise it were no longer of grace, but of debt. Salvation is *given to us*, not *earned by us*. Our first life is always a wandering away from God and our new life of return to God is always a work of undeserved mercy, worked upon those who greatly need, but never deserve it!

It is not of ourselves! In the further sense, it is *not out of our original excellence*. Salvation comes from above. It is never evolved from within. Can eternal life be evolved from the bare ribs of death? Some dare to tell us that faith in Christ and the new birth are only the development of good things that lay hidden in us by nature. But in this, like their father, they speak of their own. Sirs, if an heir of wrath is left to be developed, he will become more and more fit for the place prepared for the devil and his angels! You may take the unregenerate man and educate him to the highest degree, but he remains and must forever remain dead in sin unless a higher power shall come in to save him from himself! Grace brings into the heart an entirely foreign element. It does not improve and perpetuate—it kills and makes alive! There is no continuity between the state of nature and the state of grace. The one is darkness and the other is light—the one is death and the other is life. Grace, when it comes unto us, is like a firebrand dropped into the sea where it would certainly be quenched were it not of such a miraculous quality that it baffles the water and sets up its reign of fire and light even in the depths!

Salvation by grace, through faith, is not of ourselves in *the sense of being the result of our own power*. We are bound to view salvation as being as surely a divine act as creation, or providence, or resurrection. At every point of the process of salvation, this word is appropriate—"*not of yourselves*." From the first desire after it, to the full reception of it by faith, it is always of the Lord, alone, and not of ourselves. The man believes, but that belief is only one result among many of the *implantation of divine life* within the man's soul by God, Himself!

Even the very will to be saved by grace is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God! There lies the stress of the question. A man ought to believe in Jesus—it is his duty to receive Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sins. But man will not believe in Jesus—he prefers anything rather than faith in his Redeemer! Unless the Spirit of God convinces the judgment and constrains the will, man has no heart to believe in Jesus unto eternal life! I ask any saved man to look back upon his own conversion and explain how it came about. You turned to Christ and believed on His name—these were your own acts and deeds. But what caused you to turn? What sacred force was that which turned you from sin to righteousness? Do you attribute this singular renewal to the existence of a something better in you than has been yet discovered in your unconverted neighbor? No, you confess that you might have been what he now is if it had not been that there was a potent something which touched the spring of your will, enlightened your understanding and guided you to the foot of the cross! Gratefully we confess the fact! It must be so. Salvation by grace, through faith, is not of ourselves, and none of us will dream of taking any honor to ourselves from our conversion, or from any gracious effort which has flowed from the first divine cause. Last of all—

V. "BY GRACE ARE YOU SAVED THROUGH FAITH AND THAT NOT OF OURSELVES—IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD."

Salvation may be called *Theodora*, or God's gift. And each saved soul may be surnamed, *Dorothea*, which is another form of the same expression. Multiply your phrases and expand your expositions, but salvation truly traced to its well-head is all contained in the unspeakable gift—the free, unmeasured benison of love!

Salvation *is the gift of God*, in opposition to a wage. When a man pays another his wage, he does what is right and no one dreams of condemning him for it. But we praise God for salvation because it is not the payment of debt but the *gift* of grace. No man enters eternal life on earth, or in heaven, as his due—it is the gift of God. We say, "Nothing is freer than a gift." Salvation is so purely, so absolutely a gift of God that nothing can be more free! God gives it because He chooses to give it according to that grand text which has made many a man bite his lip in wrath—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." You are all guilty and condemned, but the Great King pardons whom He wills from among you! This is His royal prerogative! He saves in infinite sovereignty of grace.

Salvation is the gift of God—that is to say completely so—in opposition to the notion of growth. Salvation is not a natural production from within.

It is brought from a foreign zone and planted within the heart by heavenly hands! Salvation is in its entirety a gift from God. If you will have it, there it is, complete! Will you have it as a perfect gift, "No. I will produce it in my own workshop." You cannot forge a work so rare and costly upon which even Jesus spent His life's blood! Here is a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. It will cover you and make you glorious! Will you have it? "No. I will sit at the loom and I will weave a raiment of my own!" Proud fool that you are! You spin cobwebs! You weave a dream! Oh, that you would freely take what Christ upon the cross declared to be finished!

It is the gift of God. That is, *it is eternally secure in opposition to the gifts of men, which soon pass away*. "Not as the world gives, give I unto you," says our Lord Jesus. If my Lord Jesus gives you salvation at this moment, you have it and you have it forever! He will never take it back—and if He does not take it from you, who can? If He saves you, now, through faith, you are saved—so saved that you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand. May it be so with all of us! Amen.

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

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

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FRAGRANT GRACES

NO. 3480

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"While the king sits at His table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance."
Song of Songs 1:12.

THIS passage may be read in several ways. Literally, when Christ tabled among men, when He did eat and drink with them, being found in fashion as a man, the loving spirit broke the alabaster box of precious ointment on His head while the king was sitting at His table. Three times did the Church thus anoint her Lord, once His head and twice His feet, as if she remembered His threefold office and the threefold anointing which He had received of God the Father to confirm and strengthen Him. So she rendered Him the threefold anointing of her grateful love, breaking the alabaster box and pouring the precious ointment upon His head and upon His feet. Beloved, let us imitate the example of those who have gone before. Though we cannot, as the weeping penitent, wash His feet with our tears, or wipe them with the hairs of our head, like that gracious woman—we may be cautious of nothing, of fair adornments, or fond endowments—if we can but serve His cause or honor His person. Let us be willing to "pour contempt on all our pride," and "nail our glory to His cross." Have you anything tonight that is dear to you? Resign it to Him! Have you any costly thing like an alabaster box hidden away? Give

it to the King! He is worthy and when you have fellowship with Him at His table, let your gifts be brought forth. Offer unto the King thanksgiving and pay your vows unto the Most High.

But the King is gone from earth. He is seated at His table in heaven, eating bread in the kingdom of God. Surrounded now not by publicans and harlots, but by cherubim and seraphim, not by mocking crowds, but by adoring hosts, the King sits at His table and entertains the glorious company of the faithful—the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven! He fought before He could rest. On earth He struggled with His enemies, and it was not till He had triumphed over all, that He sat down at the table on high! There sit, You King of kings, there sit until Your last enemy shall be made Your footstool! What can we do, brothers and sisters, while Christ sits at the table above? These hands cannot reach Him. These eyes cannot see Him. But our prayers, like sweet perfume, set burning here on earth, can rise in smoke to the place where the King sits at His table—and our spikenard can diffuse a perfume even in heaven itself! Do you want to reach Christ? Your prayers can do it! Would you now adore Him? Would you now set forth your love? With mingled prayer and praise, like the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, your incense can come up acceptably before the Lord!

And, brothers and sisters, the day is coming when the King shall sit at His table in royal state. Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes! Let the Church never forget that. The first advent is her faith—the second advent is her hope. The first advent with the cross lays the foundation—the second advent with the crown brings forth the top stone. The former was ushered in with sighs—the latter shall be hailed with shouts of, “Grace, grace unto it.” And when the King, manifested and recognized in His sovereignty over all lands, shall sit at His table with His Church, then, in that blessed Millennium, the graces of Christians shall give forth their odors of sweet savor!

We have thus read the text in three ways, and there is a volume in each, but we turn over another page, for we need to read it in relation to the spiritual presence of Christ as He does now reveal Himself to His people. “When the King sits at His table”—that is, when we enjoy the presence of Christ—“my spikenard gives forth its fragrance.” Then our graces are in active exercise and yield a perfume agreeable to our own soul and acceptable before God.

In the train of reflection I shall now attempt to follow. My manner must be hurried and should it seem feeble, brothers and sisters, I cannot help it. If you get fellowship with Christ, I care little for the merits of my sermon, or the perils of your criticism. One thing, alone, I crave, “Let Him kiss us with the kisses of His mouth”—then shall my soul be well content, and so will yours be also! The first observation we make shall be this—

I. EVERY BELIEVER HAS GRACE IN POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES.

The text implies that when the King is not present, the spikenard yields no smell, but the spikenard is there for all that. The spouse speaks of her spikenard as though she had it, and only needed to have the King come and sit at the table to make its presence known and felt. Ah, well, believer, there is grace in your heart if you are a child of God! When you cannot see it yourself. When your doubts have so covered up all your hopes, that you say, “I am cast out from His presence”—yet for all that, grace may be there. When the old oak has lost its last leaf by the howling blasts of winter. When the sap is frozen up in the veins and you cannot, though you search to the uttermost branch, find so much as the slightest sign of verdant existence, still, even then, the substance is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. And so with every believer, though his sap seems frozen and his life almost dead, yet if once planted, it is there! The eternal life is there when he cannot discover it himself. Do you know—if

not, I pray you may never know experimentally—that there are many things that keep a Christian's spikenard from being poured out? Alas, there is our sin! Ah, shameful, cruel sin, to rob my Master of His glory! But when we fall into sin, of course, our graces become weak and yield no fragrance to God. Ah, too, there is our unbelief which puts a heavy stone on all our divine graces, and blows out the heat which was burning the frankincense, so that no altar smoke arises towards heaven. And often, it may be, it is our bitterness of spirit, for when our mind is cast down, we hang our harps upon the willows so that they give forth no sweet music unto God. And, above all, if Christ is absent, if through neglect or by any other means our fellowship with Him is suspended, grace is there—but oh, it cannot be seen! There is no comfort springing from it. But, beloved, though we mention this to begin with, we rather choose to pass on and observe that—

II. GRACE IS NOT GIVEN TO A CHRISTIAN TO BE THUS HIDDEN, BUT IT IS INTENDED THAT, LIKE SPIKENARD, IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN EXERCISE.

If I understand a Christian aright, he should be a man readily discerned. You do not need to write upon a box that contains spikenard, with the lid open, the word, "Spikenard." You will know it is there—your nostrils would tell you. If a man should fill his pockets with dust, he might walk where he would, and though he should scatter it in the air, few would notice it. But let him go into a room with his pockets full of musk, and let him drop a particle about—he is soon discovered because the musk speaks for itself! Now true grace, like spikenard or any other perfume, should speak for itself. You know our Savior compares Christians to lights. There is a crowd of people standing yonder—I cannot see those who are in the shadow, but there is one man whose face I can see well, and that is the man who holds the torch. Its flames light up his face so that we can readily catch every feature. So, whoever is not

discovered, the Christian should be obvious at once! "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrays you." Not only should the Christian be perceptible, but grace has been given to him that it might be in exercise! What is faith, unless it is believing? What is love, unless it is embracing? What is patience, unless it is enduring? To what purpose is knowledge, unless it is revealing truth? What are any of those sweet graces which the Master gives us, unless they yield their perfume? I fear we do not gaze enough upon that face covered with the bloody sweat, for if we did, as sure as the King was thus in our thoughts sitting at His table, we would be more like He, we would love Him more, we would live more passionately for Him and would spend and be spent, that we might promote His glory. I just note this point, and then pass on, that believers' graces, like spikenard, are meant to give forth their smell. But here is the pith of our whole subject, though we have little time to linger upon it—

III. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN'S GRACES CAN BE PUT INTO EXERCISE IS THAT HE MUST HAVE THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER.

He is called "the King." I am told that the Hebrew word is very emphatic, as if it said, "*The* King"—the King of kings, the greatest of all Kings. He must be such to us—absolute Master of our hearts, Lord of our soul's domain, the unrivalled One in our estimation to whom we render obedience with alacrity. We must have Him as King, or we shall not have His presence to revive our graces. And when the King communes with His people, it is said to be at "His table," not at ours. Specially may this apply to the table of communion. It is not the Baptists' table. It is not my table. It is His table because if there is anything good on it, remember, He spread it! No, there is nothing on the table unless He Himself is there. There is no food to the child of God unless Christ's body is the flesh, and Christ's blood the wine. We must have Christ! It must be emphatically

His table by His being present, by His spreading it, His presiding at it, or else we have not His presence at all. I find the Hebrew word here signifies a "round table." I do not know whether that is intended which I understand by it—perhaps it is—it suggests to me a blessed equality with all His disciples sitting at His round table, as if there were scarcely a head, but He was one of them, so close the communion He holds with them sitting at the table, so dear His fellowship, sitting like one of them, made like unto His brothers and sisters in all things at His round table.

Well, now, we say that when Christ comes into the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, or any other ordinance, straightway our graces are vigorous. How often have we resolved that we would live nearer to Christ? Yet, though we have resolved, and re-resolved, I fear it has all ended with resolving. Perhaps we have prayed over our resolutions and for a little season we have sought them very earnestly, but our earnestness soon expired like every other fire that is of human kindling—and we made but little progress. Be not disheartened, my beloved in the Lord! I tell you, whether you are able to believe it or not, that if your heart is this night cold as the center of an iceberg, yet if Christ shall come to you, your soul shall be as coals of juniper that have a most vehement flame! Though to your own apprehension you seem to be dead as the bones in a cemetery, yet if Jesus comes to you, you shall forthwith be as full of life as the seraphs who are as flames of fire! Why do you think He will not come to you? Do you not remember how He did melt you when first He manifested Himself to your soul? You were as vile, then, as you are now. You were certainly as ruined, then, as you are now! You had no more to merit His esteem, then, than you have now—you were as far off from Him, then, as you are now—I might say even further off. But lo, He came to you when you did not seek Him! He came in the sovereignty of His grace and the sweetness of His mercy when you despised Him! Why, then, should He not come to you now?

Oh, breathe the prayer—tenderly and hopefully breathe the prayer—"Draw me," and you will soon find power to run, and when all your passions and powers are fled, the King will speedily bring you into His chamber! Dark as your present state may be, there are sure signs of breaking day. I want you, brothers and sisters, to believe and to expect that you shall hold this night with Christ the richest, sweetest fellowship that ever mortal was privileged to enjoy, and that all of a sudden! I know your cares—forget them! I know your sins—bring them to His feet! I know the wandering of your heart—ask Him to tether you to His cross with the same cords that bound Him to the pillar of His flagellation. I know your brain is perplexed and your thoughts flying here and there, distracted with many cares—put on the crown of thorns and let that be the antidote of all your manifold disquietudes! I think Jesus is putting in His hand by the hole of the door. Is not your heart moved for Him? Rise up and welcome Him! And as the bread is broken and the wine is passed round, come, and eat and drink of Him, and be not a stranger to Him. "Let not conscience make you linger." Let not doubts and fears hold you back from fellowship with Him who loved you before the earth was, but rest your unworthy head upon His blessed bosom and talk with Him, even though the only words you may be able to say may be, "Lord, is it I?" Do seek fellowship with Him, as one who ignores every thought, feeling, or fact besides. So may it please Him to manifest Himself to you and to me as He does not to the world.

If you that have never had fellowship with Christ think I am talking nonsense, I do not marvel. But let me tell you, if you had ever known what fellowship with Christ means, you would pawn your eyes, and barter your right arm, and give your estates away as trifles for the priceless favor! Princes would sell their crowns and peers would renounce their dignities to have five minutes' fellowship with Christ. I will

vouch for that. Why, I have had more joy in my Lord and Master in the space of the ticking of a clock than could be crammed into a lifetime of sensual delights, or of the pleasures of taste, or of the fascinations of literature! There is a depth, a matchless depth, in Jesus' love! There is a luscious sweetness in the fellowship with Him. You must eat, or you will never know the flavor of it. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Behold how ready He still is to welcome sinners. Trust Him and live. Feed on Him and grow strong. Commune with Him and be happy. May every one of you who shall sit at the table have the nearest approach to Jesus that you ever had! Like two streams that, after flowing side by side, at length unite, so may Christ and our soul melt into one, even as Isis melts into Thames, till only one life shall flow so that the life we live in the flesh shall be no more ours, but Christ that lives in us! Amen.

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VISITS FROM THE LORD
NO. 3481

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1871.

"Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he was naked), and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat; for they were not far from land (about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fishes."
John 21:7, 8.

UNTIL our Lord should pour out the Spirit upon His apostles, they had to wait. It was expedient for them that He should go away and ascend into His glory. Then when He had received gifts for men and had distributed those gifts, they would be able to go forth in the power of the Spirit, preaching the gospel. Until then they must wait, and they must not be idle. Therefore they returned to their ordinary trades and once again the little boat plowed the familiar waves of the sea of Tiberias. There they had many old associations brought up before them. And there, moreover, on the memorable night of which we are now to speak, they learned a lesson which would be instructive to them throughout the whole course of their fishing for men! Their condition and position were very much like our own. We, as a Christian Church, are engaged in the great soul-fishery, seeking by any means to bring some to Christ. Out on the dark waters of the Dead Sea of Sin we seek to bring the souls of men, not to destroy them, but that Christ may save them! This is to be the Church's perpetual work. She must never cease from it. For this purpose is she kept in the world and if she does not answer this purpose, she is faulty before her Lord.

Just now we are much in the condition of these apostles. There is upon some of our spirits a dissatisfaction with the success that we have had of late—in fact, a dissatisfaction with all the success that either we or the Christian Church generally have had for years past. We cannot quite say, with the apostles, that we have caught nothing. Glory be to God, there are thousands of souls that have been won to Christ in this house, and in many other places where Christ is preached! But compared with the great mass of mankind—compared with the world that "lies in the wicked one—we might almost say, "We have caught nothing." Relatively, it comes to very, very, very little—and the gospel-fishery does not grow, today, as it did at the time of Pentecost, or as it has done at other seasons when God has granted revival and refreshing from His presence. We are, therefore, like the disciples—we are engaged

in the fishing, but we are not satisfied with the results! Now we know what they, perhaps, at the time forgot—that there is only one thing that can change the aspect of affairs, and that is for Jesus to appear in our midst and speak to us, giving us the word of direction and, also, Himself acting as the attractive power to the souls of men, that they may come to the gospel net! I may go round to all our agencies, if Jesus is absent, and ask them, "What is your success?" The Sunday school will have to say, "We have taken nothing." The evangelists at the street corners will have to say, "We have taken nothing." The young men sent forth from the college to preach will have to return the same sorrowful answer! And alas, for us who stand here and preach to this congregation, we, too, shall have to say, if the Master is not with us, "We have toiled all night, but we have taken nothing."

Oh, sorrowful account to have to render to God and our fellow men! Yet such it must be. But if Jesus shall come, how changed it all shall be! Then shall the preacher become wise! He shall know where and how to cast the net! He shall select those topics that shall stir the soul—that shall fire the heart! And then, Jesus being present, men shall be as willing to receive the gospel as the preacher is to preach it! It shall be as much the will of the fish to get into the net, as it is of the fishermen to cast the net! Oh, may the Master come to us! I believe He has come. I think I see Him. Some of my brothers and sisters tell me they already perceive it. He has never been entirely absent from us, but we need Him to speak a mighty word, a majestic word—a word that shall compel, by sweet constraints of grace, tens of thousands of souls to come to Him and live!

Now tonight my one subject is to the Church here, and to God's people elsewhere, who are in the same state of hope and anxiety. I want to speak about Jesus Christ's coming. The all-importance of it you all feel. You all, I trust, as workers for Christ, desire it. Now, beloved, let us notice, first, when Jesus comes—

I. WHO WAS THE FIRST TO SEE HIM.

The first to see Jesus was John. He said, "It is the Lord." The other disciples perceived Him by-and-by. We know they did, for it is written, "Knowing that He was the Lord"—but the first to see Him was John. What do we gather from this?

Why, first, *that the brightest eyes in the Church are the eyes of those who love most.* They perceive Christ first who have most affection for Him! If He is gone, these are the first to sigh. If He returns, these are the first to rejoice with unspeakable joy. Knowledge is said to open the eyes, but as for me, the dust of many learned tomes has often beclouded them. It is thought that men of education will be the first to perceive the Savior, but it was not so in the Savior's day, for these things were hidden from the wise and prudent—but they were revealed unto babes! Let love be your education. Grow in love. To love is better than to know, for a man may know, and only eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—and perish by it—but he that loves, obeys, and he shall eat of the tree of life

and dwell in the midst of the paradise of God! Blessed John! Your head had been on the Savior's bosom and, therefore, your eyes were like the eagle's. No angel, one would think, could see as well as Milton's angel, Uriel, that dwelt in the midst of the sun. He was familiar with the light. He dwelt in the full blaze of the orb of day—in the very midst of it! And, "He that dwells in love dwells in God." And "God is light," so he who dwells in the light of God sees all things. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The heart that is purified with the celestial flame of divine love is the heart that can see God!

But note that in the text John does not describe himself as loving Christ. Much more humbly and instructively does he put it. "That disciple who loved Jesus said unto Peter, It is the Lord!" No, that is my misreading of it! It is, "That disciple whom Jesus loved." Oh, yes, and that is the way that grace in the heart always teaches us to read it! It is not so much that we love Him, as that He loved, and still loves us! Superabundant love in the heart of the Man, Christ Jesus, towards that choice and chosen spirit had made John a loving disciple. He had not loved so much if Christ had not loved more. He would have told you if you had questioned him about his love, as Peter did—"The Lord who knows all, knows that I love Him." But if you had spoken about Christ's love to him, ah, then his face would have brightened, his eyes would have flashed with delight and he would have said, "He loves me. Ah, and I have had many a sweet word from Him. And my head has often been healed of all its aches when I have laid it down upon His breast." He would have ascribed it all to Christ's love and had little to say of his own! So, brothers and sisters, if the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts, you will be quick to see the same. It will not be so much your love as His love that makes you quick of the eye. Then will your eyes become like the eyes of the spouse in the song, "As the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set." Now the dove, no doubt, can see its home from a very, very long way. Let the pigeon loose and it flies to its dove-cote at once. Ah, those whose eyes Christ has "washed with milk and fitly set" can see their Lord afar off, and they fly to Him with swift and clipping wings—nor are they satisfied till they roost once more at His feet or on His bosom.

Thus, then, those that are quick to see the Savior are those who love Him—better still, those whom He loves much.

Now note that even John appears to have *perceived the presence of Christ very much through His work*. As soon as the fishes were taken in the net, then John said, "It is the Lord." And, brothers and sisters, if we want to be assured of the Master's presence in the Church, it must be by the results! I am ashamed of some Christians who are afraid of anything like a holy excitement, or a gracious revival. If there are two or three added to the church in a year, they say, "This is the finger of God," but if there are many, then straightway they begin to question! Now I think this is not reasonable, for surely when there are great fishes, a hundred and

fifty and three, then we may say, "It is the Lord." We may be pretty sure when there are so many brought that God is at work there, and we may perceive the presence of Christ. I was noticing the other day some statistics that have been given of certain revivals in different districts of the United States. It has been said that those gathered in during a period of revival are usually an injury to the church, and more frequently backslide than any other—but taking a range of some eight years in certain churches, it was found that of those persons added during seasons of refreshing from God, the percentage who afterwards backslid was much less than—scarcely, indeed, one half—the percentage of backslider in those churches which had not experienced revival, but had only grown at the slow plodding rate which some of our "sound" brothers and sisters so greatly admire! It was found that instead of being worse material, they were better material—and that these stood the fire even better than any other. This I know—that I would like to run the risk—I would like to run the blessed risk of seeing thousands coming forward to profess their faith in Christ! 'Tis true, we will have some, no doubt, that will turn out to be hypocrites, but I would not refuse some chaff if I could get ten times as much wheat! Who will give up a gold mine because there is quartz in it? Who is it that will shut up a coal pit because there happen to be some slates amidst the coal? No, blessed Master, come! and let us have the net full to bursting if You will—and then we shall say—"It is the Lord!" His great works reveal Him even to the eyes of love!

Note, further, that *the man who first discovered that Christ was present did not long keep the secret*, but, turning round to his neighbor in the boat, he whispered to him, "It is the Lord." Ah, and this is a lesson to us. If any of you that are the King's favorites and have close fellowship with Him, should perceive that He is in the church, oh, tell it to us, for we are of your mind! We count the King's company to be the most grand blessing out of heaven! Whisper to some of us, for we shall be so rejoiced to hear the blessed news! But John did not tell all of them. He told it to Peter, for Peter was very near to him. I think John had been partly the means of Peter's falling. I think so. You notice how John tells us and no one else does—that he was a kinsman to one who kept the door and he took Peter in? And I fancy that he used to smite himself about that, and say, "I ought not to have run the risk of taking Peter there. I ought not to have put him where he would have those questions asked." And he seems always to stick hard and fast to Peter and to be with him, because though he, of course, had none of Peter's sin, he felt that somehow, accidentally or unwittingly, he had led Peter into the place where he sinned—and so he loved him very much and he gave him the first intimation of the good news. Said he to him, "Brother Peter, it is the Lord." Oh, if you perceive the Lord, tonight—if you get a good word from His lips—have not you some beloved one that you can tell—one, perhaps, that has been a backslider and is now returning to the Lord with broken bones? Oh, tell him! Tell him! Tell him at once, "The Lord is here amidst us. Our Beloved stands and shows His wounds and His pierced hands.

Look, my brother! Look to Him and rejoice with me!" Ah, but you may also tell it to whomever you will, for this is a piece of good news that nobody need ever keep secret! Tell it! Tell it wherever you have the opportunity—that Jesus Christ is visiting His church! Bid poor sinners come and look to Him whom they have pierced, and live! When you have told it to some, tell it to many more and bid them communicate the blessed tidings that Jesus, mighty to save, still waits to receive sinners and to blot out their transgressions—

"Tell it unto sinners—tell—
Jesus Christ can save from hell,"

and is present, revealing Himself to His church and doing wonders in the congregation!

Thus much upon those who first see Him. Now a few words upon—

II. THOSE WHO FIRST GET AT JESUS CHRIST.

Peter—quick, hot, impulsive—no sooner hears that it is the Lord than he buckles on his coat, plunges into the sea, and swims to shore to reach his Master! They were not all Peters—it was a mercy they were not. But there was one Peter and it was mercy that there was. Nobody may blame Peter. Nobody may blame those who did not follow Peter. They were quite as right who stayed in the boat as Peter was, who swam to the shore! But I know that wherever Jesus Christ is truly present, there will be some bold noble spirits that will make a dash to get at Him. They love Him—they will be among the first to reach Him—to enjoy His presence. Yet if any of them feel moved tonight to do some deed of enthusiasm, let me take them by the hand a moment. Peter would reach his Master, but he first girds on his coat. There is reverence in Peter, though there is haste and enthusiasm. He will not come before Christ all in a careless manner—unclothed. He has too much respect for His Master. O soul, if you would serve the Lord, serve Him with holy fear, for though He is very near to you, He is God—and you are man. Take off your shoes when you would serve Him, for the place where you stand is holy ground! Be not rash in your worship, nor in your vows, nor in your actions! Gird yourself and then serve Him.

But that once done, Peter commits himself boldly to the waves! Sink or swim, he will be at his Master's side and so he strikes out right gallantly for the shore. Nothing can stop him. He impetuously gets through the breakers and the surf, and is at his Master's feet! Oh, how I wish there were some Peters in this congregation, true lovers of Christ, who, feeling that Christ is come among us, would say, "For the love I bear His name, I will be one of the first to serve Him! Here I wrap myself in the garment of zeal. It shall be my cloak and from this day I will give up all for Christ. I will serve Him beyond all others if I can, and if any can exceed me, it shall be my lack of power that makes me second, but not my lack of will!" It would not do for me to say who Peter is, nor to suggest to a man who is not Peter that he should act as Peter would, but I have noticed that every so often in the Church there will rise up men and women who will say, "We will consecrate ourselves unto the Lord." Sometimes they do it by

going forth into the mission field. Perhaps I have a young Peter here who, like Carey of old, and Marshman, and that band of heroes, may feel in his soul the fire burning and say, "I must, and I will preach Christ in the regions beyond." Possibly, however, it may be at home that the same gifts and graces may be exercised, and I have one here, perhaps, who says—oh, I would I had many hundreds who are saying—"God helping us, we will enter upon something which, though it is apparently beyond our strength, and rather venturesome, yet shall be done! We will plunge into the sea to reach our Master. We will brave anything so that we may get to Him!"

Ah, there are those who will always repress anything like divine enthusiasm and yet, mark you, the brightest ages of the Church have been those in which men consecrated to God have risen above the dictates of common prudence and have dared for Christ what others of a cooler temperament could have not dared! Oh, may the Master send the sacred fire into this congregation! I shall never rest content until I have going out of this church many who count not their lives dear to them to preach the gospel among the heathen! I wonder how it is this has not broken out among us before? Is it my ministry that is faulty in this respect? It may be so. Then will I cry to heaven to be taught better. But at Hermansberg, under Pastor Harms, the whole village seemed to be moved with a desire to carry Christ's gospel to Africa—and they emigrated in shiploads to become missionaries there! Of course, many said that Harms was infatuated. Blessed infatuation! May it fall upon many of Christ's ministers! The Moravian Church in years gone by had scarcely a member who was not a missionary. When they joined the church, they gave themselves up to the church and to Christ. Oh, when shall we come to this—if not all of us, yet, at any rate, the Peters who shall throw themselves into the sea that they may get to their Master? Knowing that it is the Lord who is in their midst, they shall be able to do venturesome deeds, brave deeds, for the glory of His name!

But I will not dwell on that, but just mention next how *the rest came to Christ*. We have seen who first saw Him. Afterwards they all saw Him. We have seen who first reached Him. Afterwards they all reached Him and I think the second did no worse than the first. For how came the rest of the disciples? In a little boat—I suppose in their fishing vessel, dragging the net after them. I feel that to be my particular department and suppose the lot of most of my dear brothers here. We are tied to this church, and we have the net. And though I would gladly enter often into fellowship with Christ by a bold dash, somehow or other I generally have to drag a net after me! I want to commune with Christ, but I have about a thousand souls that I have to preach to on the coming Sabbath. I want to rejoice in the Lord with unspeakable joy, but often get cumbered with much serving. There is this poor soul in trouble, and that poor heart who needs consolation. Well, well, if the Master bids us drag the net, we won't leave it, but keep a hold of it and if we come a little more slowly, nevertheless, if we are doing His bidding, our slow pace shall be as

accepted as Peter's swimming! And many of you, dear friends, would be very wrong if you were to give up your common callings. You are like the fishermen with the net—you have to drag it. If you should say, "I will give myself up to Christ. I will row to shore. I shall renounce my business. I shall leave all my earthly callings"—I think, unless I was quite certain you were a Peter, I would say, "Brother, go back! Drag the net. It must be brought to shore. There are your children. Oh, what a care they need and how wrong you would be if you neglected them!"

I remember a man, whose children were most neglected, who used to frequently go out preaching in the country villages. I know that once or twice he was spoken to about it, but he never mended matters. While he would be preaching, his children would be in the streets! He lived to see them grow up reprobates—and the sin was at his door. Stick to Christ! Drag your net and bring your family after you. Let this be your vehement desire—that your children shall be brought to Him! Or you have servants, or a little district in some place in London. Don't run away from your work! A brother wrote to me some time ago telling me how much distressed he was in his mind. He said he thought he should never be happy till he got out of business. I said, "Don't run away from Satan. Fight the devil where you are! Tell the devil you will grapple with him where you are, and you mean to beat him right there." Oh, if God in His providence has made you a servant, very well—beat the devil as a servant! And if you are a tradesman, don't say, "I cannot keep this trade and honor God." Do not let it be said that our God is the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys, and that it is only certain people in certain places who can honor Him! No, in every place you can honor your Master! Keep to your net. *Drag it to Christ, however*. Oh, what a drag it will be, sometimes, to bring it Christ's way!—all the business and all the work you have to do—to do all for Christ! Yet this is true religion—to sanctify not only the vessels of the altar, but the pots and the bells that are upon the horses—to make everything holiness unto the Lord! God grant us grace to do this! May He send us here and there a Peter and, at the same time, may He keep the bulk of you, while steadfast in your callings and diligent in business, to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Oh, blessed church that shall thus unanimously be drifting towards Christ and be heartily seeking after fellowship with the dear Redeemer—some impetuously, all industriously—and all successfully!

Now this leads me a little farther on. Supposing we should reach the Savior, as I trust we may, each man after His own order—

III. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF COMING TO CHRIST?

Three results. The first will be *refreshment*. He will say to us, "Come and dine." Ah, how well fed are those whom Christ feeds! When we go up to the house of prayer and look to the pulpit, we are disappointed. But if we go and look to the hills from where comes our help, we are never disappointed! What can the pastor do unless the superior Shepherd shall give us the daily food? I might well say to hungry souls, as the King of

Israel said to the woman in Samaria, when she spoke of their having eaten her child in famine, and asked the king to help her—"Woman, if the Lord does not help you, how shall I help you?" And so might we all, with the most anxious desire to do good, yet reply, "If the Lord does not help you, how can we help you?" No, brothers and sisters, it is not in the power of ordinances, any more than of ministers, to feed souls! There is nothing in the bread and wine of the communion table that can spiritually nourish us. There you have bread—no more—wine—no more. It is only when, through these, *you get to Jesus*—when you pass through the doorway of the outward and get into the inward, into the *spiritual*—it is only then that your souls are entertained! And once get there, His banqueting table is better than that of Ahasuerus! There is no such feast as that which Jesus gives—of "fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." By your enjoyments in the past, my brothers and sisters—by those ravishing moments when your souls have burned within you with intense delight—ask Him to come to you again! Beseech Him to favor you tonight with this refreshment. And mark you, that prayer need not be a selfish one, for all the strength that is gained in communion with Christ will afterwards be spent in the service of Christ!

But again. When the disciples had all come to our Lord, and had dined, the next thing was *examination*. It was addressed to Peter especially—but it must have been a lesson to all the rest of them—"Do you love Me?" The very first question that we should ask ourselves concerning our Christianity is this, "Do you love Me?" The second is, "Do you love Me?" The third is, "Do you love Me?" Answer that, and all is answered! The old orator said that the first essential of eloquence was delivery or action. The second was delivery. The third was delivery. So we will say that the first essential of a truly healthy Christianity is to love Christ! And the second is to love Christ! And the third is to love Christ! Our Lord would not talk of commonplace things at that time. He selected a vital topic, and this is always vital—"Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" Beloved brothers and sisters, I hope you will always be sound in the faith but then that is little comparatively to what it is to be sound in loving Christ! I trust, brothers and sisters, you will always be holy in life—but that can only be as you love Him in the heart. Out of the heart the life proceeds! He is the fountain—our actions are but the streams. Do, then, pass the question round among you, "Do you love Me?" I desire to put it to myself. I beg you to put it to yourselves. Pause a moment. Do you love Christ? What say you? With a true love? With a love that is such as He demands, that is above the love of mother or of child? "Do you love Me? You are coming to My table, you are baptized—you are a member of the church—but do you love Me?" Is it so? I trust you can reply, "Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You."—

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

Well, then, lastly, after coming to the Savior, who had given them refreshment and caused them to examine themselves, the next thing was

that it ensured for them *commissions of service*. Before the Lord blesses a church, He *prepares* it for the blessing. A number of sailors wrecked on a desert island are thirsting for water, but suppose a shower comes at once—it will be a wasted blessing! They must be so thirsty that they are led to put up an apparatus for catching the water when it comes—otherwise the water comes too soon and is lost! I love to see a church in such state of agony for God's grace that it has, as it were, the reservoirs ready to hold the grace when it comes! "They that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well." They "make it a well." The water does not rise in the well. "The rain also fills the pools." Yet they dig the wells to hold the rain—and the rain comes. Remember that notable incident when Israel and Judah were engaged against the King of Edom! The prophet said, as he took his harp and began to play by inspiration, "Make this valley full of ditches!" And they wondered why—but they dug the trenches and made the troughs all along the valley. By-and-by, the water came and filled the valley, and the host was refreshed! We need to make this valley full of ditches. We want, as a Church, to be ready and waiting for the blessing!

You see, Christ prepared Peter and all the apostles by saying to them, "Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep. Shepherd My flock." And He says to you, tonight, "Are you refreshed by My presence? Have you examined yourself and seen that you love Me? Now, then, gird up your loins and prepare for the service of the church." I want, brothers and sisters, to see among us men and women who are looking after Christ's sheep and lambs! I hope it is not so everywhere, but I met the other day with a good brother who has attended for a long time this Tabernacle, to whom nobody has ever spoken yet, as he told me. I do not know where he sits—at least, I half think I do, but I shall not tell you, because then somebody or other would find out who he was. But I will suppose he sits anywhere you like, all around you, and your own consciences shall judge. Now ought it to be so? Ought a person to come here Sunday after Sunday, and no one ever give him a brotherly salutation, or say a word concerning his soul? Oh, that you were looking out in the neighborhoods where you live, and in the part of this building where you sit, for opportunities of doing good! I know that there are persons who are longing to be spoken to, and they wonder why you do not speak to them! They are Christ's lambs and they want carrying in some kindly bosom. Oh, look after them and help them! You do not know how half a word said in Christ's name during your journeying about your business may be life from the dead! As it is said by Herbert, "a verse may strike him whom a sermon flies." So a little word from you may be effectual where the most earnest public ministry might fail!

Oh, beloved, the Lord is not slack! We are slack! If we have not a blessing, we are straitened somewhere, but it cannot be in Him! We are straitened in our own hearts and sympathies. What is that memorable text of the prophet, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse that

there may be meat in My house; and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." We are not to say that we are proving the Lord to give us a blessing because we pray. The test He puts us to is bringing the tithes into the storehouse—that is to say, what is God's due! Am I giving less of my substance than I ought to give? Am I giving less of my time than I ought to give? Am I giving less of my talent than I ought to give? If I withhold anything that is really God's tithe, I am not proving God! But when we are all giving and doing to our utmost, then we prove God and we shall see whether He will not open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive!

I charge you, my beloved—you who have been the flock of my care these many years—remember the history that God has given us during these 17 years. We were very few when we began, but there was a living seed among us, and there was mighty prayer—and a blessing came. "By terrible things in righteousness" God answered us! But the answer did come. What prayer-meetings we had at Park Street! How often we sat down and wept under the divine influence! Thank God, the Holy Spirit overshadowed us! What ardor there was among you, then, and how many souls were brought to Christ! Since then He has led us on from strength to strength. He has never failed us! Never is this place empty or deserted. Crowds still come to listen to the word of God! Oh, shall we not have a blessing as we had it before? I trust we may. And we shall if you are all, to the full measure of your obligations, engaged in the service of your blessed Master and seeking strength from on high! By the hands that were nailed for you—by the feet that were pierced for you—by the head that was crowned with thorns for you—by the heart that poured out blood and water for you—by the Christ who died for you—I implore and beseech you, lay yourselves out upon the altar of God, and say, "Henceforth, for us to live is Christ. Christ is all. We desire to say continually, 'The Lord be magnified.'"

Oh, that some here who know little enough about this might desire to know it! Poor soul, if you desire Christ, Christ desires you! And if you will have Him tonight, you shall have Him! If you believe that Jesus is Christ, and have put your trust in Him as your Savior, you are saved! Look to Him now! God help you to do it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 24:13-35.

Verses 13-15. *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus, Himself drew near, and went with them.* Where two talk of heavenly things they shall not be long without a third! Jesus loves holy

company, and He will join Himself to those who in their conversation join themselves to Him.

16, 17. *But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have, one to another, as you walk, and are sad?* The first part of that question some professors might be ashamed to answer, "What manner of communications are these that you have, one to another, as you walk?" It is not always that all Sunday talk is Sabbath talk—not always that we converse as we should upon the things of God. We are, many of us, blameworthy here.

18, 19. *And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Are You only a stranger in Jerusalem, and have not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people.* Just as a schoolmaster, though he knows more than the children, yet asks them questions to see what they know. So did the Savior, "What things?...And they said to Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in word and deed." I ought to have said, "in deed and word." You see my mistake. That is how we put it, "word and deed," for our words go first, but with Christ, the practical comes first, and then commences the doctrinal.

20-24. *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women, also of our company, made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw Him not.* They made out a very clear case against their own unbelief here. They had the evidence of the women, and they had the evidence of the men of their own company. The women, they knew were honest. About their own company they could have no doubt, but yet they did not draw the inference which was clear enough, namely, that Jesus had risen and that what He said He was, He had proven Himself to be.

25, 26. *Then He said unto them. O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?* Is not this just what He said He would do?

27, 28. *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And they drew near unto the village, where they went: and He made as though He would have gone further.* Never had they had a shorter walk in their lives! His holy talk had made the journey seem as nothing, and sorry they were

to see the village—and especially when they found that their companion had an idea of going further.

29. *But they constrained Him saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.* O wise disciple, when you have your Master to hold Him! "I held Him," says the spouse; "I held Him, and I would not let Him go." So may it be with us.

30, 31. *And it came to pass, as He sat at dinner with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.* Sometimes when you do not remember a friend who has greatly changed, or from whom you have been long apart, some old familiar sign will bring it all back and as with a rush of memory, you know him at once! Now if this were an ordinary meal, as perhaps it was, Jesus was so in the habit of giving thanks that they knew Him by that. I wish we knew every Christian by the same sign. Or if this were, indeed, a celebration of His own sacred festival, then again they knew, for is not this the sign between Christ and His people? And is not this table the place where Jesus meets His beloved? "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." But they knew Him to see Him no more that night.

32-35. *And they said, one to the other, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, the Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.* Did they go to their beds? The day was far spent—late traveling was dangerous in Israel. Ah, dangerous or not, they are so overwhelmed with joy that they must go and communicate what they had seen!

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STRUGGLING AGAINST SIN
NO. 3482

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes. I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies."
Psalm 119:145, 146.

THE fear of punishment leads many people to think about their sins. And a dread of hell in the future fills the retrospect of their past life with gloom and remorse. This is natural. It may happen to anyone, as it has happened to tens of thousands, that the peril has haunted them till at length the penalty has overtaken them. Although they have been constantly terrified with a sense of the divine wrath, they have never penitently looked to the divine mercy. Thus they have continued to despond and they have gone on to despair—and that utter desperation has curdled into a bitter remorse which has been the forecast of their eternal retribution! But it appears to me that there is a work of grace in the heart where there is a *fear of sin* rather than a *fear of hell*—where the desire of the soul is not so much to escape from the punishment, as to escape from the guilt which is the cause of the punishment. What thief, what murderer, when he has been arrested, convicted, sentenced and brought to the gallows, does not wish he had not committed the crime that sealed his doom? Yet there is a wide difference between a dread of suffering for the wrong you have done and a dread of doing wrong! Judge yourselves, if you are under religious impressions of any sort, whether you have merely a fear of punishment—for that is an instinct of nature—or whether you have a fear and abhorrence of sin, for that is a work of divine grace!

Now our text exhibits to us the frame of mind of one whose chief prayer was that he might keep God's statutes—and his chief anxiety lest he should fail to observe them. Oh, that you might be brought to this state of heart, those of you who are not saved! And may those of you who are saved have this state of heart perpetually in exercise! A tender heart, a scrupulous conscience, a tenacity of offending God in thought, in word, or in deed should hold us in check every day and every hour. Let us continually cry unto God to save us from violating His precepts and compel us to keep His testimonies. I address myself very indiscriminately to all who hear my voice, desiring that the text may prove a test whereby

everyone should examine himself. Do we, or do we not, desire to get rid of every evil way? Are we anxious to be sincere and without offense, holy in our character and obedient to God's statutes in our lives? The man who really does desire this will be sure to pray for it. "I cried," says the Psalmist. And then again he says, "I cried." Moreover, he combines his prayer with strong resolution, "I cried unto You; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes." Still further he seasons his prayer with a deep sense of his own weakness, for he puts it thus, "I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your statutes." Well then—

I. EVERY MAN WHO DESIRES PURITY OF HEART AND CHARACTER WILL BETAKE HIMSELF TO PRAYER.

While struggling after purity, he will soon discover that he is unable to reach it of himself. Have you ever thought that you had destroyed an evil tendency in your disposition—and then found in an unguarded moment that you fell into the temptation from the coils of which you did suppose you had escaped? You have resolved in the morning, maybe at the hour of prayer, that throughout the day your temper should be calm and quiet. Yet very likely before breakfast was over, you were more ruffled than usual. Where you fancied you had set a double guard, there it was that you were taken by surprise! You thought yourself weak in one point, but it did not happen to be that on which you were beset! Where you said to yourself, "I am safe," there you were betrayed. You must have found this out, if you are striving against sin. When it has occurred many times, you will have a habitual mistrust of yourself. Does it happen but once, you will be driven by a sense of your own incompetence to call in the sacred might of God, that with the arms of the Eternal, you may defeat the infernal adversary, prevail over your evil passions and conquer your besetting sin. "I cried unto You," says David. Not as though it were a trifling skirmish, but as one who felt that he was perilously besieged. "I cried unto You with my whole heart, for I must vanquish this sin, or be vanquished by it! I could not conquer it by myself, so I cried to You, O my God," and I said, "Oh, display Your power, and by the irresistible might of Your Holy Spirit, crush this dragon within my nature! Beat it down, that it may rise up no more."

The importunity of this prayer shows his estimate of the value he set on the blessing he craved. Read verses 145, 146 and 147, and you will perceive how he repeats himself—"I cried." "I cried unto You." "I rose before the dawning of the morning, and cried." Three times does he reiterate it! He was not to be put off. He felt he must get the mastery of sin. Hence, in sheer desperation, the good man cries again, and again, and again, "O God, deliver me, that I may keep Your testimonies." Pray often, beloved, for sin will tempt often. Cry mightily, for Satan will tempt

mightily. Innumerable snares will he place in your path—let your countless entreaties outnumber his devices!

The expression by which he memorializes his prayer shows us *the intensity of it*. "I cried." "I cried." "I cried." I do not know a better form of prayer than crying. It implies that the whole nature is full of anguish. Crying is the consequence of pain. His entire soul was stirred up. A cry is the expression of desire. It is a natural unpremeditated utterance. There is no affectation about it. A man that knows no Latin or Greek can cry. He that cannot speak with eloquence may yet give eloquent vent to his feelings in tears and entreaties. Oh, there are some with whom prayer is a ceremony. They call the servants together—they march in, and they march out to the routine of family worship. They read out of a book some form of words, or else they compass a little piece, themselves, and say it—and that is their idea of prayer! Not so. Prayer is crying, laying hold on God and spreading our needs before Him with an earnest entreaty that He would not reject us, but would give us what we ask of Him. It is a wrestling with the covenant angel. It is a sacred resolve, "I will not let You go except You bless me." If you want to conquer sin, know that it cannot be overcome by cold prayers, muttered in a heartless manner—it will not yield to empty ceremonies! Sin only flies before the blood of Christ and the power of the Eternal Spirit. These come to our rescue when, with cries and tears, we importune the Lord to help us. "I cried." "I cried." "I cried." Thrice does he repeat the words. His whole heart cried to God that he might be delivered from sin!

Wherever there is a real and true prayer about this matter, *it must be a prayer of faith*. God can, in answer to prayer, help me to conquer sin. Beloved, you pray in vain unless you steadfastly believe that there is no sin which you cannot overcome. I meet with men who say, "I can never give up drinking." My dear friend, God can make you! I meet with a man who has a violent temper and he thinks he can never curb or subdue it. Surely you do not think of taking it to heaven with you! They have no passionate people in that happy clime. You will have to get that anger put away, but only God can accomplish it! Do you say, "It would be like turning a lion into a lamb"? That is just what His grace is able to do! He can bring you from darkness to light. He can work such a transformation in you that you would not know yourself if you could see yourself after you have passed under the divine hand. Resolve in your soul that sin must be conquered—believe that it is possible—and cry to God with a full conviction that He is able to save you from it! Yet I think there are some who would not like to have their prayers answered. They ask for a humble heart. Well, I question whether they would like it, if it were given to them—whether they would not want to send it back! They pray that

they may have a pure conscience, but how, then, could they carry on that business of theirs? They ask that they may he upright in God's statutes, but they know very well that they prefer following their own crooked devices! There are thousands of prayers that are insults to heaven, but where the Spirit of God is really at work, the man who wants to be pure, prays sincerely, and cries mightily to God for purity! And nor will he be content to tolerate anything—either in his disposition or in his daily life—which would be inconsistent with the perfect holiness of God. Oh, that God might implant in all of us this desire and then set us a-praying that we might secure the blessing we crave! Now, secondly—

II. THE MAN WHO DESIRES TO WALK IN GOD'S WAY NOT MERELY PRAYS, BUT HE RESOLVES.

"I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord. I will keep Your statutes." He puts his whole heart into it. His prayer is no deceit. Then he throws that same heart into a strong resolution that he will find out what God's statutes are and when he has found them, he will keep them, cost whatever it may! Need I say that nobody becomes holy against his will? No man keeps God's statutes unless he exercises a resolve to do so. The very essence of obedience to God lies in the heart, so the heart must be set upon obedience! It must be a sincere, willing, cheerful obedience, or else it is not a genuine submission to the Almighty. Do I address anyone who is living in sin and yet saying, "I wish I could get rid of it"? I have often heard such a wish expressed by persons who must themselves have known that they were uttering a lie! A man says, "I wish I could be set free from sin tonight," and tomorrow he will mix with evil associates and loose companions, and go to places of amusement where he is as sure he will be led into sin as he would be sure that his coat would burn if he put it into the fire! He goes into the middle of the mischief—he takes the tinder of his heart where he knows there are sparks, and he says, "There will come no harm of it." He puts a candle near the gunpowder and he hopes he will not be blown away! That is what he says—but it cannot be so. If you do not want to be besmeared, do not go among the pitch and the tar. If you do not want to be defiled, avoid all ungodly fellowship. The man who means to conquer sin and resolves to conquer it, will keep himself out of mischief's way, that he may be clean before the living God! Such a man will give up everything that tempts him. If there is anything in which he knows he has weak point, he will mortify himself rather than offend his conscience. He cuts off his right arm and plucks out his right eye, according to the gospel, which means, I suppose, whatever he is fond of, if it becomes a temptation to sin, he will forthwith have done with it once and for all. It does not matter what it is—whether it is drunkenness or gluttony, or lust—whatever is his besetting sin! He just says, "No. This may be

allowable to some men to go just so far, but I cannot go as far without going further. Therefore, I will have nothing to do with it." He is ready to deny himself anything and everything. He completely reforms his habits, lest he should be led into sin. "I will keep Your testimonies."

Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man really resolves to do this! When he says, "I will keep out of the way of temptation and I will deny myself that which tempts me, lest by any means I grieve the Holy Spirit of God," he will be sure, if his resolution is of the true metal, to follow that which helps it. He knows that to hear the gospel helps it—therefore, he will not waste the morning hours of the Lord's-Day in slothful sleep, but he will welcome the assembly of the saints and rejoice in the preaching of the Word! He knows that reading good books will often be helpful to him, so he prefers them to light literature. He knows that association with Christian people will help him, so he likes to get among them. He knows that to lift up his heart in prayer to God, not occasionally, but regularly at set intervals, has often proved a help to him—and he accordingly endeavors to maintain such engagements as strictly as he finds it possible. If there is anything of good repute to help him to get rid of sin, he seeks after it! And when he prays to God to keep him pure, he takes care to choose all such means as God may put in his way to resist evil, and to follow after holiness!

Such a man will achieve his purpose. You may laugh at him for being too precise. His heart will not be wounded by your ridicule. He will lose the Sunday trade if, thereby, he loses half his living, rather than break God's command. It may be that his association with some worldly persons contributed much to his prosperity, though it involved him in serious temptations—he falters not, for he would sooner run the risk of losing all the world than stake his reputation, or jeopardize his soul, for he is bent upon getting rid of sin! Sin is the plague he hates! He would sooner be poor as Lazarus, and even covered with sores, and licked by dogs, than have the sins of the rich man upon him! He wants to be clean delivered from every foul being and every false way! One thing has he asked of the Lord, and that one thing has he set his heart upon—that he may possess himself in righteousness, that he may be without offense and that he may maintain his integrity. To obtain this, through the power of the Holy Spirit, being cleansed by the blood of Jesus, he will cheerfully suffer any imaginable privation!

Do observe how *David sought after a thorough allegiance and a perfect conformity to the will of God*. He says, "I cried with my whole heart; I will keep Your statutes"—not some of the statutes that were agreeable to him, but *all* of the statutes that had the divine sanction. I do not intend to be uncharitable when I suspect that some Christians do not wish to

know too much, or to enquire too minutely into the Lord's demands upon their resources. I have noticed a great many people lately who have looked upon perfection as a prize within their reach and even as an attainment to which they have already come! This is getting rather common. They profess to be perfectly sanctified. But what can I think of some of them who, to the best of my belief, are possessed of fortunes to the extent of two or three hundred thousand pounds? Were they perfectly sanctified, could they look on the outlying world, living in vice and ignorance, out of which a chosen people are being saved by the gospel, without supporting those agents and agencies that have the divine blessing manifestly resting upon them to the utmost of their ability? They should come nearer to the kind of consecration which was manifested in that poor widow who gave "all her living" to the Lord's treasury! I do not believe in a perfect sanctification which allows a man to lay up so much treasure on earth, while so many works for the Lord Jesus need his help. Systematic hoarding of wealth, to my mind, does not indicate a perfect character! I am not judging ordinary Christians, but only those who talk of full consecration—and I will never believe in it till I see their gold, and their silver dedicated to a larger degree, yes, to a perfect degree! Do not let them boast, but *give*. As to those who are satisfied that they are perfect in spirit, soul and body, we wait for their last testament—to see what their wills look like when they die! A man who is perfect before the Lord lays out his substance for God's cause, depend on that! He does not merely attend conferences, and talk of good things, of spirituality of mind and sanctification by faith, and all those glittering subjects, but he lives for Jesus in some practical work and gives himself up—and his substance, too—for the honor of the Redeemer's name and the diffusion of the glorious gospel! I have no leading one of these brothers in my mind's eye, but certain of their disciples—and I do not even condemn those—but I do ask them to reconcile their large wealth with their still larger professions of perfect consecration!

The true seeker for holiness is one who, while he resolves on obedience to God, will dare to be singular, if no man will accompany him in it. "I cried with my whole heart: I will keep Your statutes." He meant to do it, though he should be without companions. He was prepared to stand alone! I always admire that speech of Athanasius, when he, seeing others had turned aside to Arianism, said, "I, Athanasius, against the world." He is a true man who can be a true man by himself! Give me no semidetached cottage, but a house that stands compact on its own foundation! And give me such a man as can let the wind blow all round him and yet stand upright. He will hold his own whether men will bear or forebear! Let his fellow creatures applause or hiss him, he will remain true to his own convictions. If they bear him on their shoulders in

triumph, it is the truth he has espoused they honor—or if they trample him under their feet in contempt, it is for righteousness' sake he suffers! But, like Luther, he will defy devil, death, and hell to hold to his purpose to keep God's statutes! Now the Word of God animates a man's soul and the work of God is the enterprise of his life when this is the strong desire of his spirit. He prays to God and invokes His aid, yet at the same time he records his vow with a mind that is not given to vacillate. He has put his foot down where he meant to stand. He has knit his brow and closed his teeth and set all his features to the aspect of defiance, for he means to hold out till he achieves the victory! He is not going to compromise himself, or to tolerate any wrong thing. He will foil temptation, master evil propensities and slay the sin that offends, and aggrieves, and harasses him! In the armor of God he arrays himself and, through the grace of God, he will prevail!

The man who is thus seeking purity, while he prays and resolves, if he is really wise and taught of the Spirit—

III. WILL HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF HIS OWN WEAKNESS AND DEPRAVITY.

Therefore, he supplicates the Lord in the language of the 146th verse—"I cried unto You; hear me; I shall keep Your testimonies." His tender misgivings are an incentive to his restless importunities. As though he should say, "Oh, Lord, I am praying and resolving, but my prayers need Your answers, and my resolutions need Your might to fulfill them. My prayers—what are they? My resolves—what can they do? I am a frail leaf and I bend before the wind of temptation! My righteousness is like the sere leaf of autumn—it is soon carried away—yes, it is like a filthy rag that ought to be set aside and hidden from view! My God, I need sifting, I need sifting! Oh, save me, and then I shall keep Your testimonies." There is no holiness in any man by nature and never will be! Some ingenious author has said that man is not dead like a stone, but dead like an egg. There was some disposition to life in him that needed brooding over to develop. Well, I should not like to be the hen that had to sit on that egg till it has hatched! That a long eternity of disappointed hopes would spread out before me, I am quite certain. It is a stone egg, this humanity of ours! There is no real spiritual life whatever in it. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. And they may sit on that unclean egg as long as they like, but a vile, unclean chick will be the only result of it. Before ever we can keep God's testimonies, *we must be saved*! We must be saved, first, from the guilt of the past. By substitution, by redemption, by the application of the precious blood of Jesus, by that expiatory sacrifice in which our blessed Lord bore for us the vengeance of God that was due to our sin, must our salvation be procured!

Sinner, you will never go out of the Egypt of your bondage to sin till the blood of the Paschal Lamb has been sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts. You may strive against sin as you will, but you will never overcome it except through the blood of the Lamb. Inquire of those in heaven who have conquered sin and do now wear the snow-white garments—

"I asked them whence their victory came?
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death."

Never till you see a bleeding Savior will you be able to put your sins to death! They must be crucified on the cross. They will die nowhere else than there! "Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies."

We need to be saved, however, not only from the guilt of sin, but saved *from our sinful selves*! We, whose nature is evil, cannot do much with so bad a nature to baffle all our efforts to cleanse our way. This nature must be removed and a *new nature implanted*, or else, while the old nature is extant, the old evil will assert itself! There are different ways of treating diseases. A man has a bad malady upon him and it breaks out in his flesh. He goes to a quack who gives him an ointment which he applies outwardly to heal the sore till the morbid appearance vanishes. And he congratulates himself on the cure and commends the charlatan for his skill. "What a capital doctor he is, and how well my money was expended," he says, "he has taken away all that eruption." By-and-by, the man is lying so grievously sick and ill that he does not know what to do. "Oh," he thinks to himself, "have I made a mistake?" And when a true physician comes, he says, "What have been your symptoms?" He tells the tale of an eruption on his skin and the remedies he resorted to. "Ah," says the physician, "the disease is driven inwards! You have taken the wrong course—your present symptoms are fatal. You will die. It was well that it should come out on your flesh, seeing it lurked in your constitution. When you have a disease, you had need lay the axe at the root, and not at the branches. It is not the disfigurement of the skin that is so alarming, as the blood-poisoning that caused it." Forthwith he begins to deal with the real evil.

So, my dear friends, you are only tinkering with the symptoms, the mere eruption on the skin, while you aim at outward reformation! You must be born-again! That is the only cure for the leprosy of sin. I am glad to hear of people insisting on the importance of reforming every kind of vicious custom and evil habit, but they do not go to the root of the upas tree unless they resort to the gospel—which lays the axe right at the root of all manner of sin and blasphemy with its imperative demand that you repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out! This is the vital and vitalizing process that will turn out to be a radical blessing.

Lord, save me, save me! Change my heart! Renew my spirit! Make the fountain clean! Set the mainspring right! Oh, Holy Spirit, regenerate me! And if You do this, then, not till then, shall I keep Your testimonies!

The same is true in respect to every Christian, beloved. We require God to keep on sifting us. Unless His spiritual work shall be carried on every day in us, we shall be unable to keep His testimonies. We are to be resolved against sin—I have told you that. We are to pray against it—I have enlarged upon that. Still, we must fall back upon the naked fact that a real conquest of sin is the work of God, Himself! "I cried unto You; hear me: I shall keep Your testimonies."

Brothers and sisters, beloved in Christ, live near to God! Live at the foot of the cross! Go every day to Jesus. Never get away from the spot on which you stood when you first believed. Then and there you looked, as sinners, to find everything in Him and nothing in yourselves. Do not expect to overcome sin by any other means but by faith in the atoning blood. Do not seek anything like perfection apart from Jesus Christ who, "Is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Oh, I would charge upon the members of this church to labor after holy walking. It cuts me to the quick when I hear it said of any one of the members of this church, "Well, they may be professors of religion, but they are not honest in their dealings, or they are not choice in their language, or they do not govern their tempers. They may be saints at the prayer-meeting, but they are devils at home! They may look very amiable at the communion table, but they are very cross at their own tables." Do not let it be so! Give no cause for such an evil report, I pray you! I invite all that attend my ministry, who are truly converted, to cast in their lot with us and join the church, for so you ought to do, but oh, do not bring dishonor—I will not say upon us—that is of small consequence. Do not bring dishonor upon the gospel that we preach and the Christ whom we love!

The world will not say, "There, that is a false professor." They ought to say it. And if they were honest, that is how they would put it, but, in general, they will say, "That is your religion!" And the cross of Christ will be evilly spoken of and many a poor believer who has trouble enough as it is, finds it more difficult to give an answer to the scoffer through having the inconsistencies of others thrown in his teeth. Better die than deny the Savior! Better that we lie sick at home, covered with boils, than that we go about the world grieving the Holy Spirit and putting an evil word into the mouth of the ungodly! Follow after holiness, I charge you. You are not saved by works! We give no uncertain sound about that teaching! We have told you and we constantly do tell you, that you are only to be saved by the blood of Jesus! But, remember, Jesus came to

save us *from our sins*. If we hug our sins, we cannot have Christ for our Savior! Christ and you must part, unless you and your sins part. Jesus Christ will take any sinner to heaven, but He will not take any *sin* to heaven. He will spare the sinner, but He will not spare his sin! If you want to spare your own sins, depend upon it, you will lose your souls! Watch, I pray you, against what are called "little" sins! Remember, when thieves want to get into the house, if they cannot find a ready entrance, they will often put a child through a little window—and then he opens the front or the back door; so a little sin will often open the door to a big sin. Watch, I pray you—watch against secret sins! We have heard of some who barred the doors at night and fastened the windows, but there was a thief under the bed! Mind that it is not so with you—some hidden evil—some secret lust. Watch, pray, resolve, but still come back to this—"Lord, help me; Lord, save me; Lord, keep me." The old plowman whom I sometimes used to talk with before he went to heaven said to me, "Depend upon it, if you and I get one inch above the ground, we shall be that inch too high." There is much truth in his plain remark. If we get any high notions of what we are, we shall soon sink below what we should be. Lie low! Aspire high! Be nothing! Take Christ to be your all-in-all! Renounce self-confidence and have faith in God! In this way you shall conquer sin, your prayers shall be accepted, your resolutions shall be carried out and the purpose of your heart shall be verified. "I will keep Your statutes." May it be so with every one of us! Amen, and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:145-168.

Verse 145. *I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes.* In the time of trouble there is no resort like that of prayer, but it must be intense and earnest. "I cried with my whole heart." And sometimes it should be accompanied with a resolve to profit by the affliction. "I will keep Your statutes." As the child under the rod prays to be spared because he hopes in future to be obedient, so does the Psalmist here say, "Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes." This ought to be the effect of every affliction—to make us more careful in our obedience. It is not always so, but so it ought always to be.

146. *I cried unto You: save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.* As if he felt that the force of gratitude would compel him to obedience. He did not merely promise it, but he prophesied it as a matter of certainty that he would keep the Lord's testimony.

147. *I rose before the dawning of the morning, and cried for help. I hope in Your word.* Early prayers seem seasonable. Before we have gone into the world, should we not first go to our God? Prayer ought to be the key

of the morning to open it, as well as the key of the night to close it. And notice what should always be associated with prayer, namely, hope. "I *hope* in Your word." There is no prayer like a hopeful prayer, in which a man hopes, believes, expects that God will send him a blessing!

148. *My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your word.* Before the watchman can cry the hour of night, my eyes are upon the word of God, and I am studying it. Oh, it is well when we prove our love to the word of God by our meditation upon it, our constant searching into it.

149. *Hear my voice according unto Your loving-kindness.* Not according to my earnestness, much less according to my merit, but, "Hear my voice according to Your loving-kindness." Oh, what a large measure is this, for who can tell how boundless is the loving-kindness of God? Such is the answer to my prayer, O my Lord.

149. O *LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment.* As You try me, quicken me. Just as You see I have need of it, give me more spiritual life.

150. *They draw near that follow after mischief: they are far from Your law.* Dogs are at my heels! I have heard them long ago pursuing me, but now they are getting nearer to me than ever.

151. *You are near, O LORD.* Is not that a blessed sentence, that when the adversaries are near, the Friend of friends is near, too? What if he is like a hunted stag, and the dogs are at his heels, yet the omnipotent Lord, the Interposer, can come between and save His darling from the power of the dogs!

151, 152. *And all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.* It is an old story with me that Your love is without beginning, Your covenant from all eternity, your grace immutable, not fickle, nor changeable as if it were founded yesterday upon the sand, but, "You have founded them forever."

153-155. *Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forget Your law. Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Your word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes.* If they sought that salvation, they would cease to be wicked—they would find salvation—but while they follow out their wicked ways, they get further and further away from anything like salvation.

156-158. *Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Your judgments. 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.* It is enough to make any man grieve that the word of God, which is so right, so just, so good,

should be despised! What madness is this which is in the hearts of men, that they despise the best of the best?

159. *Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving-kindness.* It is a fair argument. As one friend may say to another, "Consider how I love you." As a child might say to his angry father when he is about to chasten him, "My father, I love you, although I have transgressed. Look at my heart and see how I love you, notwithstanding all the mistakes of my character and even the faults that I have committed."

160, 161. *Your word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your word.* "Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of"—them? No, but, "of Your word."

162-166. *I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but Your law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Your law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.* Present duty, future expectation. It is no use our hoping for great things unless we cultivate good things. God will make tomorrow bright—let us make today holy.

167, 168. *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.*

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ON THURSDAY EVENING SEPTEMBER 28, 1870.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14.

WE shall do well to notice how much in this chapter is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. It is a chapter full of all good things, most instructive and consolatory. But perhaps one of its most notable points is this—that it so greatly magnifies the Holy Spirit. You observe in the second verse how it describes His gifts—that holy liberty which we now have from our former bondage—"the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Then further on, in the sixth verse, it virtually ascribes all our true life to the same power, for it is the Spirit who works in us a spiritual mind—and the Apostle tells us that "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." The quickening of the body is, in the 11th verse, ascribed to the same agency, "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." Meanwhile the true living that we have even here is traced to that same Spirit, "If you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." No holy life is there, except as through the Spirit—sin is mortified. In the 16th verse the Spirit is described as being "a witness with our spirit" that we are born of God. How many gracious offices does He undertake for us? And as if that were not enough, in the 26th verse He is spoken of as "helping our infirmities" in prayer, teaching us what we should pray for as we ought and "making intercession for us, or in us, according to the will of God." I am afraid we don't render that honor to the blessed Spirit which He deserves. Our ministry is not deficient, I trust, in magnifying the Christ of God, but too often the Holy Spirit is not sufficiently honored and, perhaps, this may be a reason why He does not do so many mighty works in the Christian Church as He did at first. This is the dispensation of the Spirit. He dwells in us! He dwells in the Church! Let us honor Him! Let us grieve Him no more, but put ourselves beneath His guidance and wait for His blessing! Our text ascribes *leading* to the Holy Spirit! Those who have been quickened and made to live, and introduced, therefore, into the family of God, have one

mark—one never-failing mark. They all have it, and none others ever have it. As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God, and all who are the sons of God are *led* by the Spirit of God!

Now it is to this leading of the Spirit rather than to the sonship, and all the blessed things that come out of that, that I shall direct your attention at this time. And we shall notice first—

I. WHAT IS INTENDED BY A MAN'S BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT.

Every man is led by some spirit. There is an evil spirit in the world, and it leads the mass of mankind. He who says, "I am free and led by none," is led by the spirit of pride and self-conceit. Under some form or another, the human mind subjects itself to some spiritual sway—and here we are told that those who are the sons of God are distinguished by this—that the leadership under which they move is that of the Holy Spirit! I take this to mean, first, that *the Holy Spirit becomes the governing principle of our life*. Years ago we were led by the Spirit from the wilderness of our natural state. We had been called under the preaching of the Word, but vain were those calls. The Holy Spirit came and then the call of the preacher became an effectual call to our own souls. The first active grace we ever exercised was by the leading of the Holy Spirit! We were then, for the first time, recognized as the children of God, because then, also, for the first time, we yielded ourselves up to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. And mark, from that day to this, every act of ours that has been heavenward, every thought of ours that has been towards God and His Christ, has been under the leadership of that same Spirit! He who gave us at first to live, has kept us alive! He who guided our tottering footsteps to the foot of the cross and there sealed our pardon, has led us along every step of the way, up every hill of difficulty and down every valley of humiliation, even until this moment! And so it must be until we reach our journey's end.

There may be steps in that journey, alas, that it should be so, in which we are not led by the Spirit, but depart from under His power for a while, and the flesh becomes dominant. Oh, that those steps might never be thought of except with bitter regret and humiliation of spirit! But in every true step onward and heavenward between here and the gate of pearl— we shall be led by the Spirit of God. We run when He draws. We are active when He makes us active. He makes us willing in the day of His power and then we work with Him because He works in us here to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Now, beloved, you may judge whether you are the sons of God, then, by asking yourselves this question, "Am I under the influence of the blessed Spirit? Has He led me from darkness into light—from self to the Savior? And has He continued to lead me onward and upward in the divine life? And am I leaning upon

Him for all future power with which I shall fulfill my pilgrimage till I come to the celestial city?"

But opening up a little further this leadership, I would observe that when a man is said to be led, there are four things implied in the thought. The first one is very apparent, namely, guidance. If I select a pilot, I accept him to steer the vessel. If, on a dark moorland, I accept a guide who knows the way, I do not pretend to know it myself, but I put myself fully under his guidance. It is so with the child of God. He does not know. What he thinks he knows is usually his folly, if it is knowledge that has not been given to him by the Holy Spirit! But he who is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit takes Christ to be unto him, wisdom, and expects to receive this wisdom through the Holy Spirit taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto him! He is not a teacher, but a disciple. He is not, himself, a guide, but one who is guided. He has put himself into the hands of another! Self-will does not believe this. Self-love is disgusted with the thought. I may, therefore, ask you, beloved, "Do you accept the Holy Spirit's guidance? Do you desire to be led, not according to your own will, but according to the will of the Most High? Are you desirous that the prayer of your Master should be your prayer, 'Not as I will, but as You will'"? Guidance—we must accept that, or we are not led by Him!

But in the second place, there is *drawing* as well as guidance, for oftentimes when a person is led, especially if it is a weaker led by a stronger, there is a general impulse. I accept the map as my guide, but the map is not my leader. A leader gives me some degree of strength. He operates upon me gently and sweetly—impels me in the direction in which he would have me go. There is a great difference between a guide and a leader—but still there is a measure of power given by a leader who leads in the way. And oh, brothers and sisters, I am sure you who know anything about the experience of children of God, will feel that you have not only had the light of God from the blessed Spirit to show you the way, but you have had life and power to help you to *run in the way*, else you would have known the right way, but you would never have followed it—you would have seen the way of God's commandments, but you would never have run in them, unless He, the blessed Spirit, had enlarged your heart! If there is obedience to the light of God, received, that obedience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit! Not merely the knowledge and the acquiescence in the knowledge of God's will, but the power to carry out that will comes from Him, and from Him only! Now I think we may say that in leading, there is something more than guidance—drawing.

There comes in yet a third point. Under the idea of leadership is that of *government*. Moses was the leader of the children of Israel through the

wilderness. He was, as a leader, their ruler—and if the idea of government does not always attach to being led, yet it certainly does in this case! The Holy Spirit will never guide us along a road in which we claim to be His equal, in which we claim to still be free and to have no authority above us. He is the Lord and Governor within the soul of every man in whom He resides and on whom He bestows His guidance. I will ask you, my dear brothers and sisters, whether you do not acknowledge this to be the fact. You are often rebellious against the Spirit and you often grieve Him, but still, for all that, your heart desires—your *renewed heart* desires—to submit fully to the Holy Spirit! I feel in my own heart a longing to be sensitive to every impulse of the blessed Spirit, to feel His breath not only when He comes like a hurricane, but also when He comes as a gentle breeze. I would desire to be moved by the Spirit's faintest wish, and to have my soul cognizant of the Spirit's work within—pliable, malleable, so as to be easily molded, plastic beneath His divine touch. And you are not led by the Spirit unless it is your wish—unless you put yourself under His government as well as under His guidance.

And fourthly, this *being led implies acquiescence* in the government, and in the guidance, and in the drawing—for a person is not led unless he acquiesces in the drawing and runs when he is drawn. The Spirit of God never violates the free agency of man. It has been commonly laid to the charge of those who preach Calvinistic doctrine that we make it out that man is passive and that the will is nowhere! I do not know who may have said so, but certainly the master theologians of our school have always endeavored carefully to show that the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do, yet never so as to treat man as if he were not a free agent! God does not deal with man as with blocks of wood or stone. He deals with men as men. He has His will with them—His sovereign and ever-blessed will, but He does not violate their will! There is a lock box—it is locked. Soon it is opened. Now he that made that box opens it with a key and does not violate the lock, nor even the most delicate ward of the lock. It is only the thief that comes with his crowbar and rifles it, that violates its constitution. And so God knows how to put spiritual life and divine grace and obedience into the human heart without destroying the fact that it was a human heart and that it had a free choice! He makes us willing in the day of His power! It is not that the day of His power is one of physical might, but of *moral spiritual might*, so that we are made *willing* to do what once we would abhor to do! Now a man, then, whose religion leaves him passive cannot prove that he is a child of God because he is drawn by the Spirit, for it is as many as are *led*. Now to be led means that you are willing to go! To be led means that as you begin to feel the gentle drawing of the guide, you follow—not always with equal

footsteps, but still with willing steps, desirous to go in the way He indicates. Beloved, is it so with you, or not? Do you yield to His guidance? Do you desire to submit to all His government? Do you wish to work with Him, and He with you—working out your own salvation—to will and to do according to His good pleasure? If so, you are one of the sons of God. But now, secondly—

II. INTO WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT LEAD US?

It is a subject that would take many discourses. Therefore, very briefly, let us say He leads *us into the truth of the faith, into holiness of life and into peacefulness of spirit.* You shall know His guidance. He leads us *into the truth of the faith.* If any receives error, it is not by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And if, on the other hand, any man shall be able to enter into the soul, and marrow, and essence of the truth of God, flesh and blood have not revealed it unto him, but the Spirit of the living God has done so! Believe me, you have learned nothing if you have learned it of the flesh. You may take a creed and suppose it to be perfection. You may also have it explained to you in the clearest manner, but if all your learning of Christian doctrine comes from that catechism or creed, or the instruction of the minister—and if that Spirit of God has not sent it into your soul—you have learned nothing aright yet! We need to have truth burned into us, right into our very nature, before we know it—for half of the things we think we believe we don't believe, and indeed, nothing is really grasped, truly laid hold of by a living faith until the Holy Spirit leads us into the truth of God! Beloved, are you staggered by a doctrine of God's Word? Are you as yet a beginner in the divine mystery? Then wait upon the blessed Spirit with this prayer, "Open, You, my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law, and what I know not, teach me."

At the same time I have said that the Spirit of God leads men *into holiness of life*. There have been occasions in which men have performed actions which were unjustifiable and have said that they were moved thereto by the Holy Spirit. Such men lie, for the pure and Holy Spirit could never be the author of sin! No suggestion of His was, or could be, otherwise than pure and heavenly! I remember hearing of a brother who, one very cold winter, being very poor, felt it laid on his soul, he said, to remember that text, "All things are yours." It was one cold morning and there was no fire to warm himself by, nor for his little family, and this text came again and again, "All things are yours." It rushed into his mind, then, that he might go to the woodshed of a neighboring farmer, and take just a few logs to put on his own hearth, for, "All things are yours." He thought it was the Spirit and so, away he went to the woodshed and was just about to select a few likely logs when this other

text came into his mind, "You shall not steal," and in a moment he felt ashamed that he should have imputed to the Holy Spirit what was inconsistent with the will of God! Ah, your nature, wandering and vain, would be glad enough to try and get the patronage of the Holy Spirit to its vagaries, but it must not be! He is the Spirit of holiness, and He leads us in the right way—into the way everlasting—and let us not so insult His holy and blessed name by daring to lay any of our wanderings to Him! He leads us into holiness of life. No man ever goes wrong who is guided by the Spirit, and no man ever attains unto true holiness but as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit upon his understanding and his whole character!

But I say it again, that the Holy Spirit leads us *into peace of mind*, and so assuredly He does into a peace that is altogether independent of outward circumstances. He can give His children peace when the tempest blows. They shall have peace when all others are at war. Their hearts shall not be troubled because they believe in God and rest in His divine grace. Peace with God! The Spirit leads us to peace with our fellow creatures—peace with our own conscience. His ways are ways of peace. Wherever He conducts us, peace in the end shall be the sure result! When I meet with a very quarrelsome person and he says that he is led by the Spirit to fight, and to indulge a bad temper, and to sharply criticize and bitterly condemn, he may be led by *a* spirit, but certainly not by *the* Spirit of the ever blessed God! The spirit that is in us lusts into envy, but the Spirit of God is first, pure, and next, peaceable. And if we are not peaceable, we are not led by the great peace-giving Spirit of God! There is room for much more, but I will not enlarge. These are, however, the main things into which He leads us. Now, in the third place—

III. HOW DOES HE LEAD US?

In what way are the monitions of the Holy Spirit conveyed to those that are led by Him? How does He speak unto the sons of God? We are not to think He does this by inspiration, or of dreams and visions, for if none were sons of God but those who receive these, surely many of the very best of the divine family would lose their title to sonship! And I fear, on the other hand, that there are some who think they have seen visions and dreamed dreams, and have had remarkable manifestations, who are probably more the children of Bedlam that the children of Bethel! I rather consider that they have lost their senses than gained the divine graces of the Spirit! Certainly there are no things that more perplex us than the graces of many persons who think themselves spoken to by God, but rather have a ringing in their ears, or a whispering in their heads, but nothing more. How does the Spirit of God then, lead His people?

I would reply, first of all, *by the Word*. This is the "more sure word of testimony, whereunto you do well that you take heed as unto a lamp that shines in a dark place." If any man would know the will of God by the Spirit, let him come to the Word that is written here—let him search this to know what is God's mind, for, "holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Spirit." We are not to expect new revelation! The old is perfect and complete. There is a curse pronounced upon whoever should add to it or take from it. Let us accept it as the complete mind of God, so far, at any rate, as He sees fit to reveal it to us. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Word! But it is not through the bare letter of the Word, for in this He does not always speak. Many an eye has glanced over the Word and seen none of the mind of the Spirit there. Yes, and many an eye of a true believer, too, has read and read, again, and missed the glory of the passage, so that the Spirit does not always speak through the Word to us, or through the same word to the same person at all times, but He sheds a light over a certain part of the chapter, He illuminates it, lights it up and then puts it to our souls with power! And those who are Bereans and search the Scripture, shall come upon choice passages—words that shall make their hearts burn within them, texts that shall leap out of the page and embrace them and whisper in their ear sweet loving words—and kiss them with the kisses of Christ's lips over again! It is in the Word, opened up by the Spirit, that we get His joy and guidance.

Sometimes that will occur under the preaching of the gospel when the Lord gives to His servants power to speak His mind and they are His mouth. Then it is that hearts made ready "receive with meekness the engrafted Word," and hearts are guided, led and directed. It may not be, however, by a minister at all—it may be by the words read in some book in connection with an explanation, or it may be the Word of God, itself, which, for some peculiar reason unknown to us (the work of the Spirit of God), may appear to us to be more full of meaning than ever it was before. "But," says one, "I perceive that we learn God's mind, and are led by the Word of God as thus illuminated by the Holy Spirit. But suppose there are certain difficulties and I should need to know what is the proper course—how and in what way shall I learn the mind of the Spirit?" Brother, God does not treat us, now, altogether as little children, and give us, by Urim and Thummim, this or that direction. He treats us as in a spiritual dispensation, somewhat more advanced than were His people under the legal types and ceremonies. And He does not say, "This is the way—walk you in it," in so many words, but He does just this—if you distrust your own wisdom, go to Him in prayer and ask His guidance. You shall then take the question and consider it. That very consideration will be a help to you to go rightly, for haste is usually

unwise. That consideration shall of itself assist you and you will then look at it in this light—"If there is anything untruthful, then I cannot touch that! If there is anything unholy, then I cannot touch that! If my motive for such a course is purely selfish, then I feel I cannot do that. But if it is a path of wisdom consistent with the truth of God, and righteousness, and the glory of God, then, at any rate, it is not closed to me. And if there are two of the same kind and here the difficulty will be—I will now go to God again and ask Him to do something over and above what He ordinarily does through His Word, namely, *direct me either by some providential circumstance, or by some advice that shall be tendered to me by a Christian friend, or by some direct impulse upon my will* to make me do that which He would have me to do.

Very few—none, I will venture to say—have ever gone wrong when they have thus consulted God and desired to be led aright. Something has occurred which has drifted them from the path they have chosen and has drifted them into the path that they would have chosen had they been possessed of the wisdom of the infinite. Strangely, too, minds have been impelled to courses that did not seem to be wise, but they have turned out to be wise when those minds have humbly followed what they believed to be the impulse of the Holy Spirit. But I am persuaded there are many occasions in a Christian's life when, if he waits upon God, God will as distinctly move and guide him as ever He did the prophets of old—and there shall be direct communication between the Holy Spirit and the believer's soul. I am sure, unless I have been fearfully deceived, that I have often felt the motions of God's Spirit in that particular form. I have, by His grace, been enabled to obey them, and I here confess that whenever any project has been carried out by this church and it has been successful, whenever we have attempted any new work for God, if anyone has said that I was wise in having suggested it, I can only reply that I never took the initiative. I have been the creature of the circumstances that God has put around me. I have been led and driven by a power superior to mine before which I have bowed—and if there has been any success resting upon the course I have followed, it is because I have waited always to be guided—and have never wished to go before the cloud. And you shall find that every man whose life has been happy before God will tell you that if at any moment there has been the wrong and the unhappiness, it has been when he has not sought counsel, and has been his own master instead of waiting upon the Most High. I speak thus of myself, only, for one knows one's own course best, and can speak with authority there. But sometimes the example of one Christian may be a help to others. Wait on the Lord and keep His way and He will establish you in due time. He has not closed the door of His counsel, but will still

direct His people. Jesus is to this day The Wonderful, The Counselor, and you may seek guidance at His hands and find it, too!

And now, once again, *what are the excellences of being under such a leadership*? They are very many. *It supplies a great need.* We are as sheep going astray, and astray we shall always go till a good shepherd leads us. It is ennobling to have such a leader. Every man under a leader participates in some degree in the honorableness of him who leads him. How sweet it is to feel that the Holy Spirit leads you! The greatest and wisest of men, Solomon, himself—well, one would feel honor by sitting at the feet of so wise a man, but oh, the honor of being guided by the Spirit of God! The poor woman whom Cowper describes—

"Yon cottager who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store,
Who knew—and knew no more—her Bible true"

and who waited upon God each day for guidance, was far nobler than Voltaire, who guided himself, but who guided himself into a maze of doubt and darkness! Put your little hand into the hand of the great Father of all spirits, whose wisdom is infinite, and the compact ennobles you!

And *how elevating it is to be led by the Spirit;* to be led by the world is groveling. To be led by ambition is a poor foolish thing. To be led by the noblest of human spirits is, after all, only to rise to the level of man. But to be led by God! He never lowers the tone of thought in us, but elevates us and makes even our most common actions to be divine, seeing they are done in His might! O dear brothers and sisters, if we are led by the Spirit of God, we are as high as the angels are in heaven, yes, higher than they, for unto none of them has He said that they are the sons of God. "Those who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Let us add how safe this guidance is. There are no errors where He leads—all our mistakes are ours! Our blunders in doctrine and our follies in life, and our divergences from the paths of peace—these are our own! If we would but follow Him, our life would be clean, and pure, and perfect!

And how blessed it is to have Him for a leader! What happiness it gives! He comforts, He enlightens, He instructs, He sanctifies. To be near to Him is to be near to heaven. To be completely under His guidance is to be perpetually happy. Oh, happy people, whose God is the Lord, and whose leader is the Holy Spirit! And now in closing, perhaps there are some here who will say—

IV. "HOW CAN I OBTAIN THIS BLESSING OF BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD?"

The answer is, first, dear beloved; you must have the Spirit of God. No man is led by the Spirit till He *has* the Spirit. "You must be born-again." Unrenewed men cannot be led by the Spirit. He never leads the flesh—it is enmity against God, and can never be otherwise. The old nature, it is not possible even for the Holy Spirit to lead! It would perpetually turn to lust. There must be a new nature! The Holy Spirit must create us anew in Christ Jesus—we must have the Spirit, or else we cannot be led by Him! It is your difficulty, then, O unrenewed men and women, that you must have the Spirit of God, or else vain will be your prayer to be led by the Spirit of God! The blessing is that He is already given to as many of you as believe in the name of Jesus Christ! And this evening, if you have never believed before, may you be led to trust in the Son of God. But you must have the Spirit before you can be led by the Spirit. If again you say, "But how can I obtain this blessing?" I would answer, "Distrust yourself now." Up to this good hour you have been a self-made man—you have believed in self-reliance. There is some truth in that in a certain sense, but as before the living God there is no man who is less a man than he who trusts himself! You shall be as cursed as the heath in the desert which sees not when good comes. Your strength shall, by-and-by, utterly fail you. You are not wise, though you whisper to yourself that you are. The fact that you believe you are wise proves that you are a fool!

Can you believe this? It is a part of the work of the gospel to make you empty. You cannot be full till you are. You cannot be led by the Spirit till you are willing to be led—and that will never be till, first of all, you see that you need leading. Oh, may He come and convince you of your folly, of your wandering, of your ignorance—and then, laid low at His dear feet, Jesus Christ shall give you His Spirit and lead you in the way of His salvation! May this distrust happen to you tonight, if it never has done so before. Then if you would still be guided, but feel that you are not led by the Spirit, I would say to you, dear beloved, consult the Word of God more than you do! If you have the Spirit, but don't feel that you are led by Him, but that, with desires to do right, you are often wrong—be a greater searcher of the Word of God. This is not the age in which the Bible is read much. I suppose there are more Bibles in England than any other book, but there are fewer Bible *readers* probably than of any other book! And yet the Bible readers are more numerous than the Bible searchers. I hardly remember a passage that bids you read, but I do remember a passage that says, "Search the Scriptures." May we become students of the Word, desirous to know the meaning—and then we shall feel the Spirit of God instructing us through the Word—and we shall be led by Him!

And add to this reading of the Scriptures, *abundant prayer*. Again must I sorrow that there is so little prayer among us. God grant that prayer-meetings may begin to be better attended, that family prayer may be more regarded and that private prayer may be more diligently and more spiritually maintained. We shall not be led as a church and as individuals by the Spirit of God if we get out of His way, neglect His Word, or neglect to draw near to Him in prayer! What is the reason why there are so many sects in the world? Surely it must be because we don't follow the guidance of the Spirit of God. If we followed the Word of God and the *will* of God in all things, we would be very much more alike than we are! I do not think that even then we should all run in the same groove, for the road to heaven may be sufficiently wide to have several different paths in it, and yet they shall all be in the same way and in the same road. But the great differences—surely they must have come from this—that the Church did not want to be guided by the Spirit! She did not go to the Spirit's book, nor go to the throne of grace to be guided—she followed first this saint and then the other, this learned doctor and then the other, and to this day you shall hear debates about all sorts of methods of working and human authorities as if that were of any consequence at all!

What has that to do with religion? This book, the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants! And you shall have thrown before you the tenets of Independency, and the minutes of the Wesleyan Conference, or some dogma of close communion or open communion of the Baptist Church. To the dogs with it all! What does it matters, what rules and regulations we may pass? Only the Word of God and the Spirit of God should have power in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ! And happy will the day be when we shall dash down everything traditional, however venerable it may be! When we shall tear to pieces and utterly abhor all that came of wise, and learned, and good men if it were contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God! I would that all Christians would be more fully willing to be led by the Spirit of God. But, beloved brothers and sisters, there are some Christian people who don't want to know too much of their Master's will! There are some awkward texts in the Bible that some people don't like to read because they know that certain learned doctors did not square them, somehow or other, with their creed, but that it was rather a twist and a squeeze, and they feel it was rather a wrench to the text, and so they don't often read it! And certain ordinances too; many Christian people have certain beliefs and traditions about them, but they never come to the Book of God to see what it says! And so with every ordinance, whatever it may be—baptism,

confirmation, confession to a priest—what you will, if the Spirit of God has not taught it, we know nothing of it!

But are we willing, all of us all round now, to learn what the Spirit of God would teach us, honestly and truly? Can all of us say, to whatever creed we belong, "I am a disciple at the feet of Jesus, and I desire to submit all my belief entirely to the instructions of the divine spirit"? We ought to say this, and must, or we lack one mark of being the sons of God! And when all through the Christian Church this shall be the spirit, there will come a fusing—a separating between the precious and the vile, a casting away of all old beliefs and old traditions! I do not believe for a moment that the Church will come to believe as I believe, or as you believe, my dear brother. You will have something wrong to give up and I shall have something wrong to give up. We ought to desire to give up everything which is wrong and to learn everything which we do not know yet to be the truth of God, but which is the truth—may we all be brought there, kept there, held there—led by the Spirit, not tethered down by a creed, not tied hand and foot by a certain commentary, not made to say, "There, that is all I ever will believe under any circumstances," but led by the Spirit through His Word and through the enlightenment which He is sure to give to as many as put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Oh, that every sinner here were led to resign himself, now, to the Holy Spirit's will, for He would lead him to the cross at once! The Holy Spirit never leads a man into self-righteousness, never leads him to put his trust in sacraments, but leads him right away to the feet of Jesus! May the Holy Spirit guide you and all of us there, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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"O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and do; defer not, for Your own sake, O my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."
Daniel 9:19.

DANIEL was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land, but, in the providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen—many have done so. Alas, we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in grace and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they have grown rich in this world's goods. But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew—he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honor to be numbered with them and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God's providence had made him to be distinguished, yet his heart would make no distinction—he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God's three mighties in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of grace, himself, (and for that very reason), he stooped to those who were in a low state. Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of grace, when they begin to despise their fellows! They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves. But it is a good sign when your own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when you condescend to those who backslide and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When you have, like your Master, a tender sympathy for others, then are you rich in divine things! Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious brothers and sisters in the way of prayer. He would have

shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did—but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My objective here and now will be to stir up the people of God and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer—more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of His Church and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

First, our text gives us *a model of prayer*. Secondly, *it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer*. First, then, our text gives us—

I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.

I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel *was not offered without consideration*. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that required no forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he is very blameworthy. But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, but only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of preparation? The words come and then we try to quicken them rather than the desires coming first and the words like garments to clothe them?

But Daniel's considerations lay in this, first—*he studied the books of God*. He had with him an old manuscript of the prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such-and-such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such-and-such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly! Oh, that you studied your Bibles more! Oh, that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold Him to His word and say, "Fulfill this, Your word, unto Your servant, whereon You have caused me to hope." Oh, it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's words, for there is no word that can prevail with Him like His own! You tell a man, when you ask him for such-and-such a thing, "You yourself said you would do such-and-such." You have him then! And so when you can lay hold on the covenant angel with this consecrated grip, "You have said! You have said!" Then you have every opportunity of prevailing with Him. May our prayers, then, spring out of our Scriptural studies—may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer!

He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer, *studied the history of his people*. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the Church—if not with the Church of the past, certainly with the Church of today. We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army and we will buy new maps about once a week to see

all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ's army and revise their maps to see how the kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world? All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the Church—and especially about our own Church! I am afraid I must say it—I am afraid there are some members of the Church that do not know what is going on—hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brothers and sisters, know well the Church's needs as far as you can ascertain them! And then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information—and with the promises of God and the fact of the Church's needs, you will pray prayers of the spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest consideration.

But next, Daniel's prayer was *mingled with much humiliation*. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of black hair called sackcloth, and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him—and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret. These outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God. We always pray best when we pray out of the depths—when the soul gets low enough she gets leverage. Then we can plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers—a minister of the gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it! It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it. You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see too much of your sin! Yet, brothers and sisters, this is rarely the case. We need to see much of our deep needs, our great sins, for ah, that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of anything like self-righteousness! To be able to say from the very heart, "Not for our righteousness' sake do we plead with You, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers, too." Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit! When you can do this, then are you in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God and bring you down a blessing! Oh, some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves. Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy's lintel, but they can never pass through the portal! You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at His footstool—then will He hear you, but not until then.

Daniel's prayer instructs us in the next point. *It was excited by zeal for God's glory*. We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the

conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is. But suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say, "What a useful minister he is"? That is a bad motive which spoils it all. If I am a member of a Christian Church and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly, but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, "See our zeal for the Lord; see how God blesses us rather than others?" That is a wrong motive. The motive is this, "Oh, that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of His sufferings! Oh, that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise Him, new hearts to love Him! Oh, that sin were put an end so that the holiness, righteousness, mercy and power of God might be magnified!" This is the way to pray—when your prayers seek God's glory, it is God's glory to answer your prayers! When you are sure that God is in the case, you are on a good footing. If you are praying for that which will greatly glorify Him, you may rest assured your prayer will speed. But if it does not speed, and it is not for His glory, why, then you may be better content to be without it than with it. So pray, but keep your bowstring right—it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this is your bowstring—"God's glory, God's glory!" This above all—first, last, and midst—must be the one objective of your prayer.

Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice *how intense Daniel's prayer was*. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and do, defer not, for Your own sake." The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," so often—it often amounts to taking God's name in vain and is, indeed, a vain repetition! But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition—then it cannot be repeated too often and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how the prophet here seems to pour out his soul with, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," as if, if the first knock at mercy's door does not open it, he will knock again and make the gate shake! And then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed! Cold prayers ask God to deny them—only importunate prayers will be replied to! When the Church of God cannot take, "No," for an answer, she shall not have, "No," for an answer! When a pleading soul must have it—when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till He has given the blessing to such a pleading one! Brothers and sisters, if there is only one among us who can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come! Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear brother, do you undertake it? Dear sister, in God's name, do you undertake it? And God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one. But how much better would it be if many a score of men and women here, yes, the entire Church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give Him no rest until He

establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth! Oh, that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing! As soon as Zion travailed—you know that word—as soon as she travailed she brought forth children. Not till it comes to *travail*—not till then—may we expect to see much done! God send us such travailing to each one of us—and then the promise is near to fulfilling!

But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable *prayer was a prayer of understanding* as well as earnestness, for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense—and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand, but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God. It begins thus, "O Lord, hear." He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty—he asks to be heard. He begins with that, O Lord, hear. I am not worthy to be heard. If You shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just." He asks an audience—he gets it—and now he goes at once to his point without delay, "O Lord, forgive." He knows what he needs! Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering. He puts his hand on it. Oh, it is grand when one knows what one is praying for! Many prayers wander—the praying Persian evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the center is the prayer it is good to pray! God teach us to pray so. "O Lord, forgive."

Then observe how he presses the point home. "O Lord, listen and do." If You have forgiven—he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it—Do good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem—do interpose for the redemption of Your captive people! Do interpose for the reestablishment of sacred worship! It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness of action. So in prayer. "Hear, me, my Lord! You have heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me—work the blessings I need." Follow up your advantage—build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, "Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him. Because He has heard me once, therefore will I call again." Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit and also with understanding.

And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was *a prayer of holy nearness*. You catch that thought in the expression, "O my God." Ah, we oftentimes pray at a distance—we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at the foot of His throne—as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we are not sure. But when God helps us to pray as we should, we come right to Him, even to His feet, and we say, "Hear me, O my God." He is God—therefore, we must be reverent. He is my God, therefore we may be

familiar—we may come close to Him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them, I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God because he knew how to come close to God. You know how your little child climbs your knee. He gives you a kiss and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear—they must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh, a child of God—when his heart is right—how near he gets to his God! He pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High. Brothers and sisters, this is to be noted well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humiliation—he is still not in the position of slavery! It is still, "O my God"—He grasps the covenant. Faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God and pleads that relation! "O *my* God."

Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that *the prophet uses argument*. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. "Bring forth your strong reasons" is a good canon for a prevalent prayer! We should urge matters with God and bring reasons before Him—not because He needs reasons, but He desires us to know why we desire the blessing! In this text we have a reason given, first, "Defer not for Your own sake," as much as if he had said, "If You suffer this people of Yours to perish, all the world will revile Your name and Your honor will be stained. This is Your own people and because they are Your property, suffer not Your own estate to be damaged, but save Jerusalem for Your own sake."

Then next, He puts it on the same footing in another shape, "For Your city and Your people." He urges that this people were not like other people. They had truly sinned, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people! He pleads the covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham's seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that! And then he puts in next, "For they are called by Your name." They were said to be Jehovah's people. They were named by the name of the God of Israel. "O God! Let not a thing that bears Your name be rolled about like a common thing! Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust—come to the rescue of it! Your stamp, Your seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to You, therefore come and interpose." Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God—and these are very many—and discreet minds, when they are fervent, will readily know how far to go in pleading, and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear Brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when He spoke thus, "O Lord, You have been pleased to call Your Church, Your Bride. Now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouses that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her. And will You not, O Husband of the Church, do the same

with Your spouse and let Your Church receive a blessing, now that she pleads for it?" It seemed good arguing, after Christ's own sort, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Get a promise and spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, You have said it—do it!" God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think He means what He says. He is a practical God. His word has power in it and He does not like us to treat His promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be used as matters of real practical truth! Oh, plead them with God! Fill your mouths with reasoning and come before Him. Make this your determination, that as a Church, seeing we need His Spirit and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of Mercy to send us what we need! Thus much, then, upon this as a model prayer; now I shall need a little longer time to speak upon—

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.

Brothers and sisters, it is always an encouragement to do a thing *when you see the best of men doing it*. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress and, indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same. I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening who interested and amused me, too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to heaven, having told His disciples to wait at Jerusalem till the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, "Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing." And John might have said, "Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret. I think I shall go and see how that is getting on—it is a long time since I saw after it." And each one might have said, "Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when He is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling." "No," says he, "they did not say that at all, but Peter said, 'Where shall we hold a Prayer Meeting?' And Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a prayer-meeting. True it was in a back street and the house was not very respectable and, 'Besides,' says she, 'it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.' 'Never mind,' says Peter, 'it will be nearer to heaven.' So they went into the upper room and there began to pray, and did not cease the prayer-meeting till the blessing came."

Then the brother told us the next story of a prayer-meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had 16 policemen to look after him. And the brothers and sisters knew they could not get Peter out in any other way than one—so they said, "We will hold a prayer-meeting." Always the way with the Church at that time, when anything was amiss, was to say, "Where shall we have a prayer-meeting?" So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a prayer-meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that prayer-meeting and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out—and they left how he was to get out to God. While they were praying there came a knock at the door. "Ah," said they, "that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in fright! What did she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter! She went back to her mistress and said, "There is Peter at the gate." Good souls! They had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, "Why, it is his spirit—his angel." "No," said the girl, "I know Peter well enough. He has been here dozens of times and I know it is Peter"—and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief! They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was! It was the prayer-meeting that did it! And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God—

"Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw.
Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.
Restraining prayer, we cease to fight!
Prayer makes the Christian armor bright!
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

It is prayer that does it—and this fact should encourage us to pray!

The success of Daniel's prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him and he looked up—and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man! That was quick work! So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world! "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second—so it is estimated, but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, "Before they call I will answer." There is no time occupied at all! When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delays, it is only that it may come at a better time—like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier

cargo. Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home not only with the capital, but with the compound interest, too! Oh, prayer cannot fail—prayer cannot fail! Heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail! God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than He can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-worked prayer of His own quickened, earnest, importunate people! Therefore, because He sends success, brothers and sisters, pray much!

It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that *Daniel prayed for a very hard case*. Jerusalem was in ruins. the Jews were scattered. Their sins were excessive. But, nevertheless, he prayed and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the Church—we have not to mourn that God has departed from us—our prayer is that He may not, even in any measure, withdraw His hand. I pray God that I may long be buried before He shall suffer this Church to lose His presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth a single farthing, if the Spirit of God is gone. He must be there. Brothers and sisters, if you are not prayerful; if you are not holy; if you are not earnest, God will not keep pastors, deacons, elders, and church members living near to Him! The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one is kept right cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may He bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so—getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short at one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long. Ah, there are some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draftiest place—if the word was blessed to them, they did not mind it. May God grant that you may always be a living people, for years and years to come, until Christ Himself comes! But oh, you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that He would not withdraw from us for our sins, but continue to stretch out His hand in loving-kindness, even until He gathers us to our Father!

It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done—but a threefold cord, a fifty-fold cord—oh, if out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh, what prevalence there would be! Would God it were so!

Brothers and sisters, how about your private prayers—are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that mid-day prayer, for surely your soul must go up to heaven, even if your knees are not bent—are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you—there cannot be a fat soul and neglected prayer! There must be much praying if there is much rejoicing in the Lord.

And then your family prayers—do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, "My son is going to be married tomorrow—going to be married to one of your members." "I am glad to hear it," I said. "I hope he is a believer." "Oh, yes, sir. He has been a member of your church for some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow." Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, "I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled; may your sorrow be divided and lightened." But then I put, "Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life." I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer! Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?

Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the Church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a prayer-meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don't feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don't see now. I know I see some fresh ones and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well! I know those who are constantly at prayer-meetings can say it is good to be there. Often it is the best evening in the week to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing! Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, "All our strength lies in prayer"! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to reach the gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us! Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God and He has heard us. Daily He sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer! Oh, you that come here as members of the Church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you! This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure, I think it would have sounded impossible! But it was done—you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how He has helped us to this day. Oh, don't stop your prayers! You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying prophet, was told, "Take your arrows and shoot" and he went to the window, and he shot but once—and the prophet was angry and said—"You should have shot many times, and then you would have utterly destroyed your enemies." And so we pray, as it were, but little; we ask but little, and God gives it. Oh, that we would ask much and pray for much—and shoot many arrows, and plead very earnestly!

Look at this city of ours. I would not say a derogatory word against my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of

London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come of Paris! One could hardly live in that city and know all the sin that was going on there without fearing that nation's sin would bring a national chastisement! And oh, this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! You are the salt of the earth, you that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savor! God forbid that you should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people! Everywhere, sea and land, is compassed by the adversaries of the truth of God to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the mercy-seat, that their efforts may be defeated! At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not! Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in providence. We may expect great things if we can pray greatly and wrestle earnestly.

I call you in God's name, to the mercy-seat! Draw near there, with intense importunity—and such a blessing shall come as you have not yet imagined! Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves—let us pray them into prayer! Let us pray to God for them until they, at last, pray to God for themselves! Prayer can unlock mercy's door, for others as well as for our own people! Let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God, send us the blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DANIEL 9:1-11.

Verses 1, 2. *In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.* Daniel was himself a prophet, but he studied the inspired prophecies of Jeremiah. If such a man reads Scripture, how much more ought we! Whatever the light of God we may suppose to dwell within us, we shall do well to walk by the mere sure word of prophecy.

3-5. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity. And have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and from Your judgments.* Daniel certainly had rebelled less than any of his countrymen and yet he is the first to make confession on their behalf. So, my brothers and sisters, when we

have confessed our own sins, and have found mercy, then we should begin to be intercessors for others! We should make confession for the sins of our families, for the sins of our city, for the sins of our country. If no longer need we plead for salvation for ourselves because we have obtained it, let us give the full force of our prayers for the benefit of others!

6. *Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the prophets, which spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.* It greatly increases sin when we sin against warnings sent from God. Daniel confesses this.

7-9. O *Lord, righteousness belongs unto You, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You. O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.* What a gracious verse that is! Surely it might be printed in letters of gold, and every trembling, penitent sinner might look at it till, at last, beams of light should dart into the darkness of his despair!

10, 11. *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His ways which He set before us by His servants, the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice. Therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.*

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THE DEJECTED LOVER
NO. 3485

[The original title of this sermon is THE DISCONSOLATE LOVER.]

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me."
Song of Solomon 3:1-4.

HOW exquisitely pleasant is communion with our Lord Jesus Christ! And how supremely favored are those who enjoy it! Holy Scripture exhausts every earthly figure to delineate its sacred charms, its ineffable delights! Yes, inspiration, itself, exhausts its metaphors without compassing its mystery, because it is impossible for human language to express the sweetness of His grace, or the solace of our acquaintance with Him. In just so much as it is sweet to know that fellowship, so is it sad not to know or to experience it. But alas, how frequently is this communion unfelt and unproved!

I. THE BRIDEGROOM WAS MISSED.

In addressing this large assembly, I can but think a considerable number of the Lord's people are in the condition of the spouse. You do not at present enjoy access to Christ, or sweet communion with Him. It may do you good to consider the things that remain to you, though this fellowship is suspended, for let it be remembered that it is not upon communion with Christ our life depends. Our salvation stands in the *knowledge* of Him, not in communion with Him. We are made safe by what He has done, not by what we *feel*. Not our enjoyments, but His sufferings we must lay as the solid foundation of our hope!

There remains to us, dear friends (for I confess to be sometimes in the same state)—though there are no privileged token of our love to Christ, nor any palpable enjoyment of His love to us—there remains at this hour the positive conviction and the open confession that we do love Him. Four times, I think, does this benighted spouse cry, "Him whom my soul loves." She cannot see Him, but *she cherishes a tender affection for Him*. She does not enjoy His presence just now, but her heart cleaves to Him and appreciates His excellence. What though she may have been idle and

slothful, or though her spirit may be heavy and hazy, one thing she knows—she does love her Lord—about that there can be no mistake! Publicly in the streets, in the hearing of the watchmen, before the ministers and messengers of the gospel, she does not blush to say, "Him whom my soul loves." So it was with Peter. When he had much to regret, much to reprove himself for, he could say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." In like manner can you not vouch for your sincerity when there is reason enough to challenge your propriety? You feel guilty of a carelessness or a cowardice that might reflect on your gratitude, but you cannot admit a wantonness or a willfulness that could extinguish your love! My faithless heart, you would gladly tell Him, has merited Your rebuke, but Your infinite discernment can bear witness to the kindling of my desires. Do not believe my actions, but believe my inmost soul! Judge me not by the utterances of my recant lips, rather look upon the throbbing of my penitent heart. You, O Jesus Christ, are He whom my soul loves!

Though the spouse does not just now enjoy communion with Christ, she knows its sweetness and she feels uneasy until she partakes of it again. As the needle cannot stop until it points to the pole, so she trembles until her soul rests in personal communion with Jesus! Next best to present fellowship is to hunger and thirst after it. And you note, too, in this case and all the cases of every true believer in Jesus, not only is love constant and desire after Christ earnest, but there remains sufficient strength to resolutely seek for Him. You may not as yet have your desire accomplished, yet your heart is buoyed up with hope and you are saying, "I must seek Him." You are not like the traveler across the desert who at last loses all heart, gives up all effort and perishes on the sand for lack of water. No, you feel an inward impulse stronger than any outward discouragements and, though faint, you are still pursuing! What if you have sought Him and not found Him? Yet will you seek Him again till you do find Him, for divine grace stimulates you and urges you forward. As the spark flies upwards towards the sun, so the newborn nature of the Christian seeks and soars after Christ. It is not simply unhappy without Him, but it is restless and resolute to discover Him! It would break through every law of nature to establish this law of grace. The new nature seeks the source from which it came—it pines and pants to meet with Him and talk to Him in whom are all its life, strength and joy!

Do you not feel this desire after Jesus, though you are complaining of dullness, deadness and worldliness? Is there not some such indescribable yearning in your breast for a communion which you well understand, but do not now enjoy? I know not how you lost the fellowship, my brother, which you so grievously miss. There are many ways in which this may come about. You and I often lose *the sweetness of communion with Christ, I doubt not, through unbelief*. We think so lightly of unbelief, as though it were an infirmity and not a sin, whereas

of all evils, it is the chief! What can be more displeasing to the tender heart of Jesus than ungenerous thoughts concerning Him? When last you were repining and reflecting that He had forgotten you, you quickly lost that hallowed calm and that sweet confidence which you knew before. Could you wonder at it? How could He walk with you while you were casting into His ear a foul suspicion against His truthfulness and His love? Faith is the hand which holds the Savior and will not let Him go! Unbelief opens the door and bids Him go. How shall He tarry when we will not believe in Him? Do you tell Him to His face that He is not true and trustworthy, yet expect to lean your head upon His bosom? How can you expect this? Perhaps, my dear brothers and sisters, you have been too busy with the world, and yet I know some with their hands full of business, and their heads full of enterprise, who have constant communion with Christ! But perhaps you have let the world steal in upon your heart. All the water in the sea, as I have often told you, does not frighten the mariner, but that little drop of water in the hold, which betokens a leak in the ship, gives him great distress! You might have an empire to govern and yet never lose fellowship with Jesus, but with nothing more than your little family to manage, you may lose Him if you let the cravings and the covetousness of the world, its fashions or its ambitions, get inside your heart! Keep that chamber clear for Christ. Let your heart be the marriage bed and keep it chaste for Him who is your husband and your Lord! Or possibly, dear brothers and sisters, you have been negligent in the use of private prayer—and what can shut the windows through which Jesus looks as soon as laxness or slackness in supplication? Unless you are much upon your knees, you cannot expect to have your head much upon His bosom! The appointed place of audience is the mercy-seat. If you refuse to resort there, how can you look for Christ to grant you another audience chamber? Is it reasonable that He should alter His fixed institutions to suit your foolish negligence? Go then, dear brothers and sisters, if you would renew your fellowship, go again to your closet and there pray unto the Lord your God, and make your supplication unto Him!

In many other ways the Christian may lose his fellowship with Christ. Especially by the indulgence of some known sin, by harboring resentment or cherishing a bitter spirit against a brother, by shutting the eye to some gospel truth, by dissembling convictions in deference to the company you keep or the society in which you move, by not coming out from the world, or mingling too much with the ungodly. It may suffice to refer to these evils without enlarging upon them. When you miss the fellowship, there is little comfort in accounting for the way you lost it! Your heart is rather craving its restoration. "Tell me how I may find Him whom my soul loves, for I desire to renew my fellowship with Him."

Come then, beloved, with hearts humbled on account of past sin, and yet encouraged with the assurance that He who received us at the first is willing to receive us still—let us go to Him anew. We were all over foul

and vile then. If we are the same, now, we will return unto Him—if it is in a bad a plight, yet let it be with as good a plea! Come to Jesus, as once you did come to Him, though, perhaps, you have known the Master lo, these many years! The same words will suit your case—

"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."

While our text conducts us onward to the successful restoration of communion, it glances also at—

II. UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO FIND THE BELOVED ONE.

Of how many of us might it be said that with a lazy attitude and a listless wish, we have yawned after a gift for which we might have vehemently yearned. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves." As it were on her bed of sloth and idleness, *she dreamed of a happiness she was far from enjoying*. But we shall never get the privilege of close communion with Christ by merely wishing for it! What though now and then, with a hectic flush upon our cheeks, we exclaim, "Would to God I were like Christ! Oh that I lived nearer to Him! I am not satisfied with what I know—I desire to know more!" This is no symptom of health. Does the idler ever prosper? He who lies in bed and will not sow by reason of the cold, where is his harvest? What pearls come into the hands of the merchantman who says, "A little more sleep and a little more slumber"? And do you think the pearl of pearls, the pearl wherewith none other in the universe can compare, the highest privilege which the King Eternal ever bestowed on His own courtiers—do you think that this, the most distinguished favor He ever confers upon the darlings of His heart, this intimate fellowship with Jesus—do you think He will communicate that to you while you are tossing on your bed in indolence which is the bane of virtue and the nurse of folly? It was not because she sought Him by night that she did not find Him, for Jesus is often found by His people in the dark. When no rays of light, no gleams of comfort can steal over our senses, still if we seek Jesus with our whole heart, though to our own apprehension we grope about like blind men, we shall find Him, to the joy of our spirits! It was not the night that prevented her finding Him—it was the *bed*—her laziness, her lethargy and her sloth. Shake yourself from the dust and believe!—

"Avoid the idle life!
Flee, flee from doing naught!
For never was there idle brain
But bred an idle thought."

No longer to the insidious temptation which is so apt to beset us all; the Lord deliver us from the lukewarmness of the Church of Laodicea, lest He should spew us out of His mouth! When she sought Him thus, she could not find Him. No marvel, you will think, for your own experience has taught you that such disappointment is the invariable rule.

With no better success did she seek Him when afterwards *she went about in a self-sufficient spirit*. I may be wrong in my conjecture, but to me the words, "I will rise, now," sound a little like dependence upon her own exertions. "I will rise, now," has not half as grateful a ring about it, nor is it half as graceful, as, "Draw me; we will run after You." This confiding rather than that confidence seems to be the impression which becomes the saint when cold and crushed, he keenly feels how desolate he is. Arise, did I say, shake off dull sloth? Ah, then 'tis easier said than done! "Awake, my soul," is a poor invocation compared with, "Oh, Sun of righteousness, arise!" Or, "Make haste, my Beloved," or "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Beware, my brothers and sisters, of seeking after Christ in a legal spirit. Beware of going to Calvary as though you were going to Sinai. In coming to Christ, no merit of your own can recommend you—so in longing for Him to appear to you again, no strivings of your own can avail you. Let His rich grace be your poor plea! Your best way of suing is to say—

"Oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie."

Once again, *in trusting in the scrupulous using of the means,* the bride seems to have thoroughly relied upon attaining her end. Lest I should seem too censorious of her conduct, allow me to say that my criticism of the text is bent on taking and applying the rebukes to ourselves. Do you not notice, however, how sure she seems of finding Him if she goes about the city in the streets and in the broadways and if she meets the watchmen and inquires of them? But it does not appear that the fitness of the places to seek, or the persons to inquire of, were of much use. She went down one street and another, as we may resort to the street of private prayer, a narrow and little-frequented way, and she said, "I shall find Him there." But after she had walked through it, she said, "He is not here. My chamber is not a palace as it used to be. No more is it the privy closet of the King of Kings, the audience chamber royal" So she saw a wider way, and she said, "I will walk down here," as we may go to the prayer-meeting. "What blessed hours I have often enjoyed there," she said. "I shall find Him in that highway, I feel sure," but after traversing all its length she said—

"I go where others go, but find not Jesus there."

then she quotes, "I will go into the broad places where the preaching of the gospel is to be heard. I will go with the throng where God speaks through His servants," but service after service, and sermon after sermon were like clouds without rain, and wells without water! Others were refreshed, but she, trusting in the means, came away without a blessing. So, brothers and sisters, you may traverse every street in the city, you may even come to that street paved with gold—the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—or you may go down Water-street, where in the ordinance of Baptism, the Lord often reveals His death and burial unto His people, but after having traversed both these streets you shall be compelled to

say, "Though I love the means, they are a weariness to me when Jesus is not revealed to me in them."

What a difference there is between our preaching at one time and our preaching at another! How often do I bless God in the evening for that which I groaned over in the morning, when my spirit has been bowed, my tongue tied, and I could not preach as I would! It is a grand thing for the minister to be humbled in the sight of his hearers, when you discern that it is not the man in whom the power is vested, but it is his God whose might you cannot resist! My fear often is that your smiles may provoke His frowns and He may withhold His blessing from me because you attribute to some genius of mine an influence which His Spirit, alone, could exert. When I was only a lad, a stripling fresh from the country, you said when there were conversions, "How God helps him!" I am jealous of you, now, lest you should not say the same thing! God will take away His blessing when you refrain from offering Him the praise! If you once ascribe what is done in any degree whatever to the creature, or to any power that he has, you will excite the jealousy of his Lord! Remember the lessons that the spouse was taught. Means and ordinances are just what God likes to make them. Even divine institutions are beggarly elements when He forsakes them. They can be nothing better than matters of duty and they may be very far from being matters of privilege. When He wills it, He can make His ministers do exploits. The least of all His servants shall be mighty as David was when He slew the giant, Goliath, with only the sling and stone. We are nothing of ourselves. The hand that moves the instrument is everything. If you would come to Christ, or seek after Christ, looking too much to the means, you will have to return again with the mournful cry, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Such, then, are the unsuccessful efforts to regain communion with Christ.

III. WE FIND THE SUCCESSFUL HERE SET SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE UNSUCCESSFUL.

We shall now hold her up as an example which you will do well to imitate. With *what constancy* she sought this communion! She began at the dead of night, as indeed it is never too late to seek renewed fellowship. Yet she sought on. The streets were lonely and it was a strange place for a woman to be at such a strange time, but she was too earnest in seeking to be abashed by such circumstances. The watchmen met her, and they were astonished, as well they might, how she came to be there at that hour. But she sought on—she would never rest until she had found Him. Believer, if you would have fellowship with Christ, you must be in continual quest after it! Your soul must get a craving for the one thing, and that such a craving as nothing but that one thing can satisfy. I would my own soul were like Anacreon's harp, only in a better sense. You know he said, though he wished to sing of Cadmus, his harp would sing of love, alone. Oh, that we might sing of the love of Jesus and

of His love, alone! Then it would not be long before our fellowship with Him would be renewed!

And as she sought Jesus continually, *she neglected no means that seemed, to her, right and promising*. Though I have warned you against trusting in what are called the means of grace, I had not the slightest intention of undervaluing, much less of disclaiming them. We cannot rationally expect the Lord to reveal Himself other than in the way of His own appointment. He may sometimes do so and He likes to surprise us with His grace, but we have no right to expect it. Abraham's servant followed closely his master's injunctions. And when he blessed the Lord God of his master, Abraham, who had not left his master destitute of His mercy and His truth, he testified, "I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." It is in the way appointed that God does most commonly deign to meet with us! I do not expect that those of you who every time there is half a shower of rain, stay at home, will be very well fed, nor those of you who neglect the Monday prayer-meeting on any trivial excuse! There are a goodly number of you who do so—you cannot expect that you will grow in grace if you forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Those of you who when the brethren join together in earnest prayer cannot be present, must not marvel, if, like Thomas, you are not there when Jesus appears. You have good cause to be full of doubts and fears when your fellow disciples are full of joy and love. Use the means! Use all the means, I entreat you. Who knows how great and rich a blessing, obedience in even the least of the Lord's commands may bring to our souls! It is a blessed thing to walk tenderly and scrupulously observe the statutes of the Lord—to be afraid of leaving anything undone which is commanded, or of doing anything that is forbidden—lest in the omission or the commission we should by some means or other vex a jealous God and provoke Him to keep back from us much that we might have enjoyed through the means of His own appointment!

But the chief beauty of the whole story is that the spouse did not stop with the means of grace. She had applied to the watchmen on the walls, but better still for her, the watchmen had found her. The expression is remarkable, because it is expressive of much that we have often proven. You know, sometimes, what it is to be found by the watchmen on the walls. You come here with a trouble of which nobody knows anything and the watchman discovers you. In the description of your case he finds you. It often happens that the very thing you were talking of by the way, the watchman relates to you. You perceive that you cannot hide. How strange it seems to you! Is not this a token of the Father's love that He guides the watchman to discover you in your midnight wanderings where you are unknown to any but your God, and thought you would be unrecognized by anyone? Yes, but even then you know, I hope, how to pass by the watchman. She asked, "Saw you Him, whom my soul loves?" Why did they not answer? Perhaps because they were blind and never did see themselves. Alas, that some watchmen on the walls have need to

watch for their own souls rather than for the souls of others! *Still, not the best of the watchmen there could console her* with a smile of Jesus' face. We can tell you what we have felt and proved of His love. We can, sometimes, when the Lord helps us, tell you how His people are ravished with His smiles, but a smile of His face, it is for Himself to give—and none but Himself can bestow it! It were not possible for Him to send that secondhand. You must go directly to Him. Yet see what honor God puts upon His servants, because she says it was but a little after she passed them—you must go beyond the minister a little, but a little! The Lord helps His servants to bring you to the verge of fellowship. We know it is all of the Lord, unto Him be all the glory! Still, He chooses, in the use of means, to make it but a little between the earnest, spiritual exercise of outward means and the supply of the inward spiritual grace! "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves."

Thus far, Beloved brothers and sisters, have I led you. Now I want you to go a little further. Away beyond the Church, away in advance of the bread and wine spread out for our mutual repast, a little beyond all these. It is not these that will satisfy your craving. A feast of bread and wine would never gratify this longing of your spirit! You need Jesus! The minister cannot satisfy you—you need Jesus! You have got to this point of desire—you need Christ and nothing but Christ! Go on then, dear brothers and sisters, and to attain your objective I can propose nothing better than the simple method I proposed to you just now. Go to Him as you did at first! Forget the past, except to remember with penitence your sin and to anticipate in the future, the grace that welcomed you as a stranger. You know the love and mercy that are in His heart—unworthy as you are, cast yourself at His feet—and you may have the love of your espousals given back to you! You may once again cross the Jordan of doubt and fear, and enter into the Canaan of your blessed inheritance, enjoying rapt and rich fellowship with Him!

If you do see Him, be sure you lay hold of Him. He Himself loves to be embraced. Let your love lay hold of His love, for His love is laying hold of you! Hold Him fast. Dismiss all ungrateful thoughts, for they will fill your hands so that you cannot hold Him. Divest yourself of all cares for a while and now, with an empty hand, just lay hold of His righteousness and strength!

And when you get the gift you long for, I charge you tell your brothers and sisters! Bring Him to your mother's house. There are some in your mother's house sorely sick with weary apprehensions and dreary misgivings—tell them that you have seen your beloved! It will cheer their spirits. Tell them the same news that made good old Jacob's eyes overflow with tears of joy! Tell them Jesus is still alive! Tell them that Jesus yet sits upon the throne of God! Tell them that He is still full of love to His chosen ones—and I think their desponding souls will straightaway revive and they, with you, will feast on free grace and dying love!

Well, dear friends, I shall occupy no more time in talking to you, for we need to devote the rest of our time at the communion table, to calm and quiet musings. I have conducted you as far as I can. Surely there is no need to excite Christians to that which is sweet to them! Yet I beseech you let no sense of unworthiness keep you back, for you always were unworthy! As such Christ loved you at first. Neither let any consciousness of backsliding keep you back. "As a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so do you depart from Me," says the Lord by the mouth of His servant. And yet He says, "Return, return." I do not know of any figure more striking! None that involves more bitter reproach, yet for all that, He bids her come back! Though you are thus guilty, and have been unfaithful to your loving husband, still He bids you come back, and assures you of a welcome! That hymn may suit the backsliders as well as the unconverted sinners—

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream."

Oh, how sad it makes my heart when I think of some of you to whom this is all an idle tale! All this discourse is arrant nonsense in the judgment of some of you. Our faith must seem to you strangely credulous. Our views must seem to you altogether visionary! Howbeit, there is a land that you have never seen, a life that you have never felt, a truth that has never dawned on your understanding. These things that are so real to us are strange to you—still it is more strange and more strangely sad to me that you should be without God, without Christ, without hope in the world! We are pleased to greet you in this sanctuary, though we can well imagine that the sight and sound are foreign to you as would be the other side of a sea you have never crossed. You may be led to ask, "What is it? What does it mean? Is there another and a better life? Are there other and brighter joys than we have ever tasted? Do these Christians have comforts that I know not of? Have they a love which I have not? I would I knew the same!"

Ah, thoughtless, heedless sinner! Be you a high caste or a low caste sinner, know this, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bled on the cross and died for such as you are! Whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. Trust in Him and you are saved! This is the love which won our hearts. Oh, may it win yours! The things of which we have been speaking do but spring from that simple fact that He loved us and gave Himself for us. The way in which we learned the mystery of His love is as open to you as it was to us. This was the way. We put our trust in Him. We knew we were not worthy of Him, but we did trust Him. Through His grace we did, without introduction or preparation, draw near to Him and cast ourselves on His mercy. May you do the same! Let there not be an hour's delay, for the days are flying—the years are flying. Your grave is very close—within a few days you may be carried there. Fly at once to Him who bids you trust Him! God help you to do this, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

Verses 1, 2. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.* Have we not constantly declared that our faith, if true, is always practical? Here, again, we have the precepts of God's Word. Here we are told that there is much for us to lay aside, as if it were natural to us in every case, and must, therefore, be carefully laid aside. "Malice"—we are all inclined to return evil for evil—the Christian must not do so. "All guile"—everything like craft and cunning—this is unbecoming in a Christian. "Hypocrisy"—seeming to be what we are not—all sorts of mere seeming we must lay aside. "And envy"—how easy it is for us to envy one man his wealth, or another his health, or another his talents—but "all envy" the Christian must have done with! "And evil speaking"—it is painful to reflect how much of evil speaking there is among persons who we still hope are good people. They are very fond of repeating stories to the disadvantage of their fellow Christians. Now, whether you are the author of it or not, do not be the retailer of it, for we are here told to lay aside all evil speaking. But then the religion of Jesus Christ does not consist in negatives! It is not merely what we are to lay aside—there is something to be taken up. We are told that as we are born-again, we are to consider ourselves as newborn babes, and are to desire the unadulterated milk of God's Word, that we may grow thereby. It is not enough to be alive—we should desire to grow. To be saved is a great blessing—we ought not, however, to be contented with being barely saved—we should seek after the graces of the Spirit and the excellent work of God within us.

3. *If so you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* Have you tasted this? Oh, search yourselves and see, and if you have, then prove it by the laying aside of the evil, and the thirsting after the good!

4, 5. *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* The priesthood among believers does not belong to here and there, one, but to the whole company of believers. As many as love the Savior are priests and kings unto God—and they should regard their whole life as the exercise of this priesthood. When we assert that no place is holy above another, we do not thereby desecrate any place, but rather consecrate all places. We believe every day to be holy, every hour to be holy, every place and occupation to be holy to holy men, and we should so live as to evermore exercise this consecrated priesthood.

6-8. *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not*

be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. Of whom we can only say, with Augustine, "Oh, the depth," and leave that mystery to be explained to us hereafter.

9, 10. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 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.* How good it is to look back to the hole of the pit whence we were dug! What if today the sovereign grace of God has made us royal priests, yet let us remember that in past times we were not a people, "But are now the people of God." "Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Yes, I think no exercise will be more profitable by way of expressing our gratitude than the remembering what we used to be before the hand of God was laid upon us in love! For if all of us did not run to an excess of riot in our outward lives, yet some of us did. And others who were kept from gross outward sins had, nevertheless, a very sink of corruption within our nature. We felt that when the Spirit of God convinced us of sin we could truly say—

"Depths of mercy, could there be,
Mercy yet reserved for me?"

And having obtained mercy, we will never cease to bless the name of God!

11-14. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it is to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.* Christians should be good citizens. Though in one respect they are not citizens of this world, yet as they find themselves in it, they should seek the good of those among whom they dwell and be patterns of order.

15-17. *For so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.* Even if they are beggars, they are men—honor them. There is God's image, though marred and defiled, in every man—and because he is a man, honor him—pity him. Look down upon him never with contempt, but always feel that there is an immortal spark, even within that mass of filth. If the man is cast into all

manner of beggary and wickedness, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King." The same verse that says, "Honor the King," however, says, "Honor all men," and while we, therefore, have due respect to rank, yet a man is a man for all that, and we must "Honor all men."

18-20. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward, for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* I have known some that could not do that, however. If they were only spoken to very gently, they were immediately in a tiff. "But if, when you do well, you bear it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Here is something more than human nature can bear. Now grace comes in to help. "This is acceptable with God."

21. *For even hereunto were you called.* Called, you see, to be buffeted when you don't deserve it.

21-23. *Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.* Herein is he a pattern of patience to all His people.

24-25. *Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. By whose stripes you were healed, for you were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

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[The original title of this sermon is THE DISCONSOLATE LOVER.]

GOD'S DESIRE FOR US, AND HIS WORK IN US
NO. 3486

A SERMON
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"Behold You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom."
Psalm 51:6.

WHAT a contrast is here and I think intended to be here! In the verse before this one, David describes human nature as it is in its original. He was shaped in iniquity and in sin did his mother conceive him. So that throughout his entire nature from the very first there was iniquity and sin. But God desires the very opposite, so that he felt that he was the very opposite of what God would have him to be. God desires truth and his heart had been false to God. God would have him to be wise and he was, from his very birth, as foolish as a wild donkey's colt. Observe, then, that wide as the Poles are asunder is human nature—and what God would have human nature to be! It would be right to tell you that the older translators and commentators have been accustomed to read this verse somewhat differently from our own version, though I believe our own version to be correct. Calvin and others that preceded him thought that David here said, "You desire truth in the inward part, and in the hidden part you *have made me to know wisdom*," putting it in the past tense. They thought that David said this to show how very inexcusable was his sin—"I am not an untaught one—an uninstructed person. I have not been left without knowledge of Your law, of what sin is and of what holiness is. You have made me to know wisdom. I have felt Your power within my heart. I have been taught in my most secret places to know You, and yet for all that, I have revolted and gone aside, and committed this foul sin of adultery and murder." If so—if that is the correct translation (and there is no reason why that should not be correct, as well as the one we have here), it teaches us that it is a great aggravation to sin when sin is committed by a Christian. Never say that because a man is a believer his sin is less! No, but if it is the same sin as in another, it is far worse in him than it would be in another! A stranger may say of me what my child must not say without being guilty of great ingratitude and much unkindness. It was you, a man, my friend, my acquaintance—this made the treachery of Judas to become so cutting to the Savior. The nearer a man is to God's heart, the more detestable is the sin in him! You cannot bear to see an evil in one you love. If one you love has a toothache, you think more of the pain of that beloved one than of

some far greater sickness of one in whom you take no concern. So sin is a disease which, when God sees in His own beloved child, He perceives it with sorrow and He is quick to remove it and to heal it. Never trifle with sin because you are a Christian! Rather be the more careful to watch against it—

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake, my soul, when sin is near
And keep it still awake."

But now we will go to the text as it stands in our own most admirable and never equaled, and I think never to be excelled, version of Holy Scripture. We have here two things. First, we have *God's desire.* And secondly, we have *God's work*. "You desire truth in the inward parts." Then next, "In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." Let us consider first—

I. THE LORD'S DESIRE FOR US.

That which is desirable to God must be exceedingly and essentially desirable. All wise men will desire that which the infinitely wise God may desire! We are quite certain that there must be something exceedingly precious in that which God thinks fit to be an object for His infinite desires.

Now observe what this desire is. And the first remark shall be, *it has to do with inward things*. "You desire truth in the inward parts." God had made man not only outward, but man inward—not merely these outward members, but the conscious, thoughtful, commanding spirit that rules these members of flesh and blood. God looks, therefore, in all that is done by us that we should do it with our spiritual nature, and He estimates all our actions not merely by what they apparently are, but by what they spring from—He measures them by the motive, by the spirit, by the ruling desire in them. Having made our inward parts, He keeps His eyes fixed upon the complicated spiritual machinery within us, understanding it all, knowing when any cog of any wheel is out of order, when any of the machinery is disarranged. Nothing is hid from His presence and knowledge! He searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men. And His desire, as here expressed, is not so much anything with regard to the outward act or the tongue, or to any ceremonial performances, whatever, but, first of all, it has to do with the inward parts.

Dear hearer, learn from this that there is nothing in religion that is so desirable as the inward part of it. Your first and chief business with your God has to do with your innermost self—your real self. You shall come to keep your outward rightly enough if you will begin to cleanse the inside of the platter first. The outside of the house shall be whitewashed and cleansed afterward—but your first work must be to look into the secret chamber of your spirit and discover what is there. True religion does not begin outside, and then go within, but it begins within and then works outside. The candle is not outside the lantern, but it is first inside the lantern—and then it sheds light all around. Let your inward part be, then, the first part of your care! The mass of even religious mankind do

not think so. Do they not go to their place of worship on Sunday? Do they not occasionally read their Bibles? Have they not a form of prayer at the very tip of their tongue? Have they not given up swearing? Are they not strictly sober? Are they not honest? There are all outward and external things—and sometimes a few ceremonies are added to complete them, such as baptism and the Eucharist, and many more things—and the man thinks himself perfectly complete, whereas he has not even begun yet, for all this is but a thing of nothing unless the *heart* has, first of all, been purged and made right inside by God! Dear hearer, whatever you shall omit, see to it that you look to your heart! "My son, give Me your heart"—see to it that you love your God with heart and soul, and that your religion is a thing that has to do with your vital, your inward, your very essential self, for God's desire is here—let your anxiety be in the same direction!

Next, I observe in the text that *God cares for truth*—He looks for truth—by which, I think, we are to understand here, truth as opposed to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy in the heart is a mortal disease. If your religion is only a pretense. If your heart is black, though your face is bright. If you have filthiness in the well, though in the bucket there may be a little clean water, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! The pure, truthful, holy God abhors hypocrisy! There can hardly be conceived anything more detestable in the sight of the Most High than to mock Him with words of seeming while our hearts and the reality of our nature are at enmity to Him. God desires truth *in opposition to mere semblance*. There are some who have no intention to be hypocrites, but still, all the grace they have is but sham grace! All the knowledge of God they have is but theoretical. All the experience they have ever had is fanciful—all the communion with God they have ever had is mere delusion! The whole thing is but a bubble. Fair are its colors, but it will soon vanish—it is not stable and substantial—it is a mere outward shadow and there is no substance in it. God desires "truth in the inward parts," real repentance, real faith, vital godliness, real communion with God! Everything there must be what it professes to be, for God desires truth—that is, substance—in the inward parts.

Does not this yet mean a third thing, that God desires *truth as opposed to falsehood or lies*? Some persons very sincerely hold lies in their inward hearts. I do not doubt but what there is many a man who believes a false religion and is as sincere in it as any man is in a true one! But his being sincere in believing a lie does not transform the lie into a truth! And if he follows a wrong way, that wrong way will lead to a wrong end—however sincerely it may be followed! God desires that there may be truth in your heart, not error. Even if it is your heart that holds the error, that shall make no difference! He desires truth to be there—truth about Himself, truth about His Son, truth about His Spirit, truth about yourself, your sin, the way of your salvation—truth about what He has revealed. He desires truth—"truth in the inward parts."

Now put the two things together—God desires truth and He desires truth in the inward parts. Now does not this mean that *He desires truth to affect all the powers of our mind*, and all the powers of our mind to be conformable to divine truth? This is what I mean— we know we have knowledge—God would have us *truly* know. There is much knowledge that is not true knowledge. A man knows Christ, it may be, by what he has heard, what he has seen of others, but he does not truly know Christ in his own soul! Beware of the letter only! Beware of mere theoretical knowledge! God desires that what you know about His Son should be true, real knowledge. There is a great danger when we live with Christian people to pick up a second-hand experience. They have their sorrows—we hear them speak of them. We, perhaps, think we know something about those sorrows. We talk as they do. We hear of their joy and oh, it is so easy to dream that we have enjoyed the same! We use their language. This is how cant comes into the world—and it has not quite gone yet—it is all too common. But a borrowed experience and the language that comes of it—these are very loathsome to true minds, and very loathsome to God! God would not have your brains stuffed with mere words, nor would He have you seduce yourself into confidence with mere doctrines! He would have you know in your heart the guilt of sin by bitterly lamenting it—know in your heart the power of the precious blood by receiving the cleansing which it brings—knowing the sorrows and the joys of being a Christian by being a Christian yourself! He desires truth in the inward parts, wherein our knowledge is stored up.

So would the Lord have *truth in our desires*. We desire to be saved, all of us, I suppose, but oh, how many of these desires have no truth in them! "Yes," says a man. "I would gladly be saved," but then he will not give up his sin. He would gladly be saved and he commences to pray, but his goodness soon vanishes. Prayer is irksome to him—he has not learned prayer. He desires, he says, to be taught of God, but he does not give a willing ear. He desires to be resigned to God's will, he says, and he continues to kick and rebel against it! It is vain to say, "My desire is this" and, "that," when my course of action is clean contrary to it. I certainly do not desire to go North if I voluntarily steer towards the South. God would have our desires to be all true. Oh, delude not yourselves with the thought that you have holy desires unless you truly have them! Do not think your desires are true towards God unless they are really so—He desires truth in our desires.

So would the Lord have *truth in all our affections*. We think we love God, but I venture to ask the question of myself—I would raise it and I would have you raise it with yourselves—do you really love the Lord? Do you really love Him? Were He here and your soul spoke the honest truth, and it were put, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" what would the answer be? And, indeed, it will be put to you tonight—when you get home it will probably be put to you in some new shape. You will be tried in your patience. If you love Him, keep His commandments, then, and be patient towards all men. You may be tried tonight by some loss or cross—if you love Him, you will take up *His* cross and cheerfully follow

Him. See how your love may be! "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith—prove your own selves." Where are your affections? Are they where the moth and rust corrupt, or are they yonder where eternity shall never see corrosion or robbery to deprive you of your possessions? "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be, also." God desires not that you should say, "I love," if you do not, or that you should say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace, and give a traitorous kiss. He desires truth in your affection! Is your heart right? Ah, this question is easy to ask, but to answer it is not so easy—but it may be easy to answer it if it is hurried without consideration—and probably untruthfully! But if you would be grounded on the rock, truly bottomed on a sure foundation, you will say, "Search me, O God! And try me, and know my ways: and see if there are any wicked ways in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Help me to keep my heart with all diligence, for I know that out of it are the issues of life." May there be truth in the inward parts of my affections.

So the Lord would have *truth in our emotions*. The emotion of fear, for instance, should not be excited as it is in some by foolish, frivolous things. This is a false fear which ought not to come across the Christian's mind. There are some, too, who say they have a fear of God. Others who say they have a joy of God! Some that speak of sweet peace in God. Others that talk of holy delight in God. But it is one thing to talk about these things, and another to possess them! He desires that all your emotions, when you are in His presence (and you are always there), should be truthful! Too often we say in prayer, I fear, more than our heart says, and perhaps the preacher, in talking to you tonight, may say more than he, himself, knows. We are apt to do this. We have, therefore, good need to be very, very watchful, for all that there is within us that is untruthful is unaccepted. Only that which is of the truth, that comes of the truth that is in Christ Jesus, who is *The truth*—only that can be pleasing to the Lord our God! Thus might I mention *the understanding*. God would have us have truth there, and not put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. I might mention *the will*. The will should truly be surrendered to God and cheerfully obedient to Him. He desires truth there. But whatever there may be within man, whatever faculty, power, or talent he possesses, the whole should be truthfully laid at His feet, and the whole experience of the little world within us should be conformed to the truth as it is in Jesus! To live with truthfulness within is a great thing, for we often talk lies in our hearts. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." We may tell lies in our own hearts—we may thieve, rob, steal and murder in our own hearts. Yes, our own hearts may be a shamble in which we may murder all the world, though we never laid a finger on any man! And in our hearts we may destroy the very throne of Deity, yes, and God, Himself, for we do that in our heart when we wish there were no God. I know not what there may be in our heart—a very pandemonium, a little hell—a great hell in a little heart! Oh

God, look You on us and put out all false things, and let truth be in our inward parts!

Now mark, before I turn from this first head of the subject, that when we say that the great desire of God is that we should have truth in our inward parts, we are not to suppose that, therefore, He is indifferent to our outward actions—our words and so on! On the contrary, it is because He is a lover of holiness and purity that He thinks most of our hearts, because a true-hearted man must be a truth-speaking man and a truth-loving man! You have made the fountain clean—well then, there cannot be foul water come out of it! If once you have been made all clean within by sovereign grace, then the outcome must be from what there is within. You may have the devil within and hang out the angel outside, but you cannot have the angel within and the devil outside—it cannot be so. Where Jesus Christ reigns in the interior, the glory of His presence will glow in the exterior, too! You may be to your neighbors and friends an upright man, towards your enemies, a forgiving and gentle man, towards your God a manifestly devout man if in all things you are upright within, and devout within! May God grant, then, that we may be what He would have us be—that we may have truth in the inward parts. Now for the second part of the text.

II. GOD'S WORK IN US.

I am very thankful that the second sentence comes after the first, for surely we might all tremble if it were not so. "Behold You desire truth in the inward parts." "Yes," we might say, "but, Lord, how shall we ever get it there? How shall we who are unclean be purged? You may say, 'You shall be clean,' but, Lord, we cannot bring it to You! How shall we who are polluted cleanse ourselves?" Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? But now comes this, joined on with an, "and"—a blessed rivet that can never be driven out—"and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." Now let us go over this blessed word of encouragement—"and in the hidden part"—the secret part—"You shall make me to know wisdom." Observe that *where there is all fallen within us*, there will God work! He does not disdain to begin even with us, though all is out of order, though all is stained and all polluted! When He made the world, truly there was nothing to help Him, but there was nothing to oppose Him. Darkness was on the face of the deep, and disorder ruled—but those were rather negative than positive and they disappeared at once at His bidding. But in the fallen heart there is much to oppose, and to oppose vigorously! With a fierce determination to ruin himself, man resists the grace of God, and were it not that He who created the world puts His hand a second time to the work, to create in us a new heart, we would continue in our destruction, in our guilt and enmity to the Most High! Now what a comfort it is that God will deal with our secret part—our hidden part! He does not disdain to come and touch the wheel and the machinery within, though it is all polluted. If we were to think of touching a running sore, or to put our hand upon a leper, we would shudder at it—but what must it be for a holy God to come and deal with an unholy heart, with corrupt affections—with a depraved will?

We think of some poor men that are, for their livelihood, compelled to work in loathsomeness in our common sewers, but oh, what is all that compared with the heart! Yet the infinite mercy, condescension and omnipotent grace of God stooped down to deal with our inward parts! Admire the condescension of God and have hope for yourself, poor lost one, because God will deal with your inward parts!

But now notice that in my inward part, *"You will make me to know wisdom."* See the grandeur of that word! No one else can make a man really wise—spiritually, internally and eternally wise—but God Himself. Here, again, I must remark upon the condescension of God. In one verse I find Him asked to be a washer, in another place I find Him asked to heal us, and here I find Him asked to come and teach us! Shall He be schoolmaster to us? Shall He take such as we are in hand, and our inward parts in hand, to teach our inward parts His wisdom? Yes, He will do it! Means are used, I know—His ministers, His Word, His providence—but we never learn by these till He teaches us to profit. These are school books, the apparatus of the school house. The Master must come and explain them and bring His truth home, or else we learn not. It is His prerogative, His sole prerogative, to speak to the heart so as to make us foolish ones wise! The Holy Spirit will do it. "In the inward parts You will make me to know wisdom." Oh, blessed Spirit, You will show me of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come—You will take of the things of Christ and reveal them to me—You will not disdain me, poor scholar as I am. You will make me to know wisdom! And great Son of God—so will You also teach—You will condescend by Your example, by Your sacrifice and by Your precept, to make me to know wisdom! And You, great Father, even You shall not disdain to deal with us as with sons—and by Your chastening still to teach us until we know wisdom. See, then, how God deals with the inward parts and, remember, it is God who does it!

Well, next, "In the hidden part You shall make *me* to know wisdom"—*me*! It is David who speaks, but he speaks, I trust, for you. "Make *me* to know wisdom." Now who was he that used those words? *It was David, a great sinner*—to put it plainly, an adulterer and a murderer—but, "You will make me," he says, "to know wisdom." This is a bad scholar to begin with—a rough block for the great Sculptor to carve, but David says, "You will make me to know wisdom." A sinner, I said, but he was a sinner publicly disgraced. Men knew of his sin—he was the song of the drunkard and the mark of the blasphemer! His character for a while was gone—men spoke of David's sin. Ah, but You will make me—the biggest fool in Israel (for I doubt not he felt he was)—You will make me to know wisdom—*me*, from my disgrace and dishonor, You will yet lift me up! He that said this, mark you, was a penitent, bitterly penitent for what he had done. How can you know wisdom till you have hated sin? God has not introduced you to the school, yet, until He has made you smart under His rod on account of sin. This is the very beginning of wisdom, to know the bitterness and mischief of sin, and to turn from it!

He that spoke this was *a praying man*. The whole Psalm is a prayer. God will teach the praying one. He who teaches you to pray will teach you everything else! This is one of the early lessons of the Christian, to learn to pray. "Behold, he prays," was said of Saul of Tarsus. You shall learn to sing as angels do if you begin with these bass notes of prayer. He that said this was *a believing man*. He was a great sinner, but he was a great believer! It was a great faith, as we said in the exposition, that made him say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Now, sinner, disgraced sinner, but penitent, prayerful, believing sinner, God will yet make you wise—make *you* wise! Man, do you see this, that *He* desires it? He will give you that, but He will give you more! He will give you wisdom—that is more than truth! You know that truth is one thing, but wisdom is better than knowledge, for wisdom is the right way of using knowledge! Many a *knowing* man is a fool. A wise man is a "knowing" man, although "a knowing man" is not always wise. He desires you to have truth, and wherever truth is, he that follows her is wise. He will put truth within you—that is *the doctrine*. You shall have wisdom, *that is the practice*. Truth shall be the gem, but wisdom shall be the flashing rays which come from it, the brilliance thereof. He will make you to know wisdom.

Let me say very briefly, and in two or three sentences, what it is to know wisdom. Suppose you know *the truth about sin.* Well, if you know it truthfully, then your wisdom will be to hate that sin! If you know the reality of sin, your wisdom will be to lay it upon Christ by faith where God has laid it in the old covenant and in the covenant of grace—and then having had your sin forgiven, if you know sin aright, and will be wise concerning it—you will watch against it, knowing its damnable character and how apt you are to fall into it! And so, knowing the truth in your heart about sin, in your heart you will be wise towards sin, lamenting it, confessing it, carrying it to Christ—watching against it, abhorring it, protesting against it all your days!

So taking another subject, a blessed subject, *the Savior*, if you have truth in your inward parts about the Savior, you know Him to be the one and only Savior, but an all-sufficient and perfect one! Well then, your wisdom is to live upon Him! To live with Him, to live like He and the God that desires you to have the truth about Christ in your heart will teach you how to act wisely concerning Christ! In your heart and in your life you will worship Him, you will adore Him so as to spend yourself for Him—for this is wisdom towards the truth as it is in Jesus!

So take but one other subject. If you have learned *the truth about service*, and God would have that truth in your heart, for you are His servant bought with His blood, why, then, *He will teach you wisdom in service.* He will show you how to deny yourself, how to consecrate yourself, how to pour out your whole strength at His feet, how to meet your enemies, how to surmount your difficulties, how to fight His battles, how to win the crown! He desires you to have truth in your heart about this matter and He *will give you wisdom in your heart concerning it all.* So observe that what God requires of us in one place, God gives us in

another! He deals with sinners very honestly—He tells them what He wants. He then deals with them very generously, for He gives them what they need! He does not lower the law, or diminish its spirituality to suit the sinner—He tells him the truth, that He desires that he should have truth in his inward parts—but when He has set out the law, He sets out an equally broad gospel. He works in the sinner what His gracious law demands! There are the tablets of stone—God does not take one out of the ten commands away—He puts the mercy-seat on the top of the whole—covers the whole—and so He does not diminish from the Christian anything of what should be in him, or tell him to rest content with inferior holiness, or with a second-rate obedience! He tells him that He desires truth, even in his inward parts! He comes to him and He says, "That which I expect from you *I will give you*: that which I require *I will bestow upon you*."

"In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." Now turn my text into a prayer. "O God! I confess my inward part is not what it should be, nor can I make it so. You might well sweep me away because my heart is depraved, but oh, take me—wash me in the Savior's blood! Send Your Spirit to create me new and make me in my inward part to know wisdom," for Your mercy's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:1-34.

The words we are about to read follow a passage in which the Apostle describes the conflict of his soul. It is rather singular that it should be so. To catch the contrast, let us begin at the end of the 7th Chapter, 22nd verse.

Romans 7:22-25 *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Romans 8:1*.There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Some simpletons have said that Paul was not a converted man when he wrote the closing verses of that 7th Chapter. I venture to assert that nobody but an advanced Christian, enjoying the highest degree of sanctification could ever have written it! It is not a man that is dead in sin that calls himself, "wretched," because he finds sin within him—it is a man made pure by the grace of God, who, because of that very purity, feels more the comparatively lesser force of sin than he would have done when he had less grace and more sin. I believe that the nearer we get to absolute perfection, the more fit to enter the gates of heaven—the more detestable will sin become to us, and the more conflict will there be in our souls to tread out the last spark of sin. Bless God, beloved, if you feel a conflict.

Bless Him and ask Him who it may rage more terrible, still, for that shall be one evidence to you that you are, indeed, out of all condemnation because you are struggling against the evil!

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* I am not the bond-slave of it—I am the enemy of it. I am free from it, fighting against it, struggling like a free man against one who would bring him into captivity, but even though I sometime feel as if I were a captive, I know I am not, I am free!

3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not in the flesh, but after the Spirit.* This is our victory, that let the flesh lust as it may, we do not walk after it—we are kept by God's grace! We are preserved so that the bent and tenor of our life is after the rule of the Spirit of God.

5, 6. For *they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Oh, what a death it is to us if ever the flesh gets the mastery! And if it had the mastery in us, we should know that we were still in death, but oh, what a joy, what life, what peace it is to have the Spirit ruling in us so that we are spiritually minded. God give us this to the fullest!

7, 8. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* We must be born-again, then. It is no use improving the flesh. The taking away of the filth of the flesh was the old law but the burying of the flesh, that is the new. The plunging of it into the death of Christ is the very sign of the new covenant. Oh, to know the full the power of the life of God for the death of the flesh!

9, 10. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* That is why we have aches and pains, and infirmities—because the body is dead—that is, doomed to die, must die. It must see corruption unless the Lord comes and even in that case it must undergo a wondrous change—so we regard our body as dead. No wonder, then, that all those aches and pains and troubles of body come upon us. The day shall come however, when even it shall be delivered from the power of death! Meanwhile, blessed be God, "the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

11. *But if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* The blessing of life is to come to the body, too—it shall be immortal, by-and-by, delivered from all the infirmities and sorrows which sin and death have brought upon it.

12, 13. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you, through*

the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. It is a live thing and a quickening thing, for you shall live.

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* God has not a dead child—never had one. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* First, love, and then sonship. He rises in his strain.

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* It is first a quickening Spirit, and then a witnessing Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. Now up again.

17. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if we suffer with Him.* Up again—

17. *That we may be also glorified together.* Oh, what a rise is this from groaning under, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—up to this point—"That we may be also glorified together"!

18, 19. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* It is not merely that the Spirit will bless the body, but that spiritual men will bless the whole creation! Materialism, which is like the body inhabited by the spirits of saints, is to share in the bliss which Christ has come to bring.

20-22. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.* Just as our body is, so to speak, the world, the earth in which our spirit dwells, so this big earth is the body in which the Church dwells. And this body has its pains, so this creation has its pains, but as this body is to rise again, so this creation, also, though it "groans and travails," is to be brought into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." And what a world it will be when the curse that fell on it through the sin of Eden shall be removed by the glorious atonement of Calvary! And when the blood of Christ which fell to the ground, which you will remember has never gone away from the earth, but is still somewhere, shall have fully redeemed the world, the whole world shall be a trophy of the Redeemer's power!

23. *And not only they, but we also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Of course we groan within ourselves! Who said we didn't? And those brethren who say they never groan, I wish they would learn better. It is one of the signs of grace and marks of a child of God that he is not perfect and does not think he is, but groans after it, cries after it. "We groan without ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to

wit, the redemption of our body." For this poor body still lies, in measure, under a curse, still with its pains, still with its carnal appetites and fleshly tendencies to hamper and to trouble it! But this we groan after—that this flesh of ours, and the whole creation in which we dwell, shall yet have a joyous deliverance!

24-30. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 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.* He speaks as if it were all done, because the major part of it is done in the saints, and it will only be a wink of the eye and it will all be done in everyone of us who are believers! Let us look at it as quite fully done, even now, by hope that we are already glorified together.

31, 32. *What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?* What, indeed, what can we say? We are lost in wonder, love and praise! Thus much, however, we can say, for it concerns our struggles while we are here below. Paul has got that shadow still over him—of struggling against the flesh. What shall we say in the view of these blessed things concerning that struggle? Why, this: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

33, 34. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* Equally impossible—and if neither God nor Christ will condemn, what judge have we to fear? The Judge of all the earth, and the Judge of the quick and the dead—if neither of these condemn, condemn away who likes!

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THE HONORED GUEST

NO. 3487

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully."
Luke 19:6.

ARE YOU prepared, like Zacchaeus, to give the Lord Jesus Christ a glad and grateful welcome? If we would obtain the full benefit of His devoted life, His atoning death and His triumphant resurrection, we must receive Him into our hearts by simple faith and entertain Him with tender love. Outside the door of our heart, Jesus is a stranger—He is no Savior to us—but inside the heart which has been opened, by divine grace, to admit Him, His power is displayed, His worth is known and His goodness is felt! My dear hearers, you have heard of His fame, you have witnessed the miracles He has worked upon others and now it remains that you receive Him, yourself, to ensure your own well-being. He stands at the door and knocks! You must open to Him. The promise is, "If any man will open unto Me, I will come in and sup with him." "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Not upon all who heard was the privilege conferred, for many, when they heard, did not believe. Alas, they provoked Him, and so they perished in their sins! But those who hail Jesus as a friend, salute Him as an honored guest, sit at His feet, hang on His lips and find how He lights every chamber of their soul with joy, satisfies every craving of their better nature and enriches them with all the endowments of adopted children!

In many respects Zacchaeus supplies us with a noble example. He shows us how to receive the Savior. You will observe that he received Him speedily. "He made haste and came down." It is not always easy to come down from a tree with great speed. He came down, however, as fast as he could. There was no hesitancy in his manner. I daresay his heart was down before his feet! In like manner they who would receive Christ must receive Him now. This is not a call or a counsel to be trifled with. The procrastination of Felix, which led him to say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for You," is a very dangerous spirit. Let those who talked as Felix talked beware lest they perish as Felix perished! "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Zacchaeus made haste. They who receive Christ heartily must receive Christ immediately!

We notice, too, that *Zacchaeus received the Lord obediently*. When the Master said, "Make haste," he made haste. Hardly had He said, "Come down," when down he came. If you, my hearers, be likewise willing and obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land. Christ likes us to be

obedient to Him, though He speaks to us less as a lawgiver than as a Savior and a friend. If we refuse to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, how can we reasonably expect to find rest unto our souls? The words of Jesus must be deeply respected and diligently observed by those who would have Him for their Rock, their Refuge and their Hiding Place. Let Him be your Counselor if you want to partake of His redemption! Render allegiance to Him as your King if you would enjoy all the grace of His priestly mediation and intercession!

There was also a *thorough heartiness on the part of Zacchaeus in receiving Christ*. He made a great feast for Him. He did not admit Him as one who intruded. It was not with cold civility, but with cordial hospitality that he greeted Him. I think I see the satisfaction that sparkled in his face! I think I hear the salutation that leaped from his tongue, "Come in—come in, my gracious Lord! Never did my house entertain so welcome a guest as You are!" Would you receive Christ, you must throw the doors of your heart wide open! Then your eyes, your lips—every muscle of your body will express your earnestness. Your whole spirit, soul and strength will be stirred to enthusiasm if you know His worth and feel the honor He confers on you. A man who finds a treasure hid in a field will congratulate himself on his good fortune. A woman, when she embraces her first-born child, will dote on him with exquisite fondness. Shall no strong emotions prove our sincerity when we receive the Lord of life and glory?

And mark you, too, this Chief of the Publicans *received Christ spiritually*. His convictions were in keeping with his conduct. When he distributed his goods to the poor, and made a bold confession of his faith before his fellow men, there was proof positive that Christ had not only crossed the threshold of Zacchaeus' house, but had also penetrated the chambers of his heart! Ah, beloved, it is useless to receive Christ nominally, professionally, ceremonially, or with rites and ceremonies, to do Him empty homage! By a sincere reception of Him who was sent of God, your nature, your disposition and your habits will be transformed from what they were, and conformed to what He is—and the change will be conspicuous, for if you are in Christ, and Christ is in you, all will become new!

A prominent feature, however, so distinctly stated that it should not be carelessly overlooked was this, that he received Him joyfully. This was crowning evidence of the purity of his motives and the artlessness of his actions. In such mirth there could be no guile. Ask now, *Why do not all men thus receive Jesus Christ joyfully? How is it that some men receive Him with such exuberant joy? In what ways do those show their joy who have thus received the Master?*

I. WHY IS IT THAT ALL MEN DO NOT RECEIVE CHRIST JOYFULLY?

This is our first question. They need Him, all of them. There is no difference in this respect. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are all sold under sin. God has concluded the whole race of man in unbelief. He has shut them all up in condemnation! There is no escape from the universal

doom except by the way of the cross. Jesus Christ comes to save—comes with pardon in His hands, with messages of love, with tokens of favor—yet most men bar the doors of their hearts against Him! There is no cry heard in their souls, "Lift up your head, O you gates! And be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!" Instead thereof, there is a sullen cry, "Come prejudice! Come unbelief! Come hardness of heart! Come love of sin—bar the doors and barricade the gates lest, perhaps, the King of Glory should force an entrance!" Men treat the Savior as they would treat an invader who attacked their country! They seek to drive Him away! They would gladly be rid of Him. They cannot endure His presence. No, they can scarcely endure, some of them, to hear about Him in the street! Why is this? The chief reason *lies in the depravity of man's nature*. You never know how bad man is till he comes in contact with the cross!

Although the crimes of savage, uncivilized men may appear to you far more heinous than any that are committed in our favored country where just laws are, for the most part, enacted, and opportunities of education generally enjoyed, yet the propensity to do that which is evil in the teeth of a knowledge of that which is good, the subtlety of perverting the truth of God in the clear light of divine revelation, the faithlessness of that foul ingratitude which can betray the most tender friendship, are never so painfully illustrated as in view of the Crucified! To despise the name of Jesus, to reject the love of God, to conspire against the Ambassador of peace, to take the inhuman, devilish counsel—"This is the heir; let us kill Him!"—this was the last offense of the wicked husbandmen in the parable. Nor does the parable exaggerate the treachery. For this is the greatest offense of human nature, when it says, in effect, "This is the incarnate God, let us reject Him. This is the Word made flesh, let us disgrace Him. This is the Father's beloved Son—let us betray Him!" Oh, Human Nature, how blind must be your heart, how seared your conscience not to see the beauties of Christ! How base must you be to despise the love and tenderness of such a Savior!

Were we to select secondary causes, however, which spring out of this deep-seated depravity and discriminate between the various classes of offenders, we would say that *many men reject Christ instead of receiving Him joyfully out of sheer ignorance*. For this ignorance there is not much valid excuse. There are thousands of persons, even in this highly-favored, greatly-enlightened country, who really do not know what the gospel means! The knowledge of salvation is within their reach, but they have no desire to acquaint themselves with this best of all the sciences. We are all sinners, they say, but they do not know what they mean. In the jargon of general confession, they lose sight of their own personal transgressions. The plan of salvation by a Substitute, which is the gist of the whole matter, never dawned on their understanding. They do not know the great truth of God that Jesus took our sins and suffered for us in our place that justice might be satisfied, that mercy might be

magnified and that we sinners might be liberated and, therefore, it comes to pass that whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Being ignorant of this, they are still depending upon their own works, merits and professions—or they are relying upon their baptism, their confirmation, or their identification with some ecclesiastical system by means of some outward ceremony—instead of understanding that *salvation is by faith*, a thing of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter. This ignorance of the blessed Savior prevents many from receiving Him joyfully. So was it with the woman of Samaria—hence the Savior said to her, "If you had known the gift of God and who it is that speaks to you, you would have asked, and He would have given you living water." Lest you perish through lack of knowledge, brothers and sisters, do entreat the Lord to guide you in the reading of Scripture, and in listening to the exposition of Scripture, that you may get a clear understanding of the way of the Lord. "That the soul should be without knowledge is not good," for ignorance is the parent of many infatuations!

To refuse attention, to resist evidence, to rebut exhortation in the instance of full many, exhibits *a spirit of gross unbelief*. They will not believe in Jesus. They will not acknowledge Him to be the Son of God—they will scarcely believe that the man ever lived who had a right to the homage which His few disciples offered Him! The Atonement they look upon as an old wives' tale and they account the resurrection from the dead as an idle dream! I will say but little of their excuse. They are not open to conviction. They live in darkness because they have barred every window of their soul against the light of God. The precious doctrine of Christ bears on its face the genuine stamp. Its authenticity is engraved upon its very forefront. Their stolid disputations cannot diminish its value or its virtue. They wrong themselves when they denounce or disparage the truth of God as it is in Christ.

Others are actuated by *a positive aversion to the Savior*. They have no sinister reflections to cast on the story of His life, the purity of His manners, the holiness of His character, or the benevolence of His mission—but they do not desire to be saved from their sins—they rather enjoy reveling, unrebuked and undisturbed, in the gratification of their own sensual propensities! They do not want to be saved from drunkenness! They would rather go on with the drink. They do not want to be saved from the lusts of the flesh—they would sooner pamper its gross appetites! They do not want to be saved from pride or self-confidence—they would rather indulge their towering ambition! They do not want, in fact, to have a divorce proclaimed between them and their sins—they would sooner discard the high obligations of the divine law and act upon the expedience of the life that now is—than forego a pursuit or a pleasure in hope of eternal life! Hence they cannot bear the name of Jesus! They recoil from it, unable to conceal their enmity. Religion is not merely insipid—it is positively nauseous to them! The singing of a hymn in the house would put them out of temper. Did their wife or their child mention the cross of Christ, or faith in His precious

blood, they would either sneer and ridicule with unseemly jest, or else their temper would boil over with malice and wrath! The Lord pluck that black heart out of you, man! The Lord give you a new heart and a right spirit! You will have to bend or else to break! If you will not turn, you will burn! If you do not repent of this hatred of Christ, now, you will feel remorse enough for it hereafter. In the day when He comes in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead, you will seek in vain to elude His eyes, or escape from His wrath!

You will find that the reason for not receiving Christ in many others is the fact that *they are worldly, and eaten up with too many cares*. A pitiful apology and very perilous! Such paltry excuses will bring poignant regrets. The hour of death can do little to rectify the years of life misspent. Not then can you seek God, if you have never sought Him before! Oh, you are taken up with the farm and the merchandise, with your daily labors and diversions, your losses and your gains heaping up, not knowing who shall inherit. These canker worms eat up your souls. Would that men were not such fools as to be always providing for this poor tenement of the body, while they neglect the precious jewel it encloses—their immortal soul—occupied with trivial personalities, while reckless of their real estate. They are crying, "Buy, buy," in Vanity Fair, while the Lord of life and glory passes by! Yet they heed not. Talk of the main chance, but they miss the wise choice. They sell gold for dross—they lose their souls and get hell!

Still more inexcusable, I think, are those who reject Christ because *they are taken up with the world's frivolities*. Some people live in a whirl of fashion where repentance would be accounted vulgar! Not in sportive gaieties, but in pensive solitudes do penitence and contrition find room for exercise. Ridiculous as it may sound, some people are far too genteel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! He is fit company, in their esteem, for publicans and sinners, but into their drawing rooms, were He to enter, He would soon be expelled! They want Him not in the upper circle of the *haut ton*—neither would He be kindly received in the lower circles, among the frequenters of music halls and dancing saloons. Ah, no—as of old, so now—"There is no room for Him in the inn." The world is ready enough to welcome actor, singer, dancer, punster, anyone who can amuse them! But as for Christ, who stands with bleeding hands and cries, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest," they despise Him! They miss the soul of beauty for gaudy charms and bubbles! They turn from the source of real joy to indulge in silly laughter! They push away the real and leap after the shadow!

They forsake the overflowing fountain and fly to the broken cisterns that can hold no water!

Ah, brothers and sisters, this is a miserable spectacle! It is a dreary sight to see a sinner despising mercy, a drowning man rejecting the lifebelt, a sick man declining the physician, a man entering the gates of death refusing life and immortality! Oh, sin, how you have fooled men!

How you have made them hate themselves and act cruelly to their own souls! What suicides they commit! What a sacrifice of their noblest nature! They go down to hell with a verdict of *felo de se*. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself! You have destroyed yourself! They reject Him shamefully whom they should have received joyfully! They carry out their own will and they perish in their willfulness! And now we ask in the next place—

II. WHY DO SOME MEN RECEIVE HIM JOYFULLY?

The answer is simply *because divine grace has made them to differ*. Grace has subdued their stubborn will, illuminated their darkened understanding, changed their depraved affections and made their whole mind to judge of things after a different fashion. Do not suppose that we who have received Christ were naturally any better disposed to Him than others. Oh, no! If, when the seed was sown, we were like the honest and good ground in which it took root, there had been a previous tillage upon our hearts to make them ready! We would not have been found willing had it not been the day of God's power! I think we all unite in saying—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste
And perished in our sin."

As for the reasons and inducements which prompted us to receive Christ joyfully, I may speak very plainly for myself. *I received Christ because I could not help it*. I was at my wits' ends. I think no man ever flees to Christ for refuge, or seeks shelter in the port of gospel peace until he is quite certain that every other harbor is shut up. We make Christ our last resource! We try everything else. We make grand resolutions to do good works, or to attend gorgeous ceremonies. We try trivial formalities, or paltry superstitions—anything—the silliest conceit or the emptiest quackery! We go the round of folly before we discover the path of wisdom. At length I must go to Christ, or else woe is unto me if I win Him not! Helpless and hopeless, in sheer distress we cry out, "Give me Christ, or else I die." Henceforth He is not merely our choice, but a positive necessity to us to have Him as our hourly, daily and eternal portion! Oh, the strait unto which I was brought when I received Christ! It was Christ or death! Salvation by Christ, or damnation without Him! I received Him because I could not help it. I had no alternative. How many of you are in the same dilemma? How many of you will fly to Him in similar destitution? Driven before the tempest, catching a glimpse of the lighthouse, you cry out—

"Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to Your bosom fly."

Well may we receive Christ joyfully since He works such wonderful changes in us, and so beneficent! He cheers the grievous past. It was all black and threatening with the memory of our provocations. He sprinkles His blood upon it and now it becomes bright and beaming with mementos of the loving kindnesses and tender mercies of the Lord. He illuminates the present. There was nothing but gloom and black despair

till He shone as the light of life in our dwelling! Then life and salvation dawn upon us like the dayspring from on high. He disperses the clouds that hung over the future. The outlook was dark and threatening till Jesus came, bright and glorious, and we discovered a hereafter. Beyond the black river of death we now discern the gleaming of the spirit land, and the place of meeting where we shall see His face! Thus, when Jesus comes into the heart, the three realms of the past, the present and the future all glow with the light of God! When the sun rises, the hills, valleys and rivers, above and beneath, are all sown with orient pearl!

Right joyfully do we receive Christ because *He comes into our hearts with such gracious offices*. He came as a priest to put away sin! Who could but be glad? He came as a king! Who would not receive such a monarch with sound of trumpets and flaunting of banners? He came to us as a shepherd! Shall not the flock of His pasture be glad of the sight of Him? He came as a dear and tender friend—does not His sweet sympathy excite any joy? Think, too, of the yet more endearing relationship in which He came. He came as a husband and our souls are married unto Him. Blessed bridegroom! Adorable Savior, You have engrossed our heart and won our love! Does not the bride rejoice when the husband comes home? Is there not gladness in her heart when the nuptial day approaches? Oh, well, well might we welcome Christ when He comes, dressed in such robes and wearing such offices as these! When He came, He came with such wondrous blessings—pardon and peace, justification and acceptance, sanctification and honor, wisdom and righteousness—all these! And now He proclaims Himself to be our protector! His paths drop fatness. He makes rich and adds no sorrow. Such as find Him find in Him such wealth of goodness—deep, mysterious, unknown—as far exceeds earthly pleasure, all worldly fortune! Surely on the lowest ground we might afford Him the loftiest welcome! Even churlish Laban received Eliezer with courtesy when he saw the presents he brought—the bracelets, the earrings and the jewels—and should not we receive Jesus when we mark those costly gifts in His hands—the purchase of His own blood which He freely gives to those who receive Him?

And shall we not receive Him joyfully *because He comes in such blessed spirit*? He upbraids not. He was all gentleness, meekness, grace, when here below—though of divine pedigree—the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Should we not, then, receive Him with sound of the trumpet, with the psalter and harp, yes, and with unspeakable joy of heart? Let me add that the better we know Him, the more joyfully we receive Him for His own sake. Oh, I could stand here and weep to think that I do not speak better of my Lord and Master! Truly I know more of His grace and goodness than I should ever be able to tell! I trust you can say the same. It is one thing to know the sweetness of His savor, and quite another thing to have to tell that savor to others There is no exaggeration in the language of the spouse when she says, “Yes, He is altogether lovely.” Such as receive Him with their

hearts, will find that the most rapturous expressions that saints have ever used do not exceed, but fall infinitely short of the delight, the heavenly joys, which He brings into the soul! If one might choose a heaven upon earth, it would be to rest forever in quiet meditation upon the beauties of His person, the perfection of His character, the power of His blood, the prevalence of His plea, the glory of His resurrection, the majesty of His Second Advent! Everything about Christ is delightful. There is not a truth of God He ever teaches but is fragrant with choice perfume. There is not a word He utters but smells of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces from which He came!

If you have not received Christ, my dear hearers, you have missed the brightest feature of divine revelation; for a foreigner to visit England and never see the Metropolis of London; for a man to have lived in the world without ever seeing the sun. For one to have beheld tables spread with the most sumptuous provisions, but never to have tasted any of them—in any such case there would be little cause for congratulations! So you do not know what life is—you are dead to all its charms. You do not know what light is—you have only dwelt in the shade, or in the twilight at the best—if you have not beheld the Savior, entertained Him, and tasted that He is gracious! You have missed the cream. You have been staying outside in the farmyard feeding with the swine! You do not know what the fatted calf is, upon which the children feed at the Father's table. You have been a dog, satisfied with the bones, not knowing the fatness and the marrow of true life. But the Christian, dear friends, finds Christ to be so inconceivably precious, such a fountain of delight, such a river of mercy, that when he receives Him, he receives Him joyfully—and the longer he knows Him, the more joyful he is to think that he ever received Him at all! And now, such being the reasons why some receive Christ joyfully, let us ask—

III. HOW DO THEY SHOW IT? IN WHAT WAYS AND BY WHAT MEANS DO THEY EXPRESS THEIR JOY?

I have known some who have taken very strange ways of showing their joy. They have been inclined to stand up and shout in the very place where they found the Savior, while others could only sit still and water the floor with their tears, feeling as if for the next week or two they did not want to look anybody in the face, but just in solemn silence of the mind to revel in the company of their adorable Lord! We do not wonder that some people show a little strange enthusiasm when they first come to know Christ. It is no marvel. When a man has been in prison for months, he may well be a little demonstrative in his joy on obtaining his liberty—so when a soul has been under the burden of sin and bound with its galling chain, he may well leap, as Bunyan tells us his Pilgrim did when the burden was loosed off him and rolled away!

Yet there are other and better ways of expressing satisfaction and pleasure than these which have much of the flesh, much of the natural disposition about them. Though not to be condemned, still they are not to be commended. A better way of showing that you have received Christ

joyfully is by *turning out His enemies*. When you receive Christ in at the front door, you must not keep the devil in the back parlor! Every traitor sin must be ejected when the Great King takes up His residence in your heart! The thorough cleansing of your house from every defilement is the smallest tribute we can expect you pay in deference to your royal guest. The soul that receives Christ joyfully, sighs and groans because it cannot make, as it would, a clean sweep of its sin! I know you do not love Christ if you cling to your sins! If you love Christ heartily, you will put away your iniquities—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be;
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee."

And when you do receive Christ joyfully, *you will be eager to obey His instructions*. Like Zacchaeus, you will ask, "Lord, what would You have me do?" Christ was going to Zacchaeus' house, and you know what people say when they have a guest they are anxious to please. They entreat him thus, "Now just do as you like. Consider yourself at home. Whatever you want, ask for, only tell us what we can do to make you happy, and we shall we glad to do it." This is how every cheerful holy soul deals with Christ. He says, "Lord, tell us what You would have me do. Only let me know Your will—tell me by Your Word, by Your minister, by Your Holy Spirit! Work in my own heart, personally—teach me Your way, and oh, my God, my heart shall be glad to conform to Your wishes." Have you all done this? Have you been obedient to all the Savior's commands, or have you sought to observe them? If you have, this should be an evidence of your joyfully receiving Him!

Another proof of our joy in receiving Christ is *receiving His people*. This, in more ways than one, He has made the test of attachment to Himself. "Love one another." "Feed My lambs." "If you have done it unto one of the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me." Just as Laban said when he took in Eliezer, "There is room for you, and room for the camels," so let there be room in our hearts for Jesus. There will be room for some of these poor troubled ones, these burdened saints. They may not always be pleasant company, but we shall be willing to receive them, and to join with them because of their Master. Now, dear friends, if you are a Christian, and have received Christ, unite yourselves with His people—make a profession of your faith, come out and join the people of God—and do not be ashamed with them to suffer the reproach of Christ.

And if you have received Christ joyfully, *you will love His cross*. I mean not only the cross which He had to carry, but the cross which you now have to carry for Him. You will count it a great privilege to suffer reproach for His sake. You will love the cross. "No cross, no crown," is an ancient motto, but it is just as true today as it was a thousand years ago! The faith that Moses illustrated, you will follow, counting the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. If you receive the

Master in good part, you will say, "Come in, my Master! Come in, and bring Your cross, too, and I will bear it cheerfully, for Your sake."

Moreover, you will prove the grateful welcome you give Him *by wishing that other people may receive Him joyfully, too.* I cannot believe you know my Master if you do not wish to make Him known. Were you cured of some sad disease and met with a sufferer as bad as you once were, your tongue would be quick to tell him of the medicine that can cure him. And surely, if you have been saved by Christ from the damning power of sin, you will want to be telling it to the sons of men that there is balm in Gilead and that there is a physician there! Perhaps you cannot preach. Possibly not half a dozen people might be edified were you to try. But you can talk to a neighbor. You can speak with your children. I was pleased, today, in reading the life of John Wesley's mother, to notice how she set apart Monday to speak to one of her daughters, Tuesday to speak to another, Wednesday to speak, as she says, "to Jack," meaning John Wesley, and Thursday to speak to Charles—so that they each had a day—and there was an hour each day given to speak to each child about the affairs of the soul. That is the way to win the children for God! Depend upon it, reader, the blessing of God, the Holy Spirit, if we experimentally know the joy of religion, ourselves, will be the means of much good to others if we make it a point to "tell to sinners round what a dear Savior we have found."

May the Lord, in His mercy, call you as He called Zacchaeus! May many of you receive Him joyfully as Zacchaeus did! Seek Him and He shall be found of you. Trust Him—He will not deceive you. Cast your soul upon Him—He will be as good as His Word. Mark His promise, "Him who comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out." Faithful is He that gives you this grateful encouragement! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, and through countless ages you will look back upon this fleeting hour with unspeakable, perennial joy —with gratitude that eternity cannot be exhausted! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 2:1-14.

Verses 1, 2. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And immediately many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not even near the door: and He preached the word unto them.* We expect to see the crowd round the door, but there was not room, even for the doorway hearers, when Jesus Christ was preaching! There is an attracting power about the voice of Jesus. We may expect that if we will let Jesus speak in the ministry, and not speak too much our own thoughts and our own words, there will still be the same attraction about the gospel. "He preached the word unto them."

3. *And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy.* A paralyzed person—that is the exact word—one who could not come himself, but

had a very anxious desire to come. They came to Him, bringing a paralytic.

3. *Which was borne of four.* Four neighbors agreed to lift him

4. *And when they could not come near unto Him for the crowd*—They had tried the door many times, but could not possibly enter.

4. *They uncovered the roof above where He was.* They, perhaps, went up the stairway of the next house, and then from one flat roof to another, till they came to the top of the veranda which sheltered Christ while He preached to the people in the court. They uncovered this roof above where He was.

4. *And when they had broken it up*—For it does not seem to have been a very light structure, but to have required some labor. Yet they broke it up.

4. *They let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.* Where there is a will there is a way, and when there is no way, a resolute will can make one. Better to come to Christ through the ceiling than not to come at all. Better to be let down to Him by a rope than not to be in His presence!

5. *When Jesus saw their faith*—For He has a very quick eye to faith—and though we do not read that they had said anything and, therefore, they had not *expressed* their faith—yet this bold and venturous action in breaking up the roof and letting all the dust fall about the Savior's head, not fearing that they would provoke Him, but trusting in His gentleness and patience, showed their confidence that they had only to get the man where Christ could see him, and good would come of it. "When he saw their faith."

5, 6. *He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts*—They had come with a bad motive. They wanted to find fault and they took their seats that they might hear everything very carefully, take notes of it and put it down—and make as much mischief of it as they could! They had their ears open. They did not know, however, that He could read their hearts, or they might not have been so forward in coming into His presence. They were "sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts."

7. *Why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God?* Which was quite true, but then He was God and, therefore, it was not blasphemy! Blasphemy it would have been had he not been divine.

8, 9. *And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?* Do they not each require a divine power? If I be divine, I shall prove I am by healing this man. Then I have a right to say, "Your sins are forgiven you."

10-12. *But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.* Admire and imitate the faith and the obedience of this paralytic! He did better than some, for there have been some who, out of very gratitude, have disobeyed Christ. I mean, when He said to one that he should not tell what Christ had done, he did tell it. But this man, though no doubt his gratitude would have prompted him to stay and throw himself at his benefactor's feet, or to stop at least and sing a hymn of thankfulness to God, yet he knows that to obey is the best form of gratitude—and as Christ had told him, "Go your way into your house," he did just that! The best thing to do for Christ is to do what Christ bids you. There are many glittering forms of gratitude, but all is not gold that glitters. The most golden gratitude is that which scrupulously renders obedience to every command of Jesus Christ. Take this to heart, and do you likewise.

13. *And He went forth again by the seaside, and all the multitude came unto Him, and He taught them.* Better air than there was in the house, and more room, but He kept to the same gospel. He taught them.

14. *And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* Swept up his shekels—gathered up his account books—stayed no longer. He rose from taking tolls to follow the Master! Oh, for just such a word tonight to some here present. "Follow Me." And would to God there would be such a heart in them as there was in this man named Levi, alias Matthew, that they, too, might come and follow Jesus!

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JUSTIFICATION, PROPITIATION, DECLARATION
NO. 3488

A SERMON
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"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:24-26).

I THINK, dear friends, some of you will be saying, "There is that same old doctrine again that we are so continually hearing," and I am sure if you do say it I shall not be surprised. Nor, on the other hand, shall I make any sort of excuse. The doctrine of justification by faith through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ is very much to my ministry what bread and salt are to the table. As often as ever the table is set, there are those necessary things. I regard that doctrine as being one that is to be preached continually, to be mixed up with all our sermons, even as, under the law of God it was said, "With all your offerings you shall offer salt." This is the very salt of the gospel! Indeed, it is impossible to bring it forward too often. It is the soul-saving doctrine—it is the foundation doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ! It is that by which God is pleased to bring many into reconciliation with Himself. As the schoolmaster takes care to ground his scholars well in grammar, that they may get hold of the very roots of the language, so must we be rooted and grounded in this fundamental and cardinal truth of God—justification through the righteousness of Jesus Christ! Martin Luther, who used to preach this doctrine very vehemently and forcibly, yet declared that he felt as if he could knock the Bible about the peoples' heads if he could by any means get this doctrine into them—for as soon after they had learned it, they forgot it! Over and over, and over again must the Christian minister continue to insist upon this truth—that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And forever and ever, as long as the world stands, must he continue to repeat the truth of God, that we are justified through the righteousness of our Redeemer and not by any righteousness of our own!

I do not intend at this time to try and preach a sermon, but rather give an "outline exposition" again of this doctrine. And if you turn to the text, I think we can very well divide it, and very properly, too, into three parts, and head it with three words of, justification, propitiation and declaration. *Justification*—"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." *Propitiation*—"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation though faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins." And then we come to the third—the *Declaration*—to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God! To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus! First, then, here is something about—

I. JUSTIFICATION.

The sense of this term is, in this place, and in most others, to declare a person to be just. A person is put on trial, he is brought before the judge. One of two things will happen—he will either be acquitted or justified, or else he will be condemned. You and I are all virtually before the judge and we are, at this moment, either acquitted or condemned, either justified or under condemnation! It is not possible that any one of us should be acquitted on the grounds of our not being guilty, for we must all confess that we have broken the law of God thousands of times! It is not possible for any of us to be declared just on the ground of our own personal obedience to the law of God, for to be just through our own obedience we must have been perfect—but we have not been perfect! We have broken the law, we still continue to break it and, by the works of the law, it is clear we cannot be just—cannot be justified. The Lord, even the God of heaven and earth, has planned and promulgated a way by which He can be just and yet can declare the guilty to be just—a way by which, to use the words of our text, He can be just and yet the justifier of him who believes. That way is simply this, *a way of substitution and imputation*. Our sins are taken off of us and laid upon Christ Jesus, the innocent Substitute, "For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." Then, when this is effected, the righteousness which was worked out by Jesus Christ is taken from Him and imputed—reckoned—unto us, so that the rest of the text comes true, "That we may be made the righteousness of God in Him." We are found in Him not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. You see, we did not keep the law of God, but broke it. We were, therefore, condemned! Jesus came and stood in our place, headed up the whole race that He had chosen, became their representative, completely kept all the law for them, also suffered the punishment due for all their breaches of the law, becoming a substitute, actively and passively obeying the law and suffering its penalty! And now what He did is imputed to us, while what we did by way of sin was of old imputed to

Him and He was made a curse for us—as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." If you ask me how this can be a just thing to do, I reply, God has determined it and it is not possible that He should have determined anything that was not just!

But, moreover, there was an original reason for it, for our first ruin came upon us through our first parent, Adam. Our first fall was not our doing, but the doing of the man who stood as our representative! Perhaps had we, each one of us, at the first separately and distinctly sinned, without any connection with him, redemption might have been as impossible to us as we have reason to believe it is to fallen angels! But inasmuch as the first sin was in connection with the federal headship of the first Adam, it became possible and right that there should be *a salvation through a second federal headship*, even Jesus Christ, the second Adam. "As by man came death, so by man also comes the resurrection from the dead." As by man sin came into the world and the race perished, so by the second glorious man, Christ Jesus, divine grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life! But you need not question the justice of the plan. The Sovereign against whom you have offended deigns to accept it—and what God accepts we need not hesitate to rely upon! If the offended One is satisfied to proclaim us just, we may be perfectly satisfied with what He shall do toward us, for if He justifies, who can condemn? If He acquits, who dare accuse? We may boldly say, if once we are acquitted, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Now notice what the text says of this plan of justification. It tells us that, as far as we are concerned, *it is given to us freely!* Being freely justified, God forgives the sinner's sins gratis, freely—not on account of any repentance of his, meritoriously considered—not on the ground of any resolutions of his which might bribe the Eternal mind—not on account of penance, or suffering endured or to be endued, but He puts sins away freely because He chooses to do it—for nothing! Without money, without merit, without anything that could move Him but His own grand nature, for He delights in mercy—"Being freely justified."

And then to make it still clearer, it is added, *by His grace*, which is not a tautology, though it is a repetition. We are justified, not by any debt due to us, not because God was bound to justify, but because out of His own abundant love and rich compassion He freely makes the guilty to be pardoned and the unrighteous to be justified by the righteousness of Christ! I know it has been said by some that we make out that there is no such thing as free pardon and free justification because we set the righteousness of Christ as the procuring cause of both. I grant you we do! But we equally strenuously hold the pardon to be free, and the justification to be free, though it is through the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus—free to us, free so far as the heart and mercy of God is concerned—and only through redemption—because God must be just, He must be righteous, He cannot separate sin from the penalty! He is a Sovereign, but He never, in His sovereignty, violates righteousness! And it would be a sovereign act of *unrighteousness* if He passed by sin without awarding to it the punishment which He threatened should follow it—an act which it is not possible for God to do, for He must be just and He has, Himself declared He will by no means clear the guilty! Still, the justification is free to you, free to every soul that will have it, free to every man that believes in Jesus!

Now note this justification is put before you as being *through the redemption*, which is in Christ Jesus. There is a price paid—it is through the redemption. There is an intervening suffering and an intervening obedience. We are not justified freely without redemption, nor justified by His grace without the intervention of the atoning sacrifice. Oh, how men labor to get rid of this! There are certain persons who think themselves philosophic, who will do all they can to throw dirt into the face of this doctrine of substitution, but it is the very soul, head, foundation, corner, and keystone of the entire gospel! If it is left out, I hesitate not to say that the gospel preached is another gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you—

"In vain the guilty conscience seeks
Some solid ground to rest upon.
With vain desire the spirit breaks,
Till we apply to Christ alone!
Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind!
But if Emmanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins!
His grace forbids my slavish fear,
His love removes my sins."

We cannot give up the doctrine of redemption, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus! This is it, soul—listen to it—you are justified freely, but it cost the Savior dearly! It cost Him a life of obedience! It cost Him a death of shame, of agony, of suffering—all immeasurable! There was your cup of wrath which you must drink forever, and which you could never drain to the bottom! It must be drunk by someone! Jesus drinks it, sets the cup to His lips, and the very first drop of it makes Him sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground! But He drinks right on, though head, and hands, and feet are all suffering—drinks right on, though He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Drinks right on, I say, until not one black drop or dreg could be found within that cup and, turning it upside down, He cries, "It is finished! It is finished," as He

gives up the ghost. At one tremendous draught of love, the Lord has drunk condemnation dry for every one of His people for whom He shed His blood! "Justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." There was a redemption by substitutionary suffering, a redemption by vicarious obedience, a redemption by interposition of Christ on our behalf—

"To bear, that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

Do you understand this, sinner? Do you understand this? If you do not, then God help you to grasp it now, for it is a thing of the present—is it not here a present participle?—being justified freely, that is, *now*, justified *now*! O sinner, you are now condemned, but if you now will look to Jesus standing as the victim in your place. If you will *now* trust in Jesus dying in your place—you shall *now* be just, your sins shall *now* be forgiven—the righteousness shall *now* be yours and you shall know the meaning of that text, "There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Do you see, then, what justification means? Oh, may you enjoy it! It will make you leap for joy if you do! And now the second word is—

II. PROPITIATION—a reference here to the mercy-seat, the covering in—in our own words it is a reconciliation, a something by which God is propitiated—an atonement by which God and man are made one, a propitiation—a something which vindicates the injured honor of God, which comes in to make amends to the divine law for human offenses.

Now concerning this propitiation, let us speak, and may the Holy Spirit give us utterance. You say, O sinner, "How shall I come before God? How shall I draw near to the Most High God?" What would you give to be saved? All that you have, you would freely present—if you had bullocks and sheep upon a thousand hills and their blood could cleanse you—you would pour it out in rivers! You ask again, "What is the propitiation I can bring?" God tells you. Here He tells you that He has provided a propitiation in the person of His dear Son. And I would have you notice first of all *who it was that provided it*—whom God had set forth. Admire the love of this—that the God who was angered, is the God who finds the propitiation! Against God the sin was leveled! God Himself finds the way of being gracious towards sinners. How safe it must be to accept a propitiation who God, the offended one, Himself proposes! Notice next that it is said that *God has set this forth*. The margin has it, "Has foreordained it." The atonement of Christ is not a new idea—it is an old determination of the Most High and it is no close secret! God has published it—set it forth. By His prophets in His Word—by His preachers in all your streets—God has set forth Christ to be the propitiation for human sin! It is His own arranging, His own—and the publication to you

tonight is by His own authority! Oh, regard this and you who seek His mercy leap to think that it comes to you certified in such a way!

But then notice that *the main point in this propitiation is the blood*. "Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." Some cannot bear to hear about the blood of Jesus and yet, under the old law it was written, "It is the blood which shall make atonement for sin." And again, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," and again, "The blood is the life thereof," and again, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," that is to say, that which makes atonement for human sin is not the life of Christ as an *example*—nor the actions of Christ as a vindication of righteousness—but *the suffering of Christ—the death of Christ*. Everyone knows that this is what is meant by the blood. In the blood-shedding, Jesus suffered! His body suffered—inwardly His soul bled, His spirit suffered—His soul-sufferings were the soul of His sufferings! Then came death. Death was the penalty of sin. Jesus died, literally died—and the heart's blood came forth, mingled with water from His pierced side. God is pleased to pardon us because Jesus suffered—and the main point of comfort is the cross—the cross of the crucified, the dying Savior! Do not let your minds wander away from this, you that are seeking peace with God. Your hope is not so much at Bethlehem as at Calvary. Your consolation is not to be found in the Second Advent but in the First Advent—and the death that closed it. You are not to look to Christ in His glory for your comfort, but to Christ in His humiliation! Christ in His expiatory sufferings as your only hope! The blood, the blood, the blood—it is there the propitiation lies—and to that our faith must turn our eyes. It is so. Yes, it is so—

"My sins deserve Your wrath, my God!
Your wrath has fallen on Your Son!"

My sins turned away Your face—You have turned away Your face from Him. My sins deserved death—He has died. My sins deserved to be spit upon—to be mocked—to be cast out as felons. All this He has endured as if He were my sin, and is it not so? "He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Brothers and sisters, I do declare my conscience never knew any peace until I understood this truth of God, but ever since then I have no rock I build on but this—Christ in my place, and I in Christ's place! I am safe in Him and He was chastened, bruised, wounded, slain, instead of me! He it is. Propitiation through the blood. But the text says, "*Through faith in His blood*." So, then, this shows you that no propitiation has had any effect with regard to us until we have faith in the blood! I can never know that God has blotted out my sin until I have faith! And what is faith but trust? And then, when I trust the blood of Jesus, my sin is all forgiven me in one moment. When I humbly rely upon my Savior's finished work, "Though sins were as scarlet, they become as wool;

though they were red like crimson, they are whiter than snow." Do you know—I hardly know how to talk about this truth of propitiation. It makes my heart so leap for joy that I cannot find words to tell you! I do know that I, and that you, and that every believer under heaven is as clear before God of every sin as if he or she had never sinned! And is accepted before God as if his whole life had been perfect obedience—and all because that propitiation blood and the dear merits of our once crucified, but now glorified redeemer stands in our place! If I might have a perfect righteousness of my own, I would not—I would sooner have my Lord's, for my righteousness, were it perfect, were but the righteousness of a man—but His is the righteousness of God and man, *God*-man! Oh, it is not merely immaculate and complete—it overflows with merit! Truly I say again, could we have a righteousness of our own, it were wise to leave it and to have the righteousness of Jesus Christ wrapped about us by an act of faith, that we might forever stand not only accepted, but, *"accepted in the Beloved."* Why, it is the very glory of the acceptance that the acceptance comes to us in Christ!

Thus have I dwelt as well as our short time allows upon the propitiation. And now a word about—

III. THE DECLARATION.

The great objective, it appears, of the redemption, and of the gospel, is to show how God is just and yet the justifier of such as believe. And Paul very properly divides the effect of Christ's death into two parts. First, he says that that *death declared God's righteousness as to the sins that were past,* through the forbearance of God.

Before our Savior came into the world, there had passed over the world some thousands of years. Our chronology talks about four thousand years. I do not know that. I never did believe in the chronology which is appended by human judgment to our Bibles. It may be, or it may not be correct. However, it may be four thousand years. During that time a very large number of sinners lived and a large number of sinners were saved. The transgressions of the Patriarchs, the transgressions of Israel under the law, were remitted and these persons were justified by faith, and accepted—but how? There had been no offering of blood. True, the bullocks and the lambs were offered, but these could never put away sin. These were brought often, as if to show that the work was not done. The text tells us that this was through the forbearance of God. In the foresight of the atonement to be offered, God remitted—passed over, as the word is—the sins of *t*hose of His children who lived before Christ was sent—before the penalty was endured by the Substitute! It is a glorious thought, this atonement of Christ acting forward, before it was finished, before it was presented—and multitudes entering heaven and enjoying happiness as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints did,

when, as yet not a drop of that blood which saved them had been shed, not a pang of the agony which made up the atonement had yet been endured! Now had God passed over all this sin, and no atonement was, after all, presented, His justice would not have been declared. But our Savior ultimately coming and suffering, all was a declaration of the righteousness of God concerning the sins that were past. It was proven that He had in His mind's eye this great sacrifice when He passed by sin—that He had not unjustly remitted it without demanding the penalty.

But then the Apostle gives us the other half of the great result of Christ's death! He says, "To declare, I say, *at this time*, His righteousness." That is, *today*—while we read this passage. "To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness, that still as for us who live after the Passion, He might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." The atoning sacrifice of Christ looks forward, and will look all down the ages till He comes!—

"His precious blood shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

All the sins of His people, both past and present and to come, were laid on Christ—the whole mighty mass of all the sin of all His people that ever have believed, or ever shall believe on Him—all were transferred to His head and laid on Him! And He suffered for them all. And He made an end of all their transgressions and brought in everlasting righteousness for them all! Here is the grand truth of God, the grandest truth of inspiration!

Now I shall spend the last few minutes of our time in reminding you that I have not, beloved, been beating about the bush, nor preaching to you a doctrine that may or may not be true! I have not been holding up to you some angle of an eccentric creed. Behold before you that which will be a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death! Not with words of man's wisdom, but in simplicity have I tried to tell you God's way of pardoning and justifying men. At your peril reject it! As you shall answer for it before my Master's bar in that day when He shall summon you to give an account, oh, I beseech you by the living God—accept the propitiation which God sets forth! Here are no harsh terms! Here are no rigorous conditions! There stand the words, "Believe and live!" As it is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: He that believes not shall be damned." I have told you what this believing is. It is an unfeigned act of reliance upon the Incarnate God suffering in your place. If you believe on Him, or trust Him, that is the indisputable evidence that He was a substitute for you—that the load of your guilt is gone—that the stone that lay at the door is removed and you are saved! Go not about, I pray you, to seek another righteousness. All the righteousness you need, Christ presents you freely with! Do not say that you are guilty—it is true

you are—but this mode of salvation was meant for the guilty! Object not because you feel unfit. All the fitness that is needed is that you do but confess you are unfit and take freely what God presents you! No sin of yours shall ruin you if you believe, but no righteousness of yours shall save you if you will not believe!

This is God's way to save men. Will you set up another? Will you dare play Antichrist with Christ? He has declared His righteousness in the substitution of the Savior. Do you fail to see that righteousness, or seeing it, will you not admire it? Will you not adopt the plan which manifests it? Accept it, sinner! It is all a brother's heart and voice can say, accept it! Oh, if you knew the joy it would bring you, you would accept it now! I bear my witness personally. Burdened with sin, utterly lost, as much as you, I heard this gladsome news! I heard the message which said, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." I did look. I was as unfit as you—as undeserving as you—but the moment my eyes caught sight of the great surety on the ground of Gethsemane, bleeding for me, and on the cross dying for me—I saw that if God had punished Him for me, He could be just, and yet never punish me! No, that if Christ were punished in my place, to punish me after Christ had died for me would be injustice altogether! And tonight I hide myself beneath the wings of Jesus, the great Surety, and my only shelter in the storm—

"Rock of Ages cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee."

In His pierced side my soul does find a shelter from the blast of divine wrath. It is peace *now!* It is joy *now*! It is salvation *now* with me! Why should not it be so with you? You did not come here to find Him. No, but God brought you here to find you! Is it not written, "I will call them a people who were not a people, and her beloved who was not beloved." "I am found," He says, "of them that sought Me not." Oh, may He be found by you tonight! You did not know the way to be saved—you do know it now. Do not add to your guilt by knowing what you don't practice, but *now*, NOW trust Him! Oh, may the Holy Spirit work faith in you. "'Tis but a little faith," says one. Little faith will save you, but Christ deserves great faith! Oh, He is a true Christ—He cannot lie. Oh, can you not lay hold of Him? Do you see but the hem of His garment? Is it but a raveled thread that hangs out? Touch it, touch it with your finger and you shall be made whole! What if you cannot believe as you should? Believe as you can! Say with him of old, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief." Lift up the cry of the publican, "God be merciful—be propitiated towards me, a sinner! Jesus, I will have You! Have me!"

The Lord grant it, and may many in this place be saved tonight, to the praise and the glory of His grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen and amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-17.

Thus speaks the Lord Jesus—**Verse 1.** *I am the true vine.* Many questions have been raised about which is the true Church. The Savior answers them, "I am the true vine." All who are united, really united, to the ever-living Savior are members of the true Church. Find them where you may, if they are one with Christ, they are His—they are parts of the divine vine—they belong to His Church.

1. *And My Father is the vinedresser.* It is the Father's province, by the Holy Spirit and by the works of Providence, to see to the prosperity of the Church. "My Father is the vinedresser." All preachers, all teachers are but, so to speak, the pruning tool in the hand of the great Vinedresser. "My Father is the vinedresser."

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* It is a necessary part of vine dressing to remove the superfluous shoots. Too much wood making which does not lead to fruit bearing is but a waste of strength. And so in the Church there are those that bear no fruit and, for a while, they appear to be fresh and green—and they who are the under vinedressers dare not take them away. But the Father does it—sometimes by removing them by death, at other times by permitting them openly to expose their own character until they are amenable to the discipline of the Church and are removed.

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit, He takes away and every branch that bears fruit*—What of that? "He purges it (prunes it) that it may bring forth more fruit." "I cannot understand," said one to me the other day, "why I am so very sorely afflicted. I have been searching myself to discover what sin can have been the cause of it." Now, beloved, if that is your question, tonight, there may be a sin to be put away and, if so, God forbid that I should prevent your searching! But remember, on the other hand, affliction is no evidence of sin, but oftentimes of the very contrary! It is the fruit-bearing branch that gets the pruning. You are so good a branch that God would have you better. You have such capacities for bearing fruit that He wants to see those capacities developed. The lapidary does not place upon the wheel the stone that is not precious, but that which is, and so your affliction is no mark, therefore, of your lack of grace, but of your having it! "Every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

3. *Now you are pruned.* For so it should be.

3. *Through the Word which I have spoken unto you.* While Christ was with His disciples, He kept His vine continually pruned by the Word which He spoke. That word cut off the non-fruit-bearing branches, for we read that after that saying there were some that went back and walked no more with Him, for they said, "'This is a hard saying; who can bear

it?" That was the Word of God pruning off the useless branches! And there were others who were grieved by His Words. These were good people, and it did them good. It was a godly sorrow that led to bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

4. *Abide in Me and I in you.* There is the great canon of the Christian life! Hold fast to Christ. Not only live with Him, but live *in* Him. "Abide in Me." And oh, let Jesus not be merely your companion now and then, on holy occasions, but let Him abide in you! Make your heart a temple—let Him find His sweetest rest—His home, in you!

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; neither can you, except you abide in Me.* It is keeping in Christ, then, that is the vital matter! There is the root of the whole business, to be one with Jesus by vital union, deriving the sap of our life entirely from Him!

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in Me, and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit.* This double abiding gives a double harvest! Christ in Me, and I in Christ—I must be fruitful. Oh, beloved, look well to this. I am afraid we get at a distance from Christ. There is more danger of this in old professors than there is in young beginners. The young beginner is often warm of heart. The very novelty of the thing keeps him near his Master, but oh, take care of slackening! You that have been pilgrims a long time, take care of slackening! It is so easy to grow cold in this cold world—and it is so hard to maintain the holy spiritual fervor, without which there is no spiritual health.

5. *He that abides in Me, and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.* Not "you will do less," or, "you will do least," but you can do *nothing*—nothing good, nothing spiritual, nothing acceptable, if severed from Jesus!

6. *If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* And oh, how many come to this end! They seemed to be all that the fruit-bearing branches are, but they were never saved souls, for saved souls always bring forth fruits of righteousness! Their salvation is proved by their fruitfulness. But though these appeared to be all that the others were, after a while they were discovered and cast into the fire and burned.

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you.* My very words. You must treasure up Christ's teaching. You must obey His precepts. If you do this, "You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." In this chapter we are taught once or twice that the power of prayer depends very much upon the closeness of our communion with Christ—and the completeness of our obedience to Him. We are saved by faith in the Redeemer, but the joy of salvation, the very dignity and glory of it,

will only come to those men and women who jealously watch themselves, and zealously obey their Lord and Master.

8, 9. *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.* What a glorious word! I scarcely know a text more deep, more full than this. After the same manner as God the Father loves the Son—after that same sort does the Son love us! Hear the words again, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you; continue you in My love." He confirms us in it and bids us live in the enjoyment of it!

10. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.* You shall know it. You shall live in it—it shall be the air you breathe.

10, 11. *Even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you.* Christ would have His people happy—happy, however, with a holy joy which is not, therefore, a dim and second-rate joy. It is the very joy of Christ God's people are to enjoy!

11-16. *That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his master is doing: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.* A second time He puts this remarkable prevalence of prayer side by side with walking in the Lord's commandments! Oh, you that miss success in your life and work, may you not trace your failure to your forgetfulness of God? Shall God do *your* will, if you will not do *His*? Shall He wait on you, if you will not wait on Him? Will He not (must you not expect that He will) walk contrary to you if you walk contrary to Him? May His Spirit make you pure in life, for then shall you be successful at the mercy-seat!

17. *These things I command you, that you love one another.* Jesus, send us this spirit of love, we beseech you!

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A SERMON
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"For who has despised the day of small things?"
Zechariah 4:10.

ZECHARIAH was engaged in the building of the Temple. When its foundations were laid, it struck everybody as being a very small edifice compared with the former glorious structure of Solomon. The friends of the enterprise lamented that it should be so small—the foes of it rejoiced and uttered strong expressions of contempt! Both friends and foes doubted whether, even on that small scale, the structure would ever be completed. They might lay the foundations and they might raise the walls a little way, but they were too feeble a folk, possessed of too little riches and too little strength, to carry out the enterprise. It was the day of small things. Friends trembled. Foes jeered. But the prophet rebuked them both—rebuked the unbelief of friends and the contempt of enemies, by this question—"Who has despised the day of small things?"—and by a subsequent prophecy which removed the fear.

Now we shall use this question at this time for the comfort of two sorts of people—first, *for weak believers* and, secondly, *for feeble workers*. Our objective shall be the strengthening of the hands that hang down and the confirming of the feeble knees. We will begin, first of all, with—

I. WEAK BELIEVERS.

Let us describe them. It is with them a day of small things. Probably you have only been lately brought into the family of God. A few months ago you were a stranger to the divine life and to the things of God. You have been born-again and you have the weakness of an infant. You are not as strong, yet, as you will be when you have grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the early day with you and it is also the day of small things. Now your *knowledge is small*. My dear brothers and sisters, you have not been a Bible student long—thank God that you know yourself a sinner and Christ is your Savior! That is precious knowledge, but you feel now what you once would not have confessed—your own ignorance of the things of God! Especially do the deep things of God trouble you. There are some doctrines that appear to be mysterious, that are very simple to other believers, but are depressing to you. They are high—you cannot attain to them. They are to you what hard nuts would be to children whose teeth have not yet appeared. Well, be not at all alarmed about this! All in God's family have once been children! There are some that seem to be born with knowledge—Christians that come to a height in Christ very rapidly.

But these are only here and there. Israel did not produce a Samson every day. Most have to go through a long period of spiritual infancy and youth. And, alas, there are but few in the Church, even now, who might be called fathers! Do not marvel, therefore, if you are somewhat small in your knowledge.

Your *discernment, too, is small*. It is possible that anybody with a fluent tongue could lead you into error. You have, however, discernment, if you are a child of God, sufficient to be kept from deadly errors, for though there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, yet the elect cannot be deceived, for, the life of God being in them, they discern between the precious and the vile—they choose not the things of the world—but they follow after the things of God! Your discernment, however, seeming so small, need not afflict you. It is by reason of use—when the senses are exercised—that we fully discern between all that is good and all that is evil. Thank God for a little discernment—though you see men as trees walking, and your eyes are only half opened—a little light of God is better than none at all! Not long ago you were in total darkness. Now if there is a glimmer, be thankful, for remember where a glimmer can enter, the full noontide can come—yes, and shall come in due season! Therefore, despise not the time of small discernment.

Of course, you, my dear brother or sister, have *little experience*. I trust you will not fake experience and try to talk as if you had the experience of the veteran saints when you are as yet only a raw recruit. You have not yet done business on the great waters. The more fierce temptations of Satan have not assailed you—the wind has been tempered as yet to the shorn lamb—God has not hung heavy weights on slender threads, but has put a small burden on a weak back. Be thankful that it is so! Thank Him for the experience that you have, and do not be desponding because you have not more. It will all come in due time. "Despise not the day of small things." It is always unwise to get down a biography and say, "Oh, I cannot be right because I have not felt all this good man did." If a child of ten years of age were to take down the diary of his grandfather and were to say, "Because I do not feel my grandfather's weakness, do not require to use his spectacles, or lean upon his staff, therefore I am not one of the same family," it would be very foolish reasoning! Your experience will ripen. As yet it is but natural that it should be green. Wait a while and bless God for what you have.

Probably this, however, does not trouble you as much as one other thing, you have but *little faith*, and that faith being small, your feelings are very variable. I often hear this from young beginners in the divine life, "I was so happy a month ago, but I have lost that happiness." Perhaps tomorrow, after they have been at the house of God, they will be as cheerful as possible, but the next day their joy may be gone! Beware, my dear Christian friends, of living by feeling! John Bunyan puts down Mr. Live-by-feeling as one of the worst enemies of the town of Mansoul. I think he said he was hanged. I am afraid he, somehow or other, escaped from the executioner, for I very commonly meet him—and there is no

villain that hates the souls of men and causes more sorrow to the people of God than this Mr. Live-by-feeling! He that lives by feelings will be happy, today, and unhappy tomorrow—and if our salvation depended upon our feelings, we would be lost one day and saved another, for they are as fickle as the weather and go up and down like a barometer! We live by faith, and if that faith is weak, bless God that weak faith *is* faith and that weak faith is *true* faith! If you believe in Christ Jesus, though your faith is as a grain of mustard seed, it will save you, and it will, by-and-by, grow into something stronger. A diamond is a diamond, and the smallest scrap of it is of the same nature as the Koh-i-noor, and he that has but little faith has faith, for all that! It is not great faith that is essential to salvation, but faith that links the soul to Christ and that soul is, therefore, saved! Instead of mourning so much that your faith is not strong, bless God that you have any faith at all, for if He sees that you despise the faith He has given you, it may be long before He gives you more! Prize that little, and when He sees that you are so glad and thankful for that little, then will He multiply it and increase it—and your faith shall mount even to the full assurance of faith!

I think I hear you also add to all this the complaint that *your other graces seem to be small, too*. "Oh," you say, "my patience is so little. If I have a little pain, I begin to cry out. I was in hopes I should be able to bear it—bear it without murmuring. My courage is so little—the blush is on my cheek if anybody asks me about Christ—I think I could hardly confess Him before half a dozen, much less before the world. I am very weak, indeed." Ah, I don't wonder. I have known some who have been strong by reason of years and have still been lacking in that virtue. But where faith is weak, of course, the rest will be weak. A plant that has a weak root will naturally have a weak stem and then will have but weak fruit. Your weakness of faith sends a weakness through the whole. But for all this, though you are to seek for more faith, and consequently for more grace—for stronger graces, yet do not despise what graces you have. Thank God for them! And pray that the few clusters that are now upon you may be multiplied a thousand-fold to the praise of the glory of His grace. Thus I have tried to describe those who are passing through the day of small things.

But the text asks, "*Who has despised* the day of small things?" Well, some have, but there is a great comfort in this—*God the Father has not*! He has looked upon you—you with little grace, and little love, and little faith—and He has not despised you! No, God is always near the feeble saint. If I saw a young man crossing a common alone, I would not be at all astonished, and I would not look round for his father. But I saw today, as I went home, a very tiny little tot right out on the Common—a pretty little girl, and I thought, "The father or mother are near somewhere." And truly there was the father behind a tree whom I had not seen. I was as good as sure that the little thing was not there all alone! And when I see a little weak child of God, I feel sure that God the Father is near, watching with wakeful eyes and tending with gracious

care the feebleness of His newborn child! He does not despise you if you are resting on His promise. The humble and contrite have a word all to themselves in Scripture, that these He will not despise!

It is another sweet and consoling thought that *God the Son does not despise the day of small things*. Jesus Christ does not, for you remember this word, "He shall carry the lambs in His bosom." We put that which we most prize nearest our heart, and this is what Jesus does. Some of us, perhaps, have outgrown the state in which we were lambs, but to ride in that heavenly carriage of the Savior's bosom—we might well be content to go back and be lambs again! He does not despise the day of small things.

And it is equally consolatory to reflect that the *Holy Spirit does not despise the day of small things*, for He it is who, having planted in the heart the grain of mustard seed, watches over it till it becomes a tree! He it is who, having seen the new-born child of grace, does nurse, feed and tend it until it comes to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The blessed Godhead despises not the weak believer! O weak believer, be consoled by this!

Who is it, then, that may despise the day of small things? Perhaps Satan has told you and whispered in your ear that such little grace as yours is not worth having, that such an insignificant plant as you are will surely be rooted up. Now let me tell you that Satan is a liar, for he, himself, does not despise the day of small things! I am sure of that because he always makes a dead set upon those who are just coming to Christ. As soon as ever he sees that the soul is a little wounded by conviction. As soon as ever he discovers that a heart begins to pray, he will assault it with fiercer temptations than ever! I have known him try to drive such a one to suicide, or to lead him into worse sin than he has ever committed before. He—

"Trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

He may tell you that the little grace in us is of no account, but he knows right well that it is the handful of corn on the top of the mountain—the fruit of which shall shake like Lebanon! He knows it is the little grace in the heart that overthrows his kingdom there.

"Ah," you say, "but I have been greatly troubled lately because I have many *friends that despise me*, because though I can hardly say I am a believer, yet I have some desire towards God." What sort of friends are these? Are they worldly friends? Oh, do not fret about what they say! It would never trouble me if I were an artist, if a blind man were to utter the sharpest criticism on my works. What does he know about it? And when an ungodly person begins to say about your piety that it is deficient and faulty, poor soul let him say what he will—it need not affect you! "Ah," you say, "the persons that seem to despise me, and to put me out, and tell me that I am no child of God, are, I believe, Christians." Well then, do two things—first, lay what they say to you, in a measure, to heart, because it may be if God's children do not see in you the mark of a child, perhaps you are not a child! Let it lead you to examination. Oh,

dear friends, it is very easy to be self-deceived and God may employ, perhaps, one of His servants to enlighten you upon this—and deliver you from a strong delusion! But, on the other hand, if you really do trust in your Savior, if you have begun to pray, if you have some love to God—and any Christian treats you harshly as if he thought you a hypocrite, forgive him—bear it! He has made a mistake. He would not do so if he knew you better. Say within yourself, "After all, if my brother does not know me, it is enough if my Father does. If my Father loves me, though my brother gives me the cold shoulder, I will be sorry for it, but it shall not break my heart. I will cling the closer to my Lord because His servants seem shy of me." Why, it is not much wonder, is it, that some Christians should be afraid of some of you converts, for think what you used to be a little while ago? Why, a mother hears her son say he is converted. A month or two ago she knew where he spent his evenings and what were his habits of sin, and though she hopes it is so, she is afraid lest she should lead him to presumption. And she rejoices with trembling and, perhaps, tells him more about her trembling than she does about her rejoicing!

Why, the saints of old could not think Saul was converted at first! He was to be brought into the church meeting and received—I will suppose the case. I should not wonder before he came, when he saw the elders, one of them would say, "Well, the young man seems to know something of the grace of God—there is certainly a change in him. But it is a remarkable thing that he should wish to join the very people he was persecuting—perhaps it is a mere impulse. It may be, after all, that he will go back to his old companions." Do you wonder they should say so? I don't! I am not at all surprised. I am sorry when there are unjust suspicions. I am sorry when a genuine child of God is questioned. But I would not have you lay it much to heart. As I have said before, if your Father knows you, you need not be so broken in heart because your brother does not! Be glad that God does not despise the day of small things!

And now let me say to you who are in this state of small things, that I earnestly trust that you will not, yourselves, despise the day of small things "How can we do that?" you ask. Why, you can do it by desponding! I think there was a time when you would have been ready to leap for joy, if you had been told that God would have given you a little faith! And now you have got a little faith and, instead of rejoicing, you are sighing, and moaning, and mourning! Do not do so. Be thankful for moonlight, and you shall get sunlight! Be thankful for sunlight, and you shall get that light of heaven which is as the light of seven days! Do not despond lest you seem to despise the mercy which God has given you! A poor patient that has been very, very lame and weak, and could not rise from his bed, is at last able to walk with a stick. "Well," he says to himself, "I wish I could walk, and run, and leap as other men." Suppose he sits down and frets because he cannot? His physician might put his hand on his shoulder and say, "My good fellow, why, you ought to be

thankful you can stand at all! A little while ago, you know, you could not stand upright. Be glad for what you have—don't seem to despise what has been done for you." I say to every Christian here, while you long after strength, don't seem to despise the grace that God has bestowed, but rejoice and bless His name!

You can despise the day of small things, again, *by not seeking after more*. "That is strange," you say. Well, a man who has got a little and does not want more—it looks as if he despises the little! He who has a little light and does not ask for more light, does not care for light at all. You that have a little faith and do not want more faith—do not value faith at all—you are despising it! On the one hand, do not despond because you have the day of small things, but in the next place, do not stand still and be satisfied with what you have! Prove your value of the little by earnestly seeking after more divine grace! Do not despise the grace that God has given you, but bless God for it—and do this in the presence of His people. If you hold your tongue about your grace and never let anyone know, surely it must be because you do not think it is worth saying anything about! Tell your brothers, tell your sisters, and they of the Lord's household, that the Lord has done gracious things for you! And then it will be seen that you do not despise His grace.

And now let us run over a thought or two about these small things in weak believers. Be it remembered that little faith is saving faith, and that the day of small things is a day of safe things. Be it remembered that it is natural that living things should begin small. The man is first a baby. The daylight is first of all twilight. It is by little and by little that we come unto the stature of men in Christ Jesus. The day of small things is not only natural, but promising. Small things are living things. Let them alone, and they grow. The day of small things has its beauty and its excellence. I have known some who in later years would have liked to have gone back to their first days. Oh, well do some of us remember when we would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon! We had not much knowledge, but oh, how we longed to know! We stood in the aisles, then, and we never got tired! Now we need soft seats and very comfortable places—and the atmosphere must neither be too hot nor too cold! We are now getting dainty, perhaps, but in those first young days of spiritual life, what appetites we had for divine truth, and what zeal, what sacred fire was in our heart! True, some of it was wild fire and, perhaps, the energy of the flesh mingled with the power of the Spirit, but, for all that, God remembers the love of our espousals and so do we remember, too! The mother loves her grown-up son, but sometimes she thinks she does not love him as she did when she could fondle him in her arms. Oh, the beauty of a little child! Oh, the beauty of a lamb in the faith! I dare say the farmer and the butcher like the sheep better than the lambs, but the lambs are best to look at, at any rate! And the rosebud—there is a charm about it that there is not in the full-blown rose. And so in the day of small things there is a special excellence that we ought not to despise. Besides, small as grace may be in the heart, it is divine—it is a spark from the ever-blazing sun! He is a partaker of the divine nature who has

even a little living faith in Christ. And being divine, it is immortal! Not all the devils in hell could quench the feeblest spark of grace that ever dropped into the heart of man! If God has given you faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will defy all earth and hell, all time and eternity ever to destroy it! So there is much reason why we should not despise the day of small things.

One word and I leave this point. You Christians, don't despise anybody, but especially do not despise any in whom you see even a little love to Christ. But do more—look after them, look after the little ones! I think I have heard of a shepherd who had a remarkably fine flock of sheep—and he had a secret about them. He was often asked how it was that his flocks seemed so much to excel all others. At last he told the secret—"I give my principal attention to the lambs." Now you elders of the church, and you, my matronly sisters, you that know the Lord, and have known Him for years, look up the lambs! Search them out and take a special care of them! For if they are well nurtured in their early days, they will get strength of spiritual constitution that will make them the joy of the Good Shepherd during the rest of their days! Now I leave that point. In the second place, I said that I would address a word or two to—

II. FEEBLE WORKERS.

Thank God there are many workers here tonight, and maybe they will put themselves down as feeble. May the words I utter be an encouragement to them and to feeble workers collectively! When a church begins, it is usually small and the day of small things is a time of considerable anxiety and fear. I may be addressing some who are members of a newly-organized church. Dear brothers and sisters, do not despise the day of small things! Rest assured that God does not save by numbers, and that results are not in the spiritual kingdom in proportion to numbers! I have been reading lately with considerable care, the life of John Wesley by two or three different authors in order to get, as well as I could, a fair idea of the good man. And one thing I have noticed—that the beginnings of the work which has become so wonderfully large were very small, indeed. Mr. Wesley and his first brethren were not rich people. Nearly all that joined him were poor. Here and there, there was a person of some standing, but the Methodists were the poor of the land. And his first preachers were not men of education. One or two were so, but the most were good outdoor preachers—head preachers, magnificent preachers as God made them by His Spirit—they were not men who had had the benefit of college training, or who were remarkable for ability. The Methodists had neither money nor eminent men, at first, and their numbers were very few. During the whole life of that good man, which was protracted for so many years, the denomination did not attain any very remarkable size. They were few, and apparently feeble, but Methodism was never as glorious as it was at first—and there were never as many conversions, I believe, as in those early days.

Now I speak sorrowfully. It is a great denomination. It abounds in wealth—I am glad it does. It has mighty orators—I rejoice it has. But it

has no increase, no conversions! This year and other years it remains stationary. I do not say this because that is an exceptional denomination, for almost all others have the same tale. Year by year as the statistics come in, it is just this. "No increase—hardly hold our ground." I use that as an illustration here—this church will get in precisely the same condition if we do not look out—just the same state! When we have not the means, we get the blessing—and when we seem to have the might and power—then the blessing does not come. Oh, may God send us poverty! May God send us lack of means and take away our power of speech if it must be, and help us only to stammer, if we may only thus get the blessing! Oh, I crave to be useful to souls, and all the rest may go where it will. And each church must crave the same. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Instead of despising the day of small things, we ought to be encouraged! It is by the small things that God seems to work, but the great things He does not often use. He won't have Gideon's great host—let them go to their homes—let the mass of them go! Bring them down to the water—pick out only the men that lap—and then there is a very few. You can count them almost on your fingers—just two or three hundred men. Then Gideon shall go forth against the Midianites! And as the cake of barley bread smote the tent, and it lay along, so the sound of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon at the dead of night shall make the host to tremble and the Lord God shall get to Himself the victory! Never mind your feebleness, brothers and sisters! Never mind your fewness, your poverty, your lack of ability! Throw your souls into God's cause, pray mightily, lay hold on the gates of heaven, stir heaven and earth, rather than be defeated in winning souls—and you will see results that will astonish you! "Who has despised the day of small things?"

Now take the case of each Christian individually. Every one of us ought to be at work for Christ, but the great mass of us cannot do great things. Don't despise, then, the day of little things! You can only give a penny. Now then, He that sat over by the treasury did not despise the widow's two mites that made a farthing. Your little thank-offering, if given from your heart, is as acceptable as if it had been a hundred times as much! Don't, therefore, neglect to do the little. Don't despise the day of small things. You can only give away a tract in the street. Don't say, "I won't do that." Souls have been saved by the distribution of tracts and sermons! Scatter them, scatter them! They will be good seed. You know not where they may fall. You can only write a letter to a friend, sometimes, about Christ. Don't neglect to do it! Write one tomorrow! Remember a playmate of yours—you may take liberties with him about his soul from your intimacy with him. Write to him about his state before God, and urge him to seek the Savior! Who knows?—a sermon may miss him, but a letter from the well-known school companion will reach his heart. Mother, it is only two or three little children at home that you have an influence over. Despise not the day of small things! Take them tomorrow—put your arms around their necks as they kneel by you—pray, "God bless my boys and girls, and save them"—tell them of Christ

now. Oh, how well can mothers preach to children! I can never forget my mother's teaching. On a Sunday night, when we were at home, she would have us round the table and explain the Scriptures as we read, and then pray—and one night she left an impression on my mind that never will be erased, when she said, "I have told you, my dear children, the way of salvation, and if you perish you will perish justly. I shall have to say, 'Amen,' to your condemnation if you are condemned." And I could not bear that! Anybody else might say, "Amen," but not my mother!

Oh, you don't know—you that have to deal with children—what you may do! Despise not these little opportunities. Put a word in edgeways for Christ—you that go about in trains, you that go into workshops and factories. If Christians were men who were all true to their colors, I think we should soon see a great change come over our great establishments. Speak up for Jesus! Be not ashamed of Him! And because you can say but little, don't refuse, therefore, to say that, but rather say it over 20 times, and so make the little into much! Again, and again, and again, repeat the feeble stroke, and there shall come to be as much result from it as from one tremendous blow! God accepts your little works if they are done in faith in His dear Son. God will give success to your little works! God will educate you by your little works to do greater works—and your little works may call out others who shall do greater works by far than ever you shall be able to accomplish! Evangelists, go on preaching at the street corner! You that visit the low lodging houses, go on! Get into the room and talk of Jesus Christ there as you have done. You that go into the country towns on the Sabbath and speak on the village greens of Christ, go on with it! I am glad to see you, but I am glad to miss you when I know you are about the Master's work! We don't want to keep the salt in the box—let it be rubbed into the putrid mass to stop the purification. We don't want the seed forever in the corn bin—let it be scattered and it will give us more! Oh, brothers and sisters, wake up if any of you are asleep! Don't let an ounce of strength in this church be wasted—not a single grain of ability, either in the way of doing, or praying, or giving, or holy living! Spend and be spent, for who has despised the day of small things?

The Lord encourage weak believers, and the Lord accept the efforts of feeble workers, and send to both His richest benediction for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 7; 8:9-22.

Verse 1. *And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu.* God's prophets were not always in the spirit, and when the Word of God came to them, it was a notable day, and they marked it in their diary! I think that we, too, who are not prophets can

remember some special time when God's Word was peculiarly precious to us. We can put down "the fourth day of the ninth month."

2, 3. *When they had sent unto the house of God, Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?* On that day the Jews had kept a fast to commemorate the terrible calamity which happened to the temple in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now these people were living away in Babylon and it occurred to them that, as the temple was now being built and Jerusalem was restored, it was a question whether they ought to keep that fast any longer since it was not kept by divine command. It was a fast of their own inventing—and the question was whether they ought not to abandon it when things had so changed. So they sent messengers to the temple to inquire of the priests and of the prophets, and to pray to God, Himself. When we have a difficult question lying on the conscience, it is well to settle it, and not allow it to rest on the heart unsatisfied.

4, 5. *Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?* There is the point! You can fast to self. You can fast to your own pride. If we have no thought of honoring God in our fasting, there is nothing in it. The question is, "Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?"

6. *And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?* If a holy feast is not kept with a view to God, it is not kept at all! It is a feast to yourselves. You have missed the mark altogether.

7. *Should you not hear the words which the LORD has cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?* Well, what was that word? Zechariah has it fresh from God, and he states it.

8-10. *And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying. Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.* This is what God said—most just, most fit for God to require of His people.

11, 12. *But they refused to listen, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, so that they should not hear. Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts has sent by His Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.* And well there might! When God requires what is so just and so commendable, and men will not yield and will not even hear about it, they deserve that God should grow wrathful with them.

13. *Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear; says the LORD of hosts.* The punishment of sin seems to be according to the sin itself. If men will not hear God, neither will God hear them!

14. *But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.* Now, in the next chapter, the prophet goes on to speak not so much of the people's sin as of God's resolve to have mercy upon them. He speaks with gentle warnings and with loving promises.

Zechariah 8:9-22.

Verses 9, 10. *Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor.* See into what a state sin brought Israel? There was no bread, no work, no wage, no peace. Every man was the enemy of his neighbor!

11. *But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of hosts.* He would change everything and give them happiness and prosperity.

12. *For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.* God can turn our estate as easily as a man turns his hand.

"The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night."

As the wheel revolves, so can the whole fortune of a man change speedily under the kind hand of God!

13. *And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.* The Jew had become the very model of a curse. "You are as cursed as a Jew," said the enemies of Israel! But God would make them to be the very model of a blessing, so that men would say, "You are as blessed as they of Israel."

14, 15. *For thus says the LORD of hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, says the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear you not.* It is a very instructive and encouraging passage. When God threatened to punish His people, He did it. He did not play with words. He punished them and repented not. And so when God promises to bless His people, He will not run back from His word, but He will carry out every jot and tittle of it in the blessing of His people!

16, 17. *These are the things that you shall do: Speak you every man the truth to his neighbor: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD.* He will have His people true, even if they swear to their own hurt. They must not change. They are to speak the truth, though a thousand calamities should be let loose thereby! May God make us a truth-loving, truth-speaking, truth-doing people!

18. *And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying—* This is the point that I call your attention to. You had the question when I began to read—here is the answer.

19. *Thus says the LORD of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah, joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.* Here is an answer to more than they asked for! The messengers only inquired about one fast—what they should do with it—namely, the fast of the fifth month. But they get instruction upon three other fasts. If you come to God's Word upon any point, you will not only be resolved upon that point, but you will be guided in many other ways, for God's Word is full of instruction—and they that are willing to be taught of it shall become wise in all ways. So now they are told that these fasts were to be turned into feasts.

20, 21. *Thus says the LORD of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.* It is a fine thing when we invite other people and can always say, "I will go also." There are many people who say, "Do as I do, not as I say!" But if our example keeps pace with our precept, there will be power in our precept. "Let us go," they said—and he that said it added, "I will go also."

22. *Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.* And it is so, even now. We have received our religion from a Jew. We believe in One who was of the seed of Abraham. We rejoice in Him as also the Son of God, and many nations come crowding about the Christ of God.

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SINCERE SEEKERS—ASSURED FINDERS
NO. 3490

A SERMON
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"If you seek Him, He will be found of you."
1 Chronicles 28:9.

ALTHOUGH this was addressed to Solomon, it may, without any violence to the truth of God, be addressed tonight to every unconverted person here present, for there are a great many texts of Scripture of a similar import which apply to all ungodly ones, such, for instance, as that, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." And that other, "He that seeks, finds; to him that knocks, it shall be opened." I should like to go round, if it were possible, and say to every hearer here, as I put my hand upon his shoulder, "If you seek your God, He will be found of you"—even of you. May I ask you to take it as spoken to each individual—not to your neighbors, not to one who is better or worse than yourselves, but to you? You, young man, and you of riper years, you of all ages, classes and sexes, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." I know that those who think at all about religion and do not understand it, are very apt to conceive that there is something wonderfully mysterious about it. That a man should follow it, and may, perhaps, attain the blessing of it towards the end of life, or on a dying bed, though some conceive that then nobody is quite sure that he is saved unless it is some extraordinarily good man! Oh, is not this strange, that with a book so plain as this, and with a gospel preached by so many in these days, yet the mass of mankind are in a cloud and a fog about the blessed revelation of God? Jesus Christ is salvation! He is to be had—He is to be had now! You may know you have Him. You may be saved now —completely saved, and live in the full enjoyment of that knowledge! "If you seek Him, He will be found of you."

The notion is that there are a great many very mysterious preliminaries, a great deal to *do*, and a great deal to *be*, and all quite beyond our power. It is not so, but seek Him. We will tell you what that means and he that seeks Him finds Him. "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." It has been supposed that we should need a good deal of help in seeking after salvation—certain persons who step in to be absolutely necessary priests between us and God. A great delusion, but

there are thousands who believe it and who fancy that God won't hear them if they pray, except they have some respect for these human mediators. Away with the whole lie! Away with any pretense for anyone to stand between the soul and God, except Jesus Christ! "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." Though you bring no other man with you, but come empty-handed as you are to God, here, without paraphernalia, or altar, or "sacrifice of the Mass," He will be found of you! Take the text in its simplicity and sublimity. It is just this—that if any heart really seeks God in His way, it shall find Him! If any man really wants mercy from God and seeks it as God tells him to seek it, he shall have it! Any man of woman born, be he who he may, if he comes to God in the way laid down, and sincerely asks for salvation, that salvation he shall surely have! The matter is simple enough—our pride alone obscures it! The way to heaven is so plain that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein." We do but muddle it because we dislike it! We do but add this and that and the other to it because, like Naaman, the Syrian, we need to do some great thing, and we are not content to take the prophetic word, "Wash and be clean." I aim at nothing tonight, therefore, but that some here present may be brought to see the way of salvation and may be led to run in it. Oh, may God grant that, out of this company, there may be some at least who will be willing to seek and to find! While we shall cast the net, may the Master grant that some may be taken in it to their own eternal welfare! We shall try to do three things, four perhaps. First, to notice *that there is a promise here explained. We will then give directions.* Thirdly, *we will answer objections.* And, if time serves us, we will *offer a stimulant to the pursuit of this.* First, then, there is—

I. A PROMISE TO BE EXPLAINED.

"If you seek Him, He will be found of you." I have almost completed my explanation already. We have lost our God by the Fall—by our own sin. We have alienated ourselves from Him, but our case is not hopeless. Since Jesus Christ has come into the world and given the gospel, and provided an atonement, it is a certainty that if we desire the Lord and seek Him, He will be found of us. Now God has told us the way in which to seek. It is by coming to Him as He is revealed in Christ Jesus and trusting our souls with Jesus. If we do this, we have found God—and we are saved! The sum and substance of the promise is this—any soul that, by prayer, seeks God, desires salvation through Jesus, through faith in Jesus—such a soul shall be heard, shall get the blessing it desires, shall find its God! You shall not pray in vain! Your tears, cries and longings shall be heard. Christ shall be revealed to you and, through your believing in Christ, you shall certainly be saved! There is not, and never will be, in hell, a single person who dares say that he sought the Lord through Christ and could not find Him. There is not living a man who dares say that, or if he did, his own conscience would call him a liar!

They that seek Him may not find Him at once, but they shall, ultimately. Delays from God are not denials. I will repeat what I said. There is not, and there never shall be, in the pit of hell, a soul that shall dare to say, "I earnestly sought mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and did not find it." They who never found mercy in Christ never sought it, or never sought it correctly and earnestly! The seeker will become a finder. Seeking in God's way, heartily and earnestly, God will not reject him. "How do you know who I may be?" asks one—"you speak at large of all." I do not know who you may be, but I do know this, that if "the wicked forsakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turns unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon" him! I also know this, concerning you, my friend, that "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," and be you who you may, I am bidden to preach this gospel to every creature under heaven—and surely you are a *creature*! And what is this gospel? Why, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Therefore, however peculiar your case or circumstances, there stands the one grand, glorious promise—"if you seek Him, He will be found of you." The only, "if," there is, is with you! If you seek Him—no, "if," about His being found of you! Oh, shall it be an, "if"? Shall it be an "if"? The Lord convert that "if" into certainty, and may you be compelled to say, tonight, "I will seek Him, and I will never cease my seeking until in my case the promise is true, and I have found Him of whom it was written, 'If you seek Him, He will be found of you.'" I have thus explained the text, though it scarcely needed it. Now let me give—

II. SOME DIRECTIONS.

What is it to seek the Lord? To seek the Lord is, in one way, simply this—the readiest way to seek Him is *to believe that Jesus is the Christ* and to trust Him who Jesus, the Savior, is God's anointed—and to trust Him as God's anointed to save your soul! You shall find peace the moment you do that. "But," says one, "I need to get this faith you speak of—this trust which you explain." Well then, let me help you somewhat. How do we get faith in anything? Why, surely by trying to know what it is! It would be very idle for me to stand here and say to you, "Believe, believe, believe"—but not tell you what to believe—what is to be believed! A man cannot command his faith about a something that he knows nothing of! Therefore, let me say to every soul that is seeking mercy, "Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace." "Study the Scriptures." Try to understand God's way of salvation. See who Christ is. What He did. What was the result of what He did. Get a clear view of His person and His work and this will materially help you to believe.

Next to that, remember, *faith comes by hearing*. Frequent, therefore, the hearing of the Word and be careful that you seek not after the gaudy words of man's eloquence, which may feed your pride and vanity, and

tickle your ears, but can never save your soul! Seek a Christ-exalting ministry. Desire to be where your soul will be handled with fidelity and where Christ will be held up before you with simplicity and earnestness—for the hearing that God blesses is not the hearing of every man that speaks, but the hearing of the Word of God that, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief." Listen with all your ears when Christ is being talked of, and pray while you are hearing, and say, "Lord, bless that message to me." Open your soul to the message—pray the Lord to open it, that you may be like Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things which were spoken to her by Paul. Then when you think you understand the gospel, and have heard it so as to pretty plainly see it, if there should remain some difficulties which do not seem to be opened up to you by the ministry, *seek some earnest Christian*, to whom you may confide your soul on such points. You shall find that what is very difficult to you will be very easy to some believers and they will be able, in God's hands, to be the means of removing the scales from your eyes. It was so with Paul when he was converted—he must go to Ananias, and when Ananias would come in, then should the scales fall from Paul's eyes. Meanwhile, take care *to be constantly in prayer*. Cry unto God to show you the way! Ask Him to do it, for, remember, He can do for you what you can never do for yourself. Understand that you cannot save yourself—that you have no right to be saved—that if saved, it will be by His sovereign grace—therefore, cry humbly, but oh, note the value of the blessing you need and, therefore, pray earnestly! Do not let Him go except He blesses you. Rob yourself of sleep, sinner, rather than rob your soul of Christ! Search the Word again and again—and turn each promise into a prayer—and if you can only get a hold on the edge of a promise, go with it to the mercy-seat and plead it! Be thankful for the smallest degree of hope! Trust that the first beams of day will soon expand and deepen into dawn, and into noonday. Grieve not the Holy Spirit by going on with your old sin. Part with your old companions. Seek the house of God. Seek the people of God—*addict yourself to holy company and holy pursuits*—and although I would not put all this together in the place of my first word, which was, "Believe now—believe now in Christ," yet if there are difficulties in the way, they will yield under such an earnest mode of seeking as I have tried to point out to you! Oh, if a soul is resolved, "I will not perish if mercy is to be had. I will stoop to anything. I will have Christ for nothing! I will be nothing! I will let Him do what He wills with me, if I may but be saved! I will make no terms and no conditions, only let my sins be blotted out"—my friend, you are already not far from the kingdom of God! Already grace is at work in your soul and "if you seek Him, He will be found of you." Continue in that blessed search! Let nothing take you away from

it—it is your life—your soul hangs on it! Heaven and hell tremble in the balance for you—give your heart to God, your faith to Christ, your whole soul to the purpose of seeking your salvation, and say, "It is my only business, with holy faith and holy fear, to make my calling and election sure while here I stand upon this narrow neck of land, betwixt the two unbounded seas." I have thus given you some directions, but I am not going to linger over them, but pass on to—

III. ANSWER A FEW OBJECTIONS.

I cannot anticipate them all, and objection-hunting from sinners is an endless work, for when you have destroyed 50 objections, they will be ready with 50 more! But still there are a few common ones, and one is, "*I am too guilty*. Why should I seek, when it is impossible I should ever be pardoned?" Oh, if your soul rested with a man like yourself, or even with an angel, great sinner, I would not encourage you—but who is the Savior? Think for a little. He is the mighty God! He that made the heavens and stretched them out like a tent to dwell in—He who speaks and it is done—the everlasting Father—is anything too hard for Him? Look to Him! He becomes a man and yields Himself up to death! With sufferings that can never be understood or fully described—

"He bears that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

Is anything impossible for the Savior? Oh, conceive not so! The idea that any guilt is too great for Christ to pardon scarcely deserves to be replied to! It is so absurd when you are dealing with the infinite mercy of a Savior who is God Himself! It was said some years ago that the city of Peking in China suffered greatly from severe climate at one part of the year, and paid much for fuel, and yet underneath it, or close to it, there were large coal mines. And when the Chinese were asked why they did not work them, they said that they were afraid of disturbing the equilibrium of the globe—perhaps the world might turn over and the celestial empire—which had always been at the top, might be at the bottom! Nobody thought it worthwhile to answer so absurd a theory! And when any say, "My sins are too great for Christ to pardon," I could almost smile in the same way at a conception so ignorant! Can *anything* be too great for the infinite mercy of the eternal God who took our sins upon Himself upon the cross? Sinner, think not so!

There is another objection far more common, however, which is not put into words, but it means this—"*I am too good to seek Christ*. Why, have I not always been brought up religiously? I am not as those poor sinners are that have been drunks and the like. I have not any need of seeking Him." Oh, soul, if there is one that is least likely to be saved, it is you, for they that go about to establish their own righteousness are the last to submit to the righteousness in Christ Jesus—and verily, the publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before some

of you, for you can be sure of this—no man shall ever enter heaven by his own works! There is but one gate to heaven—one for queen or beggar, for the best order or the worst—and that is through the blood and righteousness of the one only Redeemer! And if you have not this, be you ever so good, you are utterly undone! Oh, lay aside that thought! You are neither too good nor too bad, but, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you."

But I hear somebody in the corner saying, "It is no use my thinking of seeking Christ, *I am too poor*." Oh, my dear friend, your mistake, indeed, is a strange one, for did not Jesus say, "To the poor the gospel is preached"? I'll be bound to say you are not poorer than the Savior, Himself, for He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay My head." Gold and silver have no value in His kingdom! The poorest is as wealthy as the wealthiest if He comes to Christ!

"Ah, yes," says another, "but I am *too ignorant*. I scarcely can read. Unhappily for me, I was brought up where I got no learning. I can never understand these things." Friend, if you are not able to read a word in the Bible, yet may you read your title clear to mansions in the skies! You need not have all this learning—it were a good thing for you if you had it—serviceable for a thousand purposes, but not necessary to the entering of that kingdom! If you know yourself as a sinner, and if you will trust Christ as a Savior, you shall be as welcome into the kingdom as doctors who have taken their degree at the Universities, or the wisest men that have ever sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Let not this keep you back.

But I have heard one say, "I would gladly seek the Lord, but *I have no place to seek Him*." What do you mean? "I have no chamber into which I can go and pray alone." That is a sad deprivation, I grant you, but do not think for a moment that you need any special place in which to seek the Lord! I remember a sailor who used to be much in prayer, and he was asked where he went to pray. "Oh," he said, "I have been many a time alone with Christ up on the mast." Why not? It is as good a prayer room as a cathedral! Another man, when he was converted, used, while under conviction of sin, to make use of an old coach that was in his master's yard. Why not? Why not? I know one whose prayer place used to be a saw pit, and another a hayloft! What does it matter?—

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

Every place is consecrated where there is a true heart. In that seat you may seek and find Him. Standing there, up in the corner of the gallery, your soul may find her God. In Cheapside, walking in the busiest street, or at the plowshare amidst the fields, let your soul but cry, "Jesus, pity a

sinner"—let your heart trust in that Jesus—no place is needed—any place suffices. Raise not that excuse!

"*I have not the time*," says another. Not the time? What time, pray tell, does it require? But if it did require it, oh, man, are you mad to say, "I have no time"? You have time enough to dress your body—you stay for that other pin, that other ribbon and that adornment of your person. Not time to put on the robe of righteousness? You have time to feed your bodies, to sit down to your meals. Not time to eat the bread of heaven? Time to cast up your accounts to see how your business stands, and not time to see to your soul's affairs? Oh, sirs, be ashamed to make such an excuse! I charge you, give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you are saved! A man wakes up in the night and finds his house is on fire. There is a noise in the street. The fireman is calling to him. The ladder is at the window! "I have not time," he says, "to go down the ladder and escape. I have little enough time for rest, and I must have my sleep while I can." The man is mad, sir, and so is every man who says, "I have not time to seek my God"! Perhaps, however, you speak the truth, for before the next word leaves my lips you may fall down a corpse! God sometimes makes our base excuses turn into solemn truths. Oh, while you have time, use it! "Escape for your life! Look not behind you!" Stay not, but hasten till you find the Savior and never think of resting till Christ is yours!

Another reason that some bring is one which occurs to them as if it were very satisfactory, and that is, "*I cannot*. No man can come, except he is drawn, and I cannot." Yes, but you may put a truth into such a shape that it is a lie! Will you let me put that into the right shape? Every time when a sinner cannot, the real reason is that he *will not*. All the cannots in the Bible about spiritual inability are tantamount to will nots! But when you say, "I cannot repent," you mean, "I *will not*—I will not seek, I will not believe." Now put it honestly to your own soul, for that is what you mean, for if you would, you could! If the will were conquered, the power would be sure to come with it, but the first difficulty is, "You will not"—and this is it, you will not seek eternal life! You will not escape from hell! You will not have heaven! You will not be reconciled to God—you will not come to Christ that you might have Christ. You make it as an objection, but I charge it upon you as crime—a crime which aggravates all the rest, and is, in itself, greater crime, perhaps, than all the rest put together! You will not come.

"Do you want to come?" "Yes, but there is much I cannot do." "Yes, but there is means provided to help you." God the Holy Spirit helps you, yes, works mightily in you! Have you never heard of that negro servant who was sent by his master on an errand? He did not particularly like to go there. He was sent with a letter. He was back in a short time and his

master said, Sam, you have not gone with that letter." "No, Massa." "Why not?" "Massa couldn't expect Sam to do impossibilities." "What impossibilities, sir?" "I went on as far as I could, Massa—came to river—couldn't swim across river—very wide river—couldn't swim across it." "But there is a ferry." "Ferry on t'other side, Massa—ferry t'other side." "Did you call to the ferry, sir?" "No, Massa; didn't." "Oh, you rascal," he said, "that is no excuse at all! Why didn't you call for the ferry? Why didn't you call for it?" Now if that negro had only just said, "Boat, ahoy there!" the ferry would have come to him and all would have been well. It was an idle thing to say, "I cannot." It was true, but it was false. So when I come to a point where there is something in the matter of my being saved which I cannot do, yet if I pray the Holy Spirit to work in me that which I cannot work in myself, He will do it. Jesus Christ will give me "true belief and true repentance—every grace that brings me near." I have only to ask for all that I need and I shall have it! It is idle for me to say, "I cannot do it." Nobody asked you to! Christ will *give* it to you! Only stand and call—call mightily, and cry with all your soul until the blessing comes! But now I must close. I need to offer only a few sentences.

IV. A STIMULANT, to lead you to seek Him who will be found of you. And the first is, "*Is it not our duty to God that we should seek Him*?" With some persons this reflection may be important. You remember the Countess of Huntingdon, one of the most remarkably gracious women that ever lived—a mother in Israel. Her conversion was, to a great degree, caused by this—she was a happy and worldly lady of noble rank, excellent and amiable, and all that, but she had no thought of the things of God. She was at a ball and the amusements of the evening were engrossing all attention, and suddenly the answer to the first question of the assembly's catechism, which she appears to have learned when she was a child, came forcibly into her mind, "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever." She thought to herself, "Why, here am I, a butterfly among a lot of butterflies! All *our* chief end is to enjoy *ourselves*, to spend the evening merrily making ourselves agreeable, and so on." She went away smitten in her soul with that thought, "The end that God made me for I am not answering." Now there are some minds that have sufficient divine grace in them to think of such a thing as that, and I shall leave that to fall into some honest and good ground. Perhaps some young man will say, "Well, after all, I am not serving my Creator as I should." You remember the conversion of Colonel Gardiner? He had lived a wild soldier's life and he had appointed that very night of his conversion to perpetuate a gross sin. He was waiting an hour before he went to his appointment, and he thought he saw, I think upon the wall, the Savior on the cross, and underneath the representation of the Crucified, he read these words—

"I have done this for you; what have you done for Me?"

He never kept that sinful appointment! He became a soldier of the cross! Oh, I wish that some here might feel something of nobility within them that would make them feel, "It is mean to act so unjustly to God, as to prefer the trivial things of time to the weighty matters of eternity."

The next stimulus I would offer is one of *hope*. "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." "Oh," says one, "if I could find Him, I would seek Him." When persons go to South Africa, they search for diamonds, but if any man could be assured that he would find a Koh-i-noor, I guarantee you he would be one of the hardest workers there! Oh, there are some here tonight that little dream it—that they will yet, before long, be telling others what eternal love has done for them! They are very ready to sneer at it, perhaps, at this moment. They think it is impossible. The Lord does great marvels! He brings down the mighty from their seat, and exalts them of low degree. Oh, soul, the gate may not open at the first knock to you, it may be, but it will open! Let me encourage you. You shall yet rejoice. Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty, for there is a harp in heaven that no finger shall ever play on but yours! And there is a crown there that will fit no head but yours! And a throne on which no one must sit but you! The Lord has chosen you, and, therefore, this night He calls you! "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness have I drawn you." Go, poor soul, to Christ, and you shall find it so!

But if that does not move you, let me give you another stimulant, and that is the opposite one, of *fear*. Suppose you should never seek your Lord? Suppose you should die without a Savior—what then? "I shall die," you say, "my soul will go before God." What then? Why, it must be condemned! And by-and-by your body shall rise up from the grave, your body shall spring, and you in body and soul shall stand before the bar of that great Savior whom you, tonight, despise! Beware, for the books will be opened and your rejection of Christ written there shall be read before the assembled world! And then when the earth does rock and reel and the ungodly in their terrors ask for the mountains to cover them—when the stars fall like withered figs from the trees and all Creation gathers up her skirts to flee away from the face of Him who comes in terror, oh, what will you do? What will you do? Expire, you cannot! Be extinguished, you will not—live on, you will! And in anguish that shall never abate, in despair that shall never be enlightened with a hope! "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die?" Why will you reject Him? "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." Oh, seek Him! Reject Him not! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Oh, who shall give me tears? Who shall teach me to speak with pathos? How shall I reach your consciences and stir your hearts? Eternal Spirit, do You this mighty work, and win this night to Yourself! O Jesus, save many a heart by this testimony of the

grace, which again and again we reiterate, "If we seek Him—if you seek Him—He will be found of you." God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:13-36.

Verse 13. *And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.* We are in the stairway, now, between heaven and earth. Christ has come down. Christ has gone up, and yet He was always there—a mystery, but one that is true, and new. Today we can go up by thought and prayer, and blessings can come down, but Christ is always there. "He is at the Father's side, the Man of Love, the Crucified."

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* What a glorious word! Here is the gospel in a verse, the whole Bible in a line or two! If we believe in Him this morning, we nave eternal life—not merely life, but life similar to the very life of God Himself—*eternal* life! We have in us that which will outlast the world, the sun, the moon and the stars! We have a life which, being like the life of God, we shall live forever and ever!

16, 17. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* Condemnation does come to the world through Christ, because the world rejects Him, but that was no part of God's design in sending Him. His design is salvation—salvation only. Oh, that we might so believe as to answer to the divine purpose in the sending of His Son. "He that believes on Him is not condemned," not even now, notwithstanding every sin he has committed, he is not condemned. "But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Unbelieving is the condemning sin—it seals upon us the condemnation of every other sin. If you do not believe in Christ this morning, my hearer, you are not in a state of probation, you are condemned already! He that believes on Him is not in a state of probation, he is not condemned! He is already acquitted, he is at this moment free from condemnation before the judgment-seat of God!

19-21. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God.* You see why men do not come to Christ—they do not want to give up their

sin—they do not want to be made uneasy in it. They are afraid of being reproved. You see why saintly men come to Christ, for they take a delight in beholding Him, and in having their faith and their divine grace made manifest, both to themselves and to onlookers.

22-24. *After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea: and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.* So John was busy until he was cast into prison. He would not waste an hour while he had an opportunity of doing good. He did it with all his heart. John, are you here in this sanctuary at this moment, not yet laid up, not yet obliged to stay in your bed? Work while you can, then—spend every moment in your Master's service.

25. *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.* Is it not a come-down—from reading about looking to Christ and loving, to a contention about purifying? There always are in the Church more or less idle quarrels about the dress of the preacher, about the mode of administering sacraments and so on—a discussion about purifying.

26. *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with you beyond Jordan, to whom you bore witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to Him.* "They are leaving you." They felt an envy on behalf of John because his influence appeared to be declining. John was quite a stranger to this feeling! He loved to see his Master grow, even at the cost of his own effacing.

27. *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.* No spiritual power, no power to bless his fellow men, except it comes from God. Shall I quarrel with God, therefore, if He gives to this man more power than He gives to me? Shall I dispute it? It is God's sovereign will and He does as He pleases!

28, 29. *You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.* They were vexed, but John was joyful! He loved to hear of Jesus prospering.

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* So he did. This is John's one song, almost the last of his utterances. He preaches no more sermons that are recorded. He must now go to prison, and there lie in a silence which he could scarcely bear. It was very hard for John to be quiet. He had an active, noble mind, and he became the victim, we fear, of doubts when he was shut up in prison. The breezy air of the wilderness suited him much better than the dull, heavy atmosphere of a

prison. I daresay some of you may feel this at this time—do not set it down to spiritual results, to spiritual causes—set it down to the atmosphere, for so it is. We often feel dull and heavy, but heaviest when the heart is in a heavy air. Every wind that rises blows away despair. So we must not think too much of our feelings, which even the wind can change.

31. *He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: He that comes from heaven is above all.* However good a man may be, he is earthly—there is flesh and blood about him akin to the earth—and even if he handles heavenly things, the earthiness of the preacher peeps out every now and then. Christ had nothing of that about Him—He was above all.

32. *And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no man receives His testimony.* Sad note! The news that all men went to Christ pleased John, but the fact that none received His testimony, comparatively none, grieved his heart.

33, 34. *He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him.* There is an infinite spiritual power about the words of Christ—they are the words of God, and the Holy Spirit concentrates all His energy in those words!

35, 36. *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hands. He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.* So John's last words are thunder! His dying speech has in it the words most terrible to all of you who believe not in Christ, "The wrath of God abides on him."

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THE SAVIOR'S CHARITY
NO. 3491

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you?" Mark 10:51.

THE story of this miracle is wonderfully attractive. It has always been a favorite theme with preachers. From the days of the apostles and the fathers of the Church they have delighted to dwell upon any single item of it as it is described by the three evangelists who record it. We have frequently spoken of the incident as a whole—let us, therefore, now confine our attention to the question which Jesus asked of the blind man, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He asks the same question at this good hour—He asks it of blind men and, I think, He asks it of partly blind men, too. There are some of us whose eyes are opened, but whose vision is obscure—we cannot see afar off. Our blessed Lord and Master says to us, as well as to the blind ones, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Let us consider this question attentively, *first on our Savior's part—the disposition it shows.* And then *on our own part*—the appeal to which we should respond.

I. THE QUESTION, AS PUT BY OUR SAVIOR, is expressive of much tenderness. *There is a beautiful delicacy in its manner.* The absence of any distinct allusion to the privation the poor man suffered from, is kind. I have noticed, in many cases, that to afflicted persons, any allusion to their infirmities is very distasteful. You could hardly do anything that would be more ungracious to a blind person than to be perpetually reminding him of his blindness, or to a person who was lame than constantly referring to his misfortune. Such people are hopeful that, bearing the evil patiently, themselves, it will not be detected by others and they are anxious to avoid the pity which is grievous when it becomes obtrusive. Now our Savior did not say to this man, "Alas, poor creature, what a sad state you are in!" There was not a word concerning the man's blindness to wound his sensibility. He was a beggar, to boot, and his dependence on alms for his subsistence would be, of itself, humiliating enough without referring to that poverty which, if keenly felt, is apt to crush a man's spirit and shear him of self-respect. There is not a word about poverty here. Christ did not say, "How long have you been sitting by the wayside begging? How much have you obtained from the cold hand of charity during the last few days?" You would not know that the man was a beggar and blind by the question which the Savior addressed to him. "What do you want Me to do for you?"—that might have been

spoken to a prince or to a king as gracefully as it was spoken to the poor blind beggar of Jericho!

I do not know whether you see much to admire and appreciate in this tenderness. I think it needs a man of fine feeling and generous sympathy to fully estimate it. Very characteristic was it of the way in which Christ deals with souls, as other instances show. The parable of the prodigal son is a correct picture of our Heavenly Father's dealings with His returning sons. In that parable we are told of the youth's nakedness, poverty, hunger and so on, but the father never mentions any one of these things—but he fell upon his son's unwashed neck and kissed his yet filthy face—and received him to his arms, all ragged as he still was! To anyone else he would have been a loathsome object, and yet to his father's heart he was still lovely, for he was his own dear child! He perceived the jewel, though it was lying on a dunghill. He did not say, "My dear son, how sad a thing it is that you should have left my roof! How could you be so foolish as to spend your living with harlots? Alas, my dear son, to what a degradation have you been brought in feeding swine." No, there must be no sort of allusion at all to the plight in which the prodigal youth returned. He was acknowledged and welcomed just as he was—in his sinnership.

Neither does the gospel of Jesus Christ come to you with taunts and upbraiding, continually reminding you of your sin. That is the work of the law of God. The law is like a sharp needle. It must go through the fabric and draw after it the silver thread of the gospel. The gospel's message is not so much about your sin as it is about the remedy for it! And when it comes to deal with your sin, it deals less with it as a crime than as a disease. It looks upon it as an affliction. It takes the most merciful view that is possible—and how little does it say to you even of disease? It gives you many invitations, "Ho, every one that thirsts." Nothing about sin there. "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden." Nothing about sin there. You remember that hymn of Rowland Hill's, which says—

"Come filthy, come naked, come just as you are"?

I am not quite certain that that is precisely the style of the gospel invitation, for that seems to say, "Come unto Me, all you who will. Whoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely." There is as little allusion made by the gospel, itself, to the sin of the sinner as possible. Of course, the sinner must be called a sinner, and the gospel never says, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace—and at the same time it does not expose the disease without prescribing the remedy. The gospel does not appeal to us so much in tones of thunder to acquaint us with our peril as it admonishes us to fly without delay to a place of safety! The gospel does not speak from Sinai, but from Calvary! From Sinai you hear the voice of rigid justice—from Calvary you hear the voice of tender mercy and gracious pardon.

There is something, I think, then, in this omission of the Savior's which has a blessed tenderness in it. Do you ask, "Why such tenderness to the sinner?" The reply is, "Because he is one who needs to be tenderly

dealt with." It has been said that the good surgeon should have a lion's heart and a lady's hands. He should have the courage to do anything that is of vital moment to the physical frame, be it to set a joint, to amputate a limb, or to uncover a sensitive nerve, yet he should have the utmost delicacy of touch, and the most tender of hearts in performing an operation that involves pain to the patient. To have his bones set with downy fingers is the injured man's desire. The awakened conscience is extremely sensitive. The law has been using its cat-o'-ten-tails upon the sinner's back until it has been furrowed with deep gashes. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint—from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Such a man needs to be gently handled! The Physician of souls knows this! The Savior of sinners acts thus. Not a harsh word is spoken, but grace is poured out from His lips. Not threats, terror, rebuke, but grace, and peace, and love!

I revel in this thought—commonplace it may be, but practical and precious it certainly is! What instruction is affords us! How it teaches us wisely to deal with the tender conscience! Like the Savior, Himself, we ought to minister to those who feel their need of help and healing very lovingly and gently, lest we break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. The hypocrite and self-righteous need have no tenderness shown towards them. Caresses would but nourish their conceit. The Savior addresses them with loathing threats—"Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!" What indignant epithets does He use! With what utter contempt does He assail them, calling them, "fools, and blind," "serpents, and a generation of vipers!" Yes, "whitewashed sepulchers," and I know not what besides! But when He comes to deal with the shorn lambs, how tenderly He carries them in His bosom! How gently He addresses those whose broken hearts need gentleness! Let us do the same. Let us try to bring out the sweets of the promise. Let us seek to break the promise into small pieces, that it may give them the meaning and sense, so that they can understand it. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, would effectually make us the instruments of comforting every soul that is depressed and dejected.

Not less remarkable is the *wisdom of the Savior.* You notice the question, "What do you want Me to do for you?" It is a rule with Christ never to do for us what we can do for ourselves. He did not tell the man that he was blind, because the man knew that himself. He did not undertake to do the work of conscience. In vain you look to Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit to do for a man that which it behooves the man to do for himself! This poor fellow could tell that he was blind; hence our Lord asked him a question which set his own mind to work. Now, dear friend, if you are desirous of being saved, Christ asks you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Your own conscience, if it is at all enlightened, will tell you that you have many sins that need to be forgiven. Why should Christ tell you that? The inward monitor, when fully awakened, knows that there is much sin that you have committed which requires absolution—

and much sin cleaving to your nature from which you require to be cleansed. You have much depravity to overcome. Your conscience tells you so. Christ does not come to you in the gospel and tell you this. He does not accuse you or excuse you in this way. With all mildness and gentleness, He puts the question thus, "What do you want Me to do for you?"—as if to make the blind man really think of the darkness in which he had lived so long, of the scales that were over his eyes and the disease that affected his optic nerve. It was well to make him think of all this, that his conscience should be naturally and thoroughly exercised. It seems to me to have been a salutary lesson, without which he would never have felt the gratitude that the gift of sight should inspire. Full many a mercy we receive and inadequately appreciate because we have never known the lack of it. People who have never been sick in their lives are not so grateful for health as those who are restored after a long illness, or those who have often been cast upon a bed of languishing. Those who have never known the pinch of poverty are seldom as grateful as they ought to be for food and raiment. While this man could see nothing, he could discern a great deal with his inward consciousness. His privation would suggest such manifold disadvantages that when he got the light, he would be sure to bless Christ for it! With the power of vision, once more to gaze upon the outward world, he would have a song in his mouth, as well as light in his eyes! It was wise in Christ thus to exercise his conscience that he might evoke his gratitude.

By means of this question, *Christ was giving the man lessons in prayer*. A schoolboy is encouraged by his master to apply to him if he finds any difficulty in his exercises that he cannot grapple with. Suppose it is the translation of a sentence from Latin into English. When he asks help, does the master at once take the matter out of his hands and do it for him? Certainly not! He says, "Where is your difficulty? Is it the meaning of that noun, or the construction of that verb, or what is it that perplexes you? Put your finger on the point that distresses you, and I will give you the assistance you require." When the blind man said, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me," his request was valid, but vague. He craved mercy, but what particular mercy was he in need of? He had need to learn the sacred art of pleading. The most advanced Christian has still need to pray, "Lord, teach us how to pray." I have noticed that though the disciples often heard Christ preach, they never said, "Lord, teach us how to preach"—but when they heard Him *pray*—you recollect the passages—"As He was praying in a certain place, the disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us how to pray." They were so astonished with such praying as the Savior's, that though, perhaps, they thought that they might emulate His preaching, His praying seemed too masterly, too infinitely above them, and they could not help exclaiming, "Oh, God, show us how to pray like that!" They felt that the majesty of His prayer was a great thing if they could but attain unto it. They desired to be taught how to pray. This is what Christ was doing with this man—He was teaching him how to pray! He did not at once open his eyes, but encouraged him to ask what he needed done for him. When the child

first begins to walk, it runs, eager to catch hold of something. The mother gets a little farther back, and a little farther, and the child goes tottering onwards to reach what it desires—and so it learns to walk. So is it with the mercy of God—He holds it out a little farther, and yet a little farther—that the soul may pray yet more. It was wisdom on the part of Christ, then, for this reason to propound the question.

And oh, what marvelous generosity this question implies! The Savior's liberality knows no bounds. "What do you want Me to do for you?" If the Messrs. Rothschild, or some other eminent capitalists were to place in one's hand a book of blank checks, and say, "There, draw what you like," it would be a liberality unheard of! To whatever extent a man may be willing to benefit his fellow man, there must be a limit. But when Jesus says, "What do you want Me to do for you?" there is no limit to His resources, or His readiness to bestow! The will of the person of whom the question is asked may limit the petition, but as the Savior put it, He gave, as it were, a sort of challenge to the poor beggar to ask whatever he liked. Now, brothers and sisters, this is much the way the Savior deals with all His people. "What do you want Me to do for you?" Whatever your desire may be, He will hear you and attend to it. I say not that He will grant it to you if it is not for your profit, but He would have you tell Him what it is you are desirous to ask. We have an example in this chapter of this kind of limitation—when James and John asked for something which our Lord thought it would do them no good to have. Nevertheless, if it is truly for your benefit and for His glory, you shall have it, ask what you will! You are not to dictate—you entreat pressingly. You are not omniscient and, therefore, your will can never be wiser than His—but you are God's child and, therefore, your desire shall be very prevalent with Him. "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Take this Book—the promises in it are exceedingly great and inestimably precious—so great that no man need ever complain that they are not large enough for him to stretch himself upon them! There are promises of God in this Book, the bottom of which no man can ever touch—streams of mercy which flow on with such a volume of grace that it is impossible they should ever be exhausted! Even though we should be like that mighty one who drinks up Jordan at a draught, yet should we never exhaust the mighty promises of God! I wish we could really feel how freely Christ gives. When we consider that He spared not His own self, but gave up His whole heart and emptied out His whole soul unto death for us, we can well understand that, having given Himself for us, He will also freely give us all things.

Thus much have I spoken concerning the question of our text as it interprets the goodwill of Christ. Let us now turn it over again—

II. AS IT APPEALS TO OURSELVES.

What do you think it ought to say to us? Or what should we say in response to it? It strikes me that, as it shows Christ's tenderness, so, on our part, *it ought to prompt a corresponding tenderness.* Horrible is the state of that man's mind who can presume upon Christ's tenderness and

yet love sin! I have heard some preach the doctrine that God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, in such a way as to make you feel that they could not see any sin in the people of Jehovah's choice. But I would like to feel that His great forbearance excited my scrupulousness. Does the Lord say that He can see no sin? Then I will see it all the more. Does He say of His exquisite tenderness, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you"—shall I, therefore, treat sin as though it were nothing, trifle with it and call it a nonentity? Oh, no! I will weep because of the tenderness of Him who knows all about me! And though He is too gracious to throw my sin in my teeth, yet I will take care to bemoan it myself. God forgives me—and for that reason I cannot forgive myself. God casts my sin behind His back—therefore, I have it continually before my face. Such love as His makes me appear the more black, the more detestable in my own eyes. If I had a friend who knew that I had some besetting sin, some grievous infirmity, and if that dear friend, out of the tenderness of his heart for me, never mentioned it to me, though it had grieved him much, should I, therefore, treat it with levity? Suppose I had injured him in business, do you think I should forget it for that reason? Or had I been the instrument of his losing some dear relative, and yet he never said a word to me about it, never upbraided me, never looked as if he felt that I had wronged him—never even hinted in a side way that I was the cause of his pain—well, I hope I speak honestly when I say that his kind reticence would wound and cut me to the heart more than if he spoke bitterly to me! If you, as a servant, have committed a fault and your master never says a word by way of blame, I am sure you will feel the sorrier rather than the less concerned for the wrong you have done. If a man comes to me in a rage and calls me evil names, I consider, then, that whatever my fault may be, he has taken his revenge and I am not bound to humble myself—but when he says, "Ah well, I will say nothing about it," or when he passes it over in silence and is as quiet and tender to me as if I had never done him an injury, why, then I must chastise myself, even if he will not chastise me! I must blame myself, since he will not blame me. Dear Christian friends, let us cultivate a holy sensibility. There is what is called the sensitive plant which turns up its leaves when it is touched. Let us be like that plant. If Christ has been tender to us, let us also be tender!

Did we not also say that Christ exhibits wisdom in the question which He put to this blind man? *Let us always seek to acquire wisdom.* The text suggests the idea of studying. "What do you want Me to do for you?" How few students among us are studious to do the will of the Lord! They may take to studying Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the Revelation—and they get a blessing out of those three books—but I wish they would do a little more for the Master than they are ordinarily known to do! Some people are so busy studying the stars that they have no time to trim the lamps here below, and yet I think the stars would shine as brightly without their study, whereas the lamps below might give clearer light if only they gave them a careful trimming. But while this is the fault of some, the fault of others is that they are all for sowing, but they scatter seed out of an

empty basket! They are all for working, but their tools are out of order! They would go fishing, but they forget to mend their nets. It were well if some who are teachers were but learners. Martha worked for Christ, but Mary learned of Christ. A holy mixture of these employments would be profitable. Would we have Martha and Mary in one—first *learn of Christ* and then *work for Christ*—this would be comely. Very familiar is that quotation from Pope—

"The proper study of mankind is man."

I am not so sure that it deserves the currency it has obtained. It is hardly standard gold. The proper study of mankind is God, but in order to get to God one must know something about man! It is well for us to know something of man's ruined estate, and especially to be acquainted with our own weakness, our own danger and our present exposure. Christian, study this! It is a very black book, but read on, for it is useful because of another book which shall follow. For, in order to get wisdom, we had need study the Scriptures, too, with a view to the practical testing of what we learn abroad.

This leads me to the remark that *it would be profitable to us were we to study our prayers*. Does that sound strange? You do not think it right to come to the Lord's Table without some degree of preparation—why should you not prepare to go to the mercy seat and to the throne of grace? If you were permitted to have an audience of Her Majesty, I will guarantee you that if you intended to ask anything, you would weigh your thoughts and almost construct your sentences before you were ushered into her presence! Certainly you would not go without considering what you intended to ask! When a man sends up a petition to the House of Commons, he knows what he wants—it were idle to throw together a mere jumble of words. It is true that the Holy Spirit has promised to help our infirmities, but He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves! I love extemporaneous prayer, for I believe that when the thoughts are clear, and the emotions vigorous, fit words will not be lacking. But I am not so fond of extemporaneous prayer when the sentiment, itself, is extemporized. Let a sermon be delivered extempore, it will be doubtless more effective than the reading of an elaborate essay, but it would be a poor sermon which the preacher never thought about before he uttered it! I have heard of a certain divine, who, after preaching, observed to some of his hearers that he had never thought of it before he went into the pulpit. The answer he got was, "That is just what we suspected." They had noticed how void it was of meaning and method. We ought to well consider our prayers. Are we not told that we have not because we ask amiss? I fear we often ask amiss from lack of preparation! The archer, when he draws his bow, not only puts his whole strength into the effort, but he diligently takes aim before he actually discharges his arrow. So let the suppliant pray! "Unto you," says David, "will I direct my prayer." Follow David's example, my friend. Be considerate of the requests you present before the Most High.

The generosity involved in our Lord's question, "What do you want Me to do for you?" supplies us with *a strong incentive to boldness at the*

throne of grace. This is our last thought. Should we not seek much liberty in prayer when we are encouraged by such liberality, such a profusion of grace? Let us not be so reluctant to ask while our Lord and Master is so ready to supply! "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," says our God. A traveler thinks that this passage must bear an allusion to a custom which prevails in the East and was practiced not many months ago by a Persian Shah. The monarch told one of his subjects to open his mouth, and when the man had done so, he began to put into it diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies and all sorts of jewels! Well, though I suppose that these are not very pleasant things to have in one's mouth, I can readily understand that a man who knew he was to have as many of them as he could hold in his mouth would open his mouth rather wide! And are not God's mercies so rich that they are like diamonds of the first water and jewels beyond price? Surely there should be no need to press the exhortation—we do not ask enough. This is a complaint which was never brought against any poor mendicant in quest of this world's comforts, and yet it is a complaint which God brings against us! Our puny souls do not crave so much as His infinite bounty is willing to bestow! Let us so account of God as that courtier whom Alexander bid to ask what he would. He asked for so much that the king's treasurer was staggered at the demand. Not so Alexander the Great! He said, though it was much for a subject to ask, it was not much for Alexander to give! Let the riches of God's glory, rather than the meanness of your own estate, measure the compass of your requests, when He says, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Now the Savior is present with us in Spirit. He will soon be here in person. I think I hear His voice as He puts this question, in loving tones, to each one of us, "What do you want Me to do for you?" You aged folks who have passed your "best days" (as they are called, though I hope your best days are really now coming), what do you want Christ to do for you? You venerable saints, if you have little to ask for yourselves in this world, what will you ask for us who are bearing the heat and burden of the day? You soldiers of Christ, who are in middle life, what do you want Christ to do for you? Have you no children to pray for, no household mercies to seek, no troubles from which you would be delivered? And you young men and maidens, the Master says to you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" If you can, I trust you will put up a desire while you are in your pews. If not, let the question greet you at the bedside where you have bowed so often. Pause a while before you pray. Think what you shall ask. It may be that the Lord, who appeared unto Solomon and said, "I will give you whatever you shall ask," may have appeared to you to make this the night of mercy. Ask not wealth of Him, ask not honor, ask not rank and station, but ask Him to give you His dear Son! Ask to have the Savior to be yours forever—and if you ask this, it will be a wide-mouthed prayer, but God will answer it, and you shall have this grateful response, "According to your faith be it done unto you." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

MARK 10:13-27, 32-52.

Verse 13. *And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them.* They thought them too little, too insignificant, and that the Master had greater things to do. But He thought not so. None are too little for Him! He receives even childish honors to Himself.

14. *But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.* Many of them come into that kingdom and all who come there must be like they. The child is not the hardest subject of conversion! No, rather—

15. *Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* Instead of growing wiser, in order to be fit for Christ, we must be more conscious of ignorance, more trustful towards Him, more dependent upon Him, more *childlike*.

16-18. *And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life. And Jesus said unto Him, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.* He did not here unveil His Deity to that young man, but if he had thought a while, he might have seen it. However, He answered his question. "If you are to be saved by your doings, this is what you have to do—not attend to sacraments and go through performances, but this."

19, 20. *You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not. Honor your father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* And he probably had very cautiously and anxiously done so, yet, for all that, he had not really kept all those commands without a flaw. We are right well sure of that, but as yet his eyes were not open to see his own shortcomings.

21. *Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.* There was so much that was amiable about him.

21, 22. *And said unto him, one thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.* He knew that there was a weak point in the young man's character—that he did not yet supremely love God, but loved his wealth—that he was living for this world, after all. And are there not many such—most correct in character? No one could point to a single flaw in their morals, but they are living purely for self—altogether that they may buy and sell and get gain. No thought of God, except a fear lest they should come under His rod—but no thought of serving Him, or laying themselves out for His glory—nor much thought, either, for their fellow men. Christ had hit the blot—marked it out for him.

23. *And the disciples were astonished at His words.* For the Rabbis had pretty well taught that money would answer everything—that if you could give so much, and pay so much, it was all well with you. Christ went against all such teaching, and showed that, in this respect, money was of no service—in fact, that it often was a hindrance.

24. *But Jesus answered again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* It is an impossibility. Only God can do it.

25-35. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed: and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes. And they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him. And the third day He shall rise again.* From the number of these sentences it is clear that our Savior entered into a very detailed account of His sufferings, dwelling upon each particular which He plainly foresaw, wherein we see His prophetic character. But it is more to our point to see that He knew beforehand what it would cost Him to redeem our souls—

"When the Savior knew the price of pardon
Was His blood, His pity never withdrew."

He knew not only that He must die, but He knew all the circumstances of pain and shame with which that death should be attended. They would condemn Him, deliver Him to the Gentiles, mock Him, scourge Him, spit upon Him and kill Him. Thus we learn that we also should dwell in holy, grateful meditation upon every point of our Lord's passion. There is something in it. He would not, Himself, thus have divided it out, and laid it, as it were, piece by piece, if He had not intended us to do with it as they did with the burnt offering of old, when they divided it—a picture of what every intelligent, instructed believer should do with the passion of His Master. He should try to look into the details of the great sacrifice and have communion with God therein. Now, albeit that this revelation of His coming shame, and sorrow, and death afflicted the hearts of His disciples, yet, for all that, observe what they did.

35. *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that You should do for us whatever we shall desire.* Strange request! First of all, read those words, "We would that You should do for us." Now the genuine spirit of a Christian is not to ask that something should be done for him, but to ask his Master, especially in such a time as that, what they could do for Him! Christ was all unselfishness, but His disciples had not yet learned the lesson. "We would that You should do for us." And then see how much they indulged

their ambition. "We would that You should do for us *whatever we desire*." And yet I question whether we are, any of us, free from this spirit! For when the Lord reproves us a little and we have not everything our own way, how apt we are to rebel! The fact is, we have got this tincture—this gall already in us—we would that He should do for us whatever we desire! Should it be according to your mind? Should the disciple dictate to his Master? Should the child be lord of the family?

36-39. *And He said unto them, What do you want Me to do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one at Your right hand, and the other at Your left hand, in Your glory. But Jesus said unto them, You know not what you ask: can you drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can.* Again, He might have said, "You know not what you say."

39, 40. *And Jesus said unto them, You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized. But to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.* They are not content, you see, with being ambitious—they would fire Him with ambition—that humble, lowly servant of God, who had laid aside for a while the power to distribute crowns and thrones! But He does not forget Himself, nor the position which He had taken up in reference to the Father, but said, "It is not Mine to give."

41-43. *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and said unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you.* However, how sad the contrast is—the Master's thoughts all taken up with His death for others—and their thoughts occupied with little petty jealousies as to who should be the greatest! It is a sad thing when this creeps into Christian churches (and it still does), when souls are perishing, and this poor world needs our weeping eyes and our laborious hands, and we get to quarreling about points of precedence! This brother thinks the other too forward. This one has not enough respect paid to him. This one has spoken sharply and the other cannot bear it. Oh, what poor disciples we are! What a blessing it is we have a patient Master who still bears with us, and will not leave us until He has infused His own spirit into us, which spirit is the spirit of self-denial, self-abnegation—the spirit which desires not its own, but looks on the things of others. God grant us all to be full of it!

43. *But whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister.* Your servant.

44. *And whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all.* And that is the way to be truly great in the Church of God—it is to be less and less in your own esteem, and willing to be nothing! The way up is downward! That is not a contradiction, but it is a paradox. Sink, and you shall rise. Be willing to serve the very *least,* and you shall have honor

among your brothers and sisters. Remember that the King of kings was the servant of servants! "Whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all."

45-49. *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort.* "Cheer up." That would be a very exact translation.

49-51. *Rise; He calls you! And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you?* Do you notice here a sort of gentle rebuke that the Savior gives to James and John? Read the 36th verse, and then read this again. "He said unto them, What do you want Me to do for you?" And now here is a blind beggar, and He sweetly puts the same question to Him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

51. *The blind man said unto Him.* And here *he* might well have shamed John and James! He asked for no thrones or kingdoms.

51. *Lord, that I might receive my sight.* "Lord, that I might look up." That is the exact translation, for no doubt he had been conscious that the light came from the sun as he felt its warmth upon him as he sat by the wayside! And, therefore, he thought that seeing must be looking up towards the place from where the sunlight came. "Lord, that I might look up."

52, 53. *And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.* It is a very remarkable thing that you will not often find the Lord Jesus Christ granting a favor without ascribing it to some excellence in the person to whom He grants it. It is generally, "Great is your faith," or something of that sort—"I have not seen such faith." Now this is a very remarkable thing because we know there really was nothing whatever in the persons, that they should deserve His great favor!

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GOD'S WORD NOT TO BE REFUSED
NO. 3492

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1915,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 27, 1870.

"See that you refuse not Him who speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven."
Hebrews 12:25.

WE are not a cowering multitude gathered in trembling fear around the smoking mount of Horeb—we have come where the great central figure is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. We have gathered virtually in the outer circle of which the saints above and holy angels make the inner ring. And now, tonight, Jesus speaks to us in the gospel. So far as His gospel shall be preached by us, here, it shall not be the word of man, but the word of God. And although it comes to you through a feeble tongue, yet the truth of God, itself, is not feeble, nor is it any less divine than if Christ, Himself, should speak it with His own lips! "See that you refuse not Him who speaks." The text contains—

I. AN EXHORTATION OF A VERY SOLEMN, EARNEST KIND.

It does not say, "Refuse not Him who speaks," but, "See that you refuse not Him who speaks"—that is, "be very circumspect that by no means, accidental or otherwise, you refuse the Christ of God, who now, in the gospel, speaks to you! Be watchful, be earnest, lest even through inadvertence you should refuse the prophet of the gospel dispensation—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who speaks in the gospel from heaven to the sons of men." It means, "Give earnest heed and careful attention, that by no means, and in no way you refuse Him who speaks." My objective tonight will be to help you, beloved friends, especially you that have not laid hold on Christ—who are not the children of Zion, who are joyful in their king—to help you, tonight, that you may see to it.

And to go to our point at once, we shall have many things to say, and we shall speak them in brief sentences, hoping that the thoughts, as they arise, may be accepted by your mind and may, by God's Spirit, work upon your hearts and conscience. There is great need of this exhortation from many considerations not mentioned in the text. A few of these we will hint at first.

First, from *the excellence of the Word of God, itself*. "See that you refuse not Him who speaks." That which Jesus speaks concerns your soul, concerns your everlasting destiny—it is God's wisdom, God's way of mercy—God's plan by which you may be saved! If this were a secondary

matter, you need not be so earnest about receiving it, but of all things under heaven, nothing so concerns you as the gospel. See, then, that you refuse not this precious Word of God, more precious than gold or rubies, which alone can save your souls!

See to this, again, because *there is an enemy of yours who will do all he can that you may refuse Him who speaks*. Satan is always busiest where the gospel is most earnestly preached! Let the sower scatter handfuls of seeds—and birds will find the seeds and soon devour them! Let the gospel be preached, and these birds of the air, fiends of hell, will soon by some means try to remove these truths from your hearts, lest they should take root in your hearts and bring forth fruit unto repentance.

Give earnest heed, again, "that you refuse not Him who speaks," because *the tendency of your own mind* will be to refuse Christ. Oh, sirs, you are fallen through your first father, Adam, and the tendencies now of your souls are towards evil—not towards the right—and when the Lord comes from heaven to you, you will reject Him if left to yourselves! Watch, then, I say! See that you refuse not! Stir up your souls, awaken your minds, lest this delirious tendency of sin should make you angry with your best friend and constrain you to thrust from you that which is your only hope for the hereafter! When a man knows that he has a bad tendency which may injure him, if he is wise, he watches against it. So, knowing this, which God's Word tells you, watch, I pray you, lest you refuse Him who speaks!

Think well, too, that you have need to see to this, because *some of you have rejected Christ already long enough*! He has spoken to you from this pulpit, from other pulpits, from the Bible, from the sickbed. He spoke to you lately in the funeral knell of your buried friend—many voices, but all with this one note, "Come to Me! Repent and be saved!" But until now you have refused "Him who speaks." Will not the time past suffice to have played this mischievous game? Will not the years that have rolled into eternity bear enough witness against you? Must you add to all this weight by again refusing? Oh, I implore you to see to it that you do not again "refuse Him who speaks from heaven," for there is not a word of that which He speaks, but what is love to your souls! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came not armed with terrors to work wrath among the sons of men! All was mercy, all was grace—and to those who listen to Him, He has nothing to speak but tenderness and loving-kindness—your sins shall be forgiven you! The time of your ignorance, God will wink at. Your transgressions shall be cast into the depths of the sea—for you there shall be happiness on earth and glory hereafter! Who would not listen when it is good news to be heard? Who would not listen when the best tidings that God, Himself, ever sent forth from the excellent glory is proclaimed by the noblest Ambassador that ever spoke to men, namely, God's own Son, Jesus Christ, the once crucified, but now exalted Savior? For these reasons, then, at the very outset I press upon you this

exhortation, "See that you refuse not Him who speaks such precious truth," which the enemy would gladly take out of your minds—the truth of God which you, yourselves, have refused long enough already—and truth which is sweet and will be exceedingly precious to your souls if you receive it! But now the text gives us—

II. SOME FURTHER REASONS for seeing to it that we do not "refuse Him who speaks." One reason I see in the text is this—see to this because *there are many ways of refusing Him who speaks*, and you may have fallen into one or other of these. See to it! Pass over in examination your own state and conduct, lest you may have been refusing Christ! *Some refuse the Savior by not hearing of Him.* In His day there were some who would not listen, and there are such now. The Sabbath days of some of you are not days of listening to the gospel. Where were you this morning? Where are you usually all the Lord's-Day long? Remember, you cannot live in London, where the gospel is preached, and be without responsibility! Though you will not came to the house of God to hear of it, yet be sure of this—the kingdom of God has come near unto you. You may close your ears to the invitation of the gospel, but at last you will not be able to close your ear to the denunciation of wrath! If you will not come and hear of Christ on the cross, you must one day see for yourselves Christ on His throne. "See that you refuse not Him who speaks to you from heaven" by refusing to be found where His gospel is proclaimed!

Many come to hear it, and yet refuse Him who speaks, *for they hear listlessly*. In many congregations—I will not judge this—a very large proportion of hearers are listless hearers. It little matters to them what is the subject in hand. They hear the sentences and phrases that come from the speaker's tongue, but these penetrate the ears, only, and never reach their heart. Oh, how sad it is that this should be the case with almost all who have heard the gospel a long time, but who are not converted! They get used to it. No form of alarm could reach them and, perhaps, no form of invitation could move them to penitence. The preacher may exhaust his art. They are like the adder that is deaf. He may know how to charm others, but these he cannot charm, charm he ever so wisely! Oh, see to it, you gospel hearers up yonder, and you below here, that have been hearing Christ these many years, see that you refuse not Him who day by day during so long a time has spoken to you in the preaching of the gospel out of heaven!

But there are some who do hear and have a very intelligent idea of what they hear, but who *actually refuse to believe it.* For diverse reasons best known to themselves, they reject the testimony of the incarnate God. They hear that God, the Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and He has borne testimony that whoever believes in Him is not condemned. They know but they will not believe in Him. They will give you first, one excuse, and then another, but all the excuses put together will never mitigate the fact that they do not believe the testimony of God

concerning His Son, Jesus Christ! And so they "refuse Him who speaks." How many, how many here are by their unbelief refusing the Christ that speaks out of heaven?

Some are even *offended at the Gospel*, as in Christ's day. When He came to a tender point in His preaching they went back and walked no more with Him. Such there are to be found in our assemblies. The gospel galls them—there is some point that touches their prejudices, something that touches their favorite sin—and they are vexed and irritable. They ought to be angry—angry with their sin—but they are angry with Christ instead. They ought to denounce themselves, and patiently seek mercy, but this is not palatable to them! They would rather denounce the preacher, or denounce the preacher's Master.

Some will even hear the gospel, the very gospel of Christ to catch at words and pervert sentences to make play of the preacher's words which he uses, when they are honestly the best he can find and, worse still, make play with the sense, too, with the very gospel—and find themes for loose jokes and profane and ribald words, even in the cross! Rolling dice, like the soldiers at the foot of the cross, with the blood falling on them, so some make merriment when the blood of Jesus is falling upon them to their condemnation! May it not be so with any here, present, but there have been such who have even reviled the Savior and had hard words for God in human flesh—could not believe that He bore the guilt of sin, could not admire the astounding love that made Him suffer for the guilt of His enemies, would not see anything admirable in the heroic sacrifice of the great Redeemer—but rather turned on their heels against their benefactor and poured forth venomous words on Him who loved the sons of men and died saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And some have practically shown they have refused Him who speaks, for they have begun *to persecute His people!* They have maltreated those that sought the glory of God, and anything that had a savor of Christ about it has been despicable and detestable to them.

Oh, dear hearers, I shall ask you, since there are all these ways of refusing Christ, to see to it that you do not fall into any of them! The grosser forms, perhaps, you would be too shocked at, but don't fall into the others. Do not especially fall into that indifference which has almost as much insult to the Savior as blasphemy! Is it nothing to you? Is it nothing to you that God should come from heaven that He might be just in the salvation of men, and that, coming from heaven to be thus just, He should, Himself, suffer that we might not suffer—the Christ of God bleed and die instead of the undeserving, hell-deserving sinners? Shall this be told you—pressed upon you and will you refuse it? Will you refuse Him who speaks, Himself, in His own sacrifice? And in the blood which He has carried within the veil continues now to speak—will you, will you refuse Him? Pray God you may see to it that in no form you do!

And now passing on, but keeping to the same point, striking the hammer on the head of the same nail, there are many reasons why men refuse Christ. Therefore, see that for none of these reasons you do it. Some refuse Him *out of perfect indifference!* The great mass of men have not a thought above their food and their drink. Like the cock that found the diamond on the dunghill, they turn it over and wish it were a grain of barley. What care they for heaven, or the pardon of sin? Their mind does not reach to that. See that you—that you, none of you, are so sensuous as to "refuse Him who speaks from heaven" for such a reason as this! Some reject Him because of their self-righteousness—they are good enough. Jesus Christ speaks against them, they say! "He does not applaud their righteousness, He rather ridicules them. He tells them that their prayers are long prayers and their many good works are, after all, a poor ground for reliance." So as the Savior will not patronize their righteousness, neither will they have anything to do with Him. Oh, say not you are rich and increased in goods—you are naked, and poor, and miserable! Say not you can win heaven by your merits—you have none! Your merits drag you down to hell. Yet many will refuse the Savior because of the insanity of their self-righteousness!

Some, too, reject Him because of *their self-reliant wisdom*. "Why," they say, "this is a very thoughtful age." And everywhere I hear it dinned into my ears, "thoughtful preaching," "thinkers," "intellectual preaching." And what a mass of rottenness before high heaven the whole lot is that is produced by these thinking preachers and these intellectual men! For my part I would rather say to them, "See that you refuse not Him who speaks," for one word of God is better than all the thoughts of all the philosophers—and one sentence from the lips of Christ I do esteem to be more precious than the whole Alexandrian library—and also the Bodleian, if you will, so much as it comes from man. No, it is the thinking of Christ we have to think about! Otherwise our thinking may prove our curse. A man, if he is drowning, if he has a rope thrown to him, had better lay hold of it rather than merely thinking about the possibilities of salvation by some other means. While your souls are being lost, sirs, there is better employment for you than merely indulging in rhapsodies and inventions of your own supposed judgment! Take hold of this, the gospel of Jesus revealed of God, lest you perish, and perish with a vengeance!

Some reject the Savior from another cause—*they do not like the holiness of Christ's teaching*. They refuse Him who speaks because they think Christ's religion too strict, too precise—it cuts off their pleasures, it condemns their lusts. Yes, yes, it is so, but to reject Christ for such a reason is certainly to be most unreasonable, for it should be in every man a desire to be delivered from these passions and lusts—and because Christ can deliver us, shall we, therefore, reject Him? God forbid that we should be led astray by such a reason!

Some reject Him because they have a *fear of the world.* If they were Christians, they would probably be laughed at as Methodists, Presbyterians, Puritans, or some other name. And shall we lose our souls to escape the sneers of fools? He is not a man—call him by some other name—he is no man that flings away his soul because he is such a coward that he cannot bear to do and believe the right thing and bear the frown of fashion!

There are others who refuse the Savior *simply out of procrastination.* They have no reason for it, but they hope they shall have a more convenient season. They are young people as yet, or they are not so very old, or if they are old, yet still life will linger a little while—and so still they refuse Him who speaks.

I have not mentioned a worthy reason for refusing Him who speaks, nor do I believe there is a worthy reason. It seems to me that if it is so, that God Himself has taken upon Himself human form, and has come here to effect our redemption from our sin and misery, there cannot be any reason that will stand a moment's looking at for refusing Him who speaks! It must be my duty and my privilege to hear what it is that God has got to say to me—it must be my duty to lend Him all my heart, to try and understand what it is that He says—and then to give Him all my will to do, or to be whatever He would have me to do or to be!

"But did God thus come?" asks one. I always feel that the very declaration is its own proof. No heart could ever have contrived or invented this as a piece of imagination—the love, the story of the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus! If I had no evidence but the mere statement, I think I must accept it, for it wears the truth of God upon its very forefront! Who should conceive it? The offended God comes here to redeem His creatures from their own offense. Since He must in justice, punish, He comes to bear the punishment Himself, that He may be just and yet be inconceivably gracious! My soul flies into the arms of this revelation! It seems to be the best news my troubled conscience ever had—God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them! Oh, there cannot be a reasonable motive for rejecting the Savior, and I, therefore, impress it upon you, since so many unreasonable motives carry men away, see that you refuse not Him who speaks! And may the Spirit of God grant that you may not be able to refuse! But now coming to the text again, we have—

III. A VERY HIGH MOTIVE GIVEN for seeing that we refuse not Him who speaks. It is this—because *in refusing Him, we shall be despising the highest possible authority*. When Moses spoke in God's name, it was no light thing to refuse such an ambassador! Still, Moses was but a man. Though clothed with divine authority, yet he was but a man and a servant of God. But Jesus Christ is God by nature. See that you refuse not Him who is of heavenly origin, who came from heaven, who is clothed with such divine powers that every word He speaks is virtually spoken from heaven, and who, being now in heaven, speaks through His ever

living gospel directly out of the excellent glory! Regard this, I pray you, and remember well the parable which Jesus gave. A certain man planted a vineyard and let it out to vinedressers. And when the time came that he should receive the fruit, he sent a servant, and they stoned him! He sent another, and they beat him. He sent another, and they maltreated him. After he had thus sent many of his servants, and the dressers of the vineyard had incurred his high displeasure by the shameful way in which they had treated the servants, he sent his own son, and he said, "They will respect my son." It was the highest degree of guilt when they said, "This is the heir, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." Then they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. You know how the Savior was treated by the sons of men—but here is the point I aim at—it is this—to reject Jesus Christ, to refuse Him, to refuse His gospel if He did not speak in it, might not be so high a misdemeanor, but to refuse Him—I don't know how it is, but my heart feels very heavy even to sinking at the thought that any man here should be able to refuse Christ, the Son of God, the Everlasting and the ever Blessed! But I cannot speak out what I feel. It fills my soul with horror to think that any creature should refuse his God, when his God speaks, but much more when God comes down on earth in infinite, wondrous, immeasurable love, takes upon Himself the form of man and suffers, and then turns round to His rebellious creature and says, "Listen, I am ready to forgive you. I am willing to pardon you. Do but listen to Me."

Oh, it seems monstrous that men should refuse Christ! I don't know how you feel about it, but if you have ever measured that in your thoughts, it will have seemed to be the most monstrous of all crimes! If, in order to be saved, the terms were hard and the conditions difficult, I could understand a man saying, "It mocks me." But when the gospel is nothing but this, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die?" When it is nothing but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," what shall I say? I cannot fashion an excuse for any of you and if you, after having heard the gospel, are cast into hell, I dare not think that its utmost pains will be too severe for so high an insult to such wondrous love! You will not be saved, sirs! You put from you, your own life! You will not be saved when the way of salvation is plain, easy, simple, close to your hand—

"What chains of vengeance they deserve
That slight the bonds of love!"

I cannot—I could not—conceive a punishment too severe for men who, knowing that their rejection of Christ will bring upon them everlasting punishment, yet willfully reject Him! You choose your own delusion. If you drank poison and did not know it, I could pity you—if you made all your veins to swell with agony and caused your death—but when we stand up and say, "Sirs, it is poison! See others drop and die—touch it not!"—when we give you something a thousand times better, and bid you

take that, but you will not take that, but *will* have the poison—then if you will, you must. If, then, you would destroy your soul, it, must be so.

But we would plead with you yet again. "See, see that you refuse not Him who speaks." I wish I could raise Him before you tonight—even the Christ of God and bid Him stand here—and you would see His hands and His feet, and you would ask, "What are these marks we see there?" He would reply, "These are the wounds that I received when I suffered for the sons of men." And He bares His side and says, "See here, here went the spear when I died that sinners might live." In glory now, yet once, says He, "This face was defiled with spit, and this body mangled with Pilate's scourge and Herod's rod, and I, whom angels worshiped, was treated as a menial, yes, worse—God Himself forsook Me! Jehovah hid His face from Me, that I, bearing the punishment of sin, might really bear it, not in fiction, but in fact, and might suffer the equivalent for all the miseries that souls redeemed by Me ought to have suffered had they been cast into hell!" Will you look at His wounds and yet refuse Him? Will you hear the story of His love, and yet reject Him? Must He go away and say in His heart, "They have refused Me. They have refused Me. I told them of salvation—I showed them how I bought salvation, but they have refused Me. I will go My way and they shall never see My face again till that day when they shall say, 'Mountains fall upon us! Hide us from the face of Him who sits upon the throne.'" If you will not have Him in mercy you must have Him in judgment! And if the silver scepter of God will not touch you, the Christ of God, the man of Nazareth, will come a second time on the clouds of heaven, and woe unto you in that tremendous day! Then shall the nations of the earth weep and wail because of Him. They would not have Him as their Savior—so they must have Him as their Judge—and out of His mouth shall the sentence come, "Depart! Depart!"

Now I have to close with the last reason that is given in the text why we should see that we "refuse not Him who speaks." It is this—that if we do—

IV. THERE IS A DOOM TO BE FEARED, for if they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven. You hear the din that goes up from the Red Sea when the angry billows leap over Pharaoh and his horsemen. Why is the king asleep in the midst of the waters? Why are the chivalry of Egypt cut off? They rejected Moses when he said, "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go." If Pharaoh escaped not when he refused him who spoke on earth, oh, dreadful shall be that day when the Christ who this day speaks to you, and whom you reject, shall lift up the rods of His anger and the lake of fire, more direful than the Red Sea, shall swallow up His adversaries! See you that next sight? A number of men are standing there holding censers of incense in their hands, and there stands Moses, the servant of God, and he says, "If these die the death of common men, God has not spoken by me," for they have rebelled against Moses. Do you see the sight? Can you picture it? If they

escaped not who refused him who spoke on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse Him who speaks from heaven? Go through the peninsular of the Arabian desert. See how the tribes drop, one by one, and leave graves behind them as the track of their march. Of all that came out of Egypt, only two entered into Canaan! Who slew all these? They were all slain there because they resisted the Word of God by His servant, Moses, and He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. If they escaped not who refused him who spoke on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse Him who speaks to us from heaven?

I might multiply instances and give you proof of how God avenged the refusal to listen to His servant, Moses, but how much more will He avenge it if we listen not to Jesus Christ the Lord! "Oh," says one, "you preach the terrors of the Lord." The terrors of the Lord? I scarcely think of them—they are too dreadful for human language! But if I speak severely, even for a moment, it is in love. I dare not play with you, sinner. I dare not tell you sin is a trifle. I dare not tell you that the world to come is a matter of no great account. I dare not come and tell you that you need not be in earnest. I shall have to answer for it to my Master! I have these words ringing in my ears, "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." I cannot bear that I should have the blood of souls upon my skirts and, therefore, do I again say to you—refuse what I say as much as you will, cast anything that is mine to the dogs, have nothing to do with it—but wherein I have spoken to you Christ's Word and I have told you His gospel, "Believe and live." "He that believes on Him is not condemned," "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Wherein it is Christ's gospel, it is Christ that speaks! And I again say to you, for your soul's sake, "Refuse not Him who speaks from heaven to *you*." May His Spirit sweetly incline you to listen to Christ's Word and may you be saved tonight!

If you don't have Christ, tonight, some of you never will have Him. If you are not saved tonight, some of you never will be. 'Tis now or never with you. God's Spirit strives with you, conscience is a little awakened. Catch every breeze, catch every breeze! Do not let this pass by! Oh, that tonight you might seek, and that tonight you might find the Savior! Otherwise remember if you refuse Him who speaks from heaven, He lifts His hands and swears that you shall not enter into His rest! Then are you lost, lost, lost, beyond all recall! God bless every one of you and may we meet in heaven.

I do not know. I sometimes am afraid that there are not so many conversions as there used to be. If I thought there were no more souls to be saved by me in this place, under God, I would break away from every comfort and go and find out a place where I could find some that God would bless. Are they all saved that will be? You seat-holders, have I fished in this pond till there is no more to come? Is it to be so, that in all the ground where wheat will ever grow, wheat has grown, and there can

be no more? My brothers and sisters in Christ, pray God to send His Spirit that there may be more brought to Jesus! If not, it is hard, hard work to preach in vain. Perhaps I grow stale and dull to you—I would not if I could help it. If I could learn how to preach, I would go to school. If I could find the best way to reach you, I am sure I would spare no pains. I do not know what more to say, but if Christ, Himself, shall be refused, how shall I speak for Him? Of His dear wounds, if His precious blood, if His dying groans, if His love to the souls of men all go for nothing, then my words cannot be anything—they may well go to the wind! But do, do turn to Him! Cast not away your souls. Come to Him! He will receive you! He waits to be gracious! Whoever is heavy laden, let him come tonight. One tear, one sigh, one cry—send it up to Him—He will hear you! Come and trust Him! He will save you! God bless you, for Christ's love's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 12.

Verses 1, 2. *Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus*— The Apostle seems to say, since so many look on from heaven, and earth, and hell, and we are runners in the great life race, let us strip to it—let us throw aside everything that would make our running difficult, every weight, however golden, every garment, however richly embroidered, lest it should entangle us in our course. And then when we have set out, let us not conclude that we have won the victory, but "run with patience," on, on, on, till at last we reach the goal!

2, 3. *The author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand at the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.* What a runner in the race He was! And what a race He ran! While we see Him at the end of the course, holding out the crown, let us remember that He knows all the trials of the way, knows what pressure must be put upon ourselves before we can reach the mark.

4. *You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* Your battles have been nothing yet—you think yourselves martyrs? What have you done? What have you suffered? What have you endured, compared with your Lord, compared with the saints of old?

5, 6. *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him: For whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives.* Here is another noble reason for patience. That same trial which, on the one hand, comes from man,

viewed in another way comes from God—and is a chastening. Let us accept it at His hands, regarding it as a token of sonship.

7, 8. *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.* You have not your Father's love—you are not recognized as an honorable member of His family.

9-13. *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward if yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* The Apostle cheers up those who are tried, with the reflection that the good which will come out of their trouble will abundantly recompense them. They are not to expect to see that good at once. It will come afterwards—not yet. No reasonable man expects the harvest at the same time that he sows. You must wait a while—bear with patience—have confidence in God—and all your trials will end well.

14. *Follow peace with all men.* You will not always get it, but follow it—run after it.

14-17. *And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* He sold his birthright. He could not have the pottage and the birthright, too, and, therefore, he chose the pottage. He must stand to it. And if here, today, we deliberately choose the pleasures of this world, we must not marvel if we have to stand to them forever.

18-24. *For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake). But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the spirits of just men made*

perfect. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. The center around which we gather in these days is not Sinai with its thunder and its fire—it is the cross—no it is heaven! It is the enthroned Savior! It is the great Mediator of a better covenant than that of which Moses came to speak! We gather there and we make up a part of that vast throng that now surrounds that center. Oh, that we, while we hear the sweet voice of the gospel, may lend it a willing ear and may we not be among the number of those who reject the voice that speaks from heaven to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ!

25-28. *See that you refuse not Him who speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* For let us not think that we are not to be reverent because we gather at the gospel's call. Let us not dream that God who is a consuming fire on the top of Sinai, is less terrible under the gospel than under the law, for it is not so.

29. *For our God is a consuming fire.*

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END OF VOLUME 61